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Free Resources:

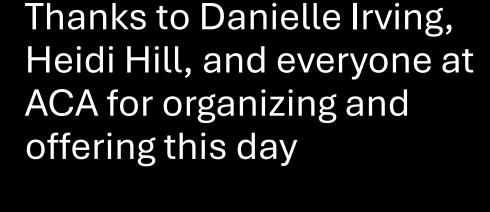
https://johnsommersflanagan.com/

How to Weave Strengths and Wellness into Your Work with Clients who are Depressed or Suicidal





Gratitude



Thanks to the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation and my colleagues at CAPE

Thanks to YOU



Opening (or Closing) Story

Ambivalence

You make the case for change

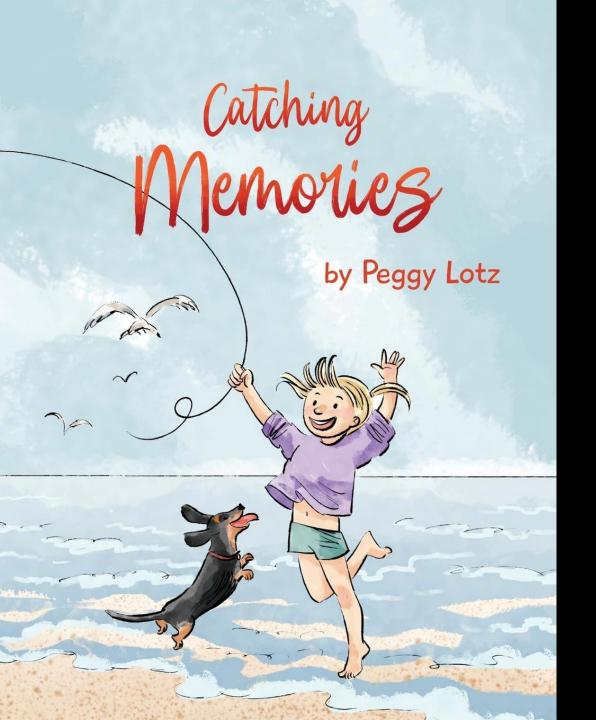


PREPARATION

Trigger warning – Why?

I will talk about why mental health and happiness are so elusive, and say contrary things

- Research indicates...
- Strength-warning...



Remember...

 Trigger warnings are suggestions about what you might not be able to handle

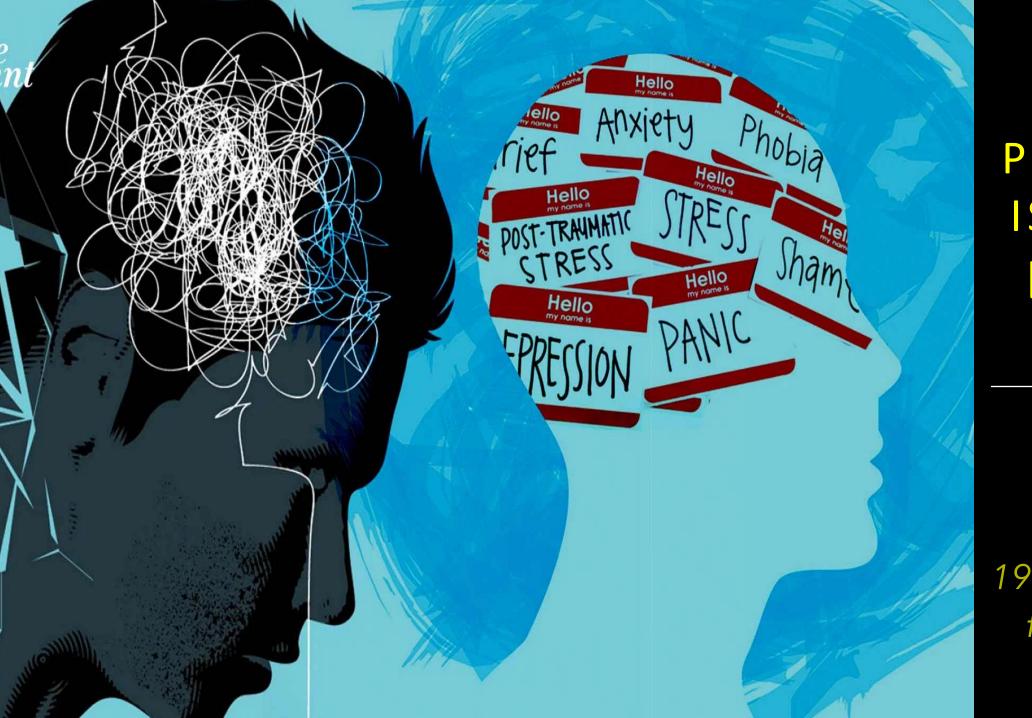
 Strength warnings are suggestions about how learning new knowledge and gaining experiences can make you STRONGER



Learning (Learner) Objectives

- 1. Explain three psychological principles that underpin strengths- and wellness-based counseling approaches.
- 2. Demonstrate the three-step emotional change technique for use with oneself and with clients.
- 3. Implement two evidence-informed strategies for generating and sustaining positive emotions.

[**You take what fits for you and apply it to yourself if you feel like it]



THE
PROBLEM
IS EXTRA
LARGE

Nearly

Every Year

1980-2024 in the face of more treatments

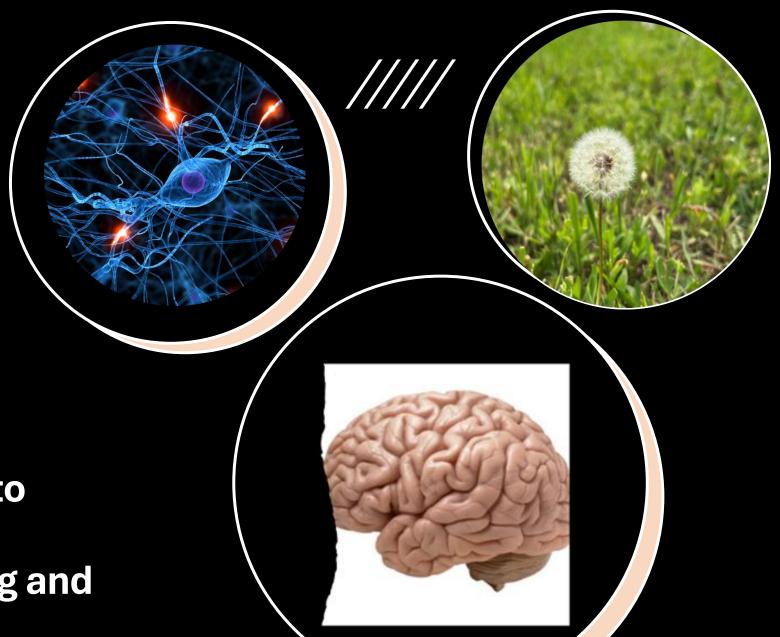
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Most of us have a

Bad News Brain

We almost need to force ourselves to embrace well-being and positivity



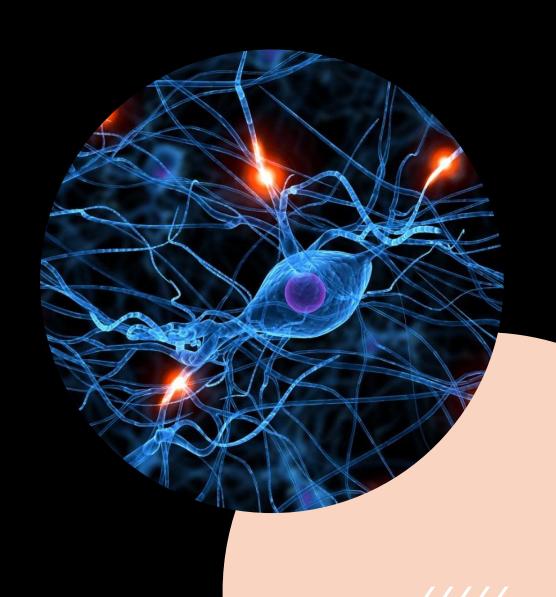


How Our Brains Work

Four (or more)

BIG

Truths





What's Wrong with YOU?

1 – We are Vulnerable to Over-focusing on What's Wrong with Us



Medical student disease

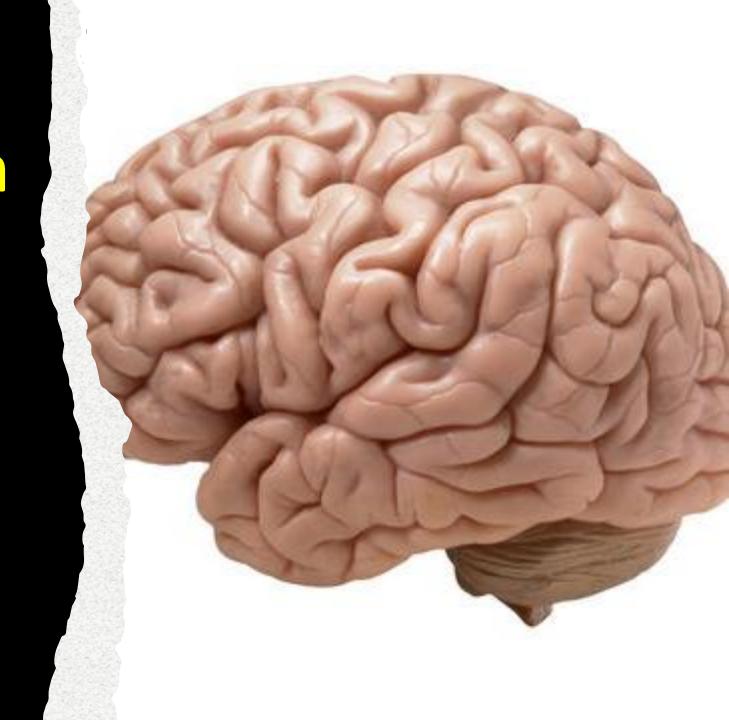


- oMental health student disease [Diagnosis+]
- OTikTok

The Amazing Brain

"Grounding" Activity

Mindful moments

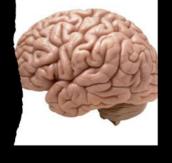


2 – Confirmation Bias





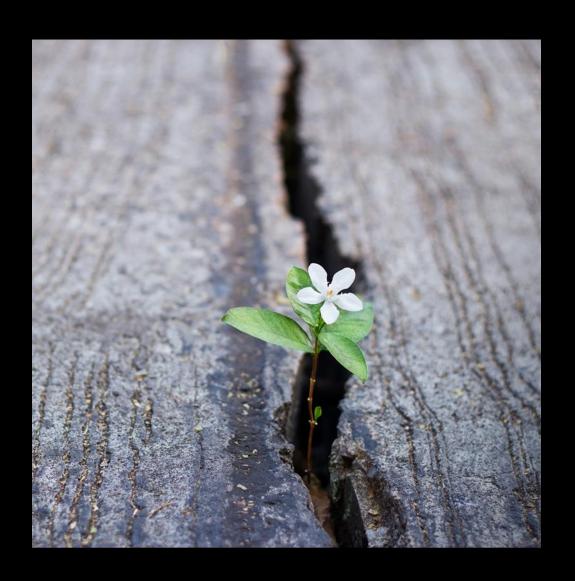
what we



look for

3 – What We Pay Attention to Grows





- The parts of your brain you use you GROW
- Duh: Neurons that fire together, wire together
- If I focus on failures, I get BETTER at focusing on my failures. . .and there were MANY [arguing]

Remember Those Three Science-Based Ideas





QUIZ
1 2 3

Positive Interventions What Shall We Grow?

Problems
[Insomnia,
Sadness,
Anxiety]

Well-Being [Feels small]

Well-Being – Feels BIGGER

Grow (or boost) this: Not just inside a person but also between and among people and within and between communities

Example: 3 Good Things or Savoring

Bad Moods

A Story about Bad Moods 1990-2014







Bad Moods – 2



Anyone here
ever had someone tell you to
"Cheer Up?!"
Or

"Smile!"







The Three-Step Emotional Change Trick

Step One
Honor YOUR
Emotion

The Three-Step Emotional Change Trick

Step Two — only if you want to

Think a New Thought . . . or Do Something Different

The Three-Step Emotional Change Trick

Step Three
Share the Good
Mood

The Three-Step Emotional Change Trick Step Four
Teach Someone
the 3 Steps



Framing Positive Interventions

Start with empathy with the pain . . . and stay there (Step 1) as needed



Knowledge is POWER

Let's talk **SLEEP**

Without knowledge, we make things up

MHCC and two theories

The DSM-IV-TR in 2000

Sample Interventions

#1: Three Good Things

Survey: Three types of

insomnia

Rumination is all-natural, but not helpful



Three Good Things

- Volunteer
- ▶ Seligman's signature technique
 - Before you go to sleep (or right now)
 - ▶ Write down (or think about) three good things that happened during the day (or last 24 hours)
 - ► Then track down in your mind "Why" those things happened
 - Seligman: After a week, you'll want to keep doing it (JSF: Maybe)
 - **▶ Volunteer**?

Natural Reactions to 3 Good Things

- Dumb and superficial
- ► Good vs. bad (vs. meaning)
- Not that good (spoiling thoughts)
- ▶ If we ask people experiencing depression to focus on positive affect, they won't, they can't, and it feels fake – Process here and now





#2: Savoring

• Intentionally linger and grow positive affect when it appears

You can do past, present, future savoring

• All by itself, savoring is an antidepressant. . . . Why?

Intentionality and the Muscle Metaphor

Which arm is bigger? You lean toward being self-critical and negative emotions.

You're good at that. You've practiced that for ?? Years.

My job is to acknowledge and feel the pain with you AND to help you exercise different brain muscles

We practice intentional positivity (BUT NEVER toxic positivity)



The Answers
To: (What's
Wrong with
You?)



- Orients toward what's wrong or what could be wrong and only nibbles on what's right
- Likes to find support for what it already believes
- Pays close attention to what's wrong -- growing it
- Tends to spoil good times with its contrary attitude

This Weekend+

Three-step emotional change trick

Three good things

Savoring

There's always more free stuff at:

Johnsommersflanagan.com





Resources

John.sf@mso.umt.edu

https://www.umt.edu/education/about/s pec-units/cape1.php

https://johnsommersflanagan.com/

https://montanahappinessproject.com/

Positive AFFECT



Bonus: How Anxiety Works

Anxiety is mostly driven by thoughts Ever hear of: Fight or Flight or Freeze?

- Male rats
- What about female rats?
- What about humans?
- Amygdala hijack and brain shutdown?
- Adolescent brains?
- All research says... fear of fear



Becoming Calmer

- 1. Know yourself and your triggers
- 2. Find your calming thing And practice being calmer This can be a cultural or family strength
- 3. Use your calming thing to manage your thoughts about yourself and your anxiety reactions
- 4. When you feel anxious—and you will—Plan for how you WANT to deal with it.
- 5. Your brain may work less well, but with preplanning, you can keep it functioning. Plan.
- 6. Learn from experience and adjust