

THE

NOWWATT

SELF-MAINTENANCE

MANUAL:

How to recognise if you need a service

by Nicola M. Gould



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In loving memory of my sister and nephew,

Paula Jane Fox
(11.1.1964 - 28.6.2016)

&

Jordan Thomas Mclaughlin
(14.7.1991 - 6.10.2016)

Too much, too little, too late



THE NOWWATT SELF-MAINTENANCE MANUAL: How to recognise if you need a service

How would you know if you needed help?

The premise of this book was inspired by Robert M. Pirsig's 1975 classic novel "Zen, and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" - a metaphysical exploration of the nature of Quality. The protagonist is intrigued by his friend and fellow rider's propensity to outsource his motorcycle maintenance, while he himself remains convinced that do-it-yourself is the only way to go. Ultimately, the Motorcycle in the novel is a metaphor for the SELF

When was the last time you asked for help? You are often the last to tune in to what is going on within your mind and your body, as your thoughts and feelings conspire to 'act out' in your behaviours your legitimate repertoire of human needs. Your manifest identity can grossly underrepresent all you are capable of (good or bad) and short-change your opportunities for a full life free of unnecessary drama, self-generated and even intergenerational suffering.

You owe it to your existence to become a self-aware, kind, compassionate, and courageous human being during the brief but magnificent journey through your own unique slice of Space-Time.

Help Seeking is a courageous act in the pursuit of Self-awareness and a healthier, more engaged existence. This book aims to help you, the *rider*, identify where you might need help, using diagrams and metaphor. By developing an awareness of the inherent natural forces operating at a biological, psychological, and social level, it is my hope that you will be better prepared for a therapeutic relationship with a skilled Helper. You might even be inspired to conduct some do-it-your-Self-maintenance before heading off to a qualified mechanic for a full service!

As taught by Behavioural Science and after more than ten years' experience helping as a clinical psychologist, it is my considered opinion that it is only within a healthy relationship that true healing can take place. As a healthy, free, and responsible adult, that primary relationship needs to be with your Self.



Preface



Everything changed the minute I decided to finally see my sister after 20 years' estrangement. It was 25 November 2015, my mother's 73rd birthday, and Paula had phoned her in some distress. My mother declared that she would be meeting her for a coffee. So, for once, I decided that I would not avoid the situation, but show up as I

was, and let the proverbial cookie crumble. Crumble, it did, in ways I could never have imagined.

After our meeting, my sister finally realised that 20 years on I was no threat, and in fact was probably her best source of social support going forward. She asked if we could get reacquainted, and, overjoyed, I said yes! However, she asked me not to tell my mother because she wanted our newfound relationship to be uncontaminated by her opinions. According to Paula, my mother would often disparage me to her and anyone else who would listen. Apparently, I was not a 'good enough' daughter. I asked Paula what I had ever done to warrant her estrangement, and her genuine reply was "I honestly can't remember".

My sister had struggled on-and-off throughout her life with mental health problems. I had always admired her strength of character to stand up to my mother and been jealous of her imaginary friends as a child. She was a loner, instinctively avoidant, and yet kind, loving, and generous of spirit. It was as if two parts of her were at war with each other her whole life, and ultimately her-Self was the casualty of that war. As our new relationship developed, I encouraged her to seek help, which she did, and she was soon in therapy with a local psychologist.

Fast forward to June 2016. Paula perceived that her job with New Zealand Customs was gravely threatened, and quite matter-of-factly chose to deal with the situation on her own, as she had done throughout most of her life. She declared to me that she had been born to the wrong family, at the wrong time, on the wrong planet, and that taking her own life would be her last act of free will. There was no stopping her, and I could not argue with her logic. I wrote to her psychologist with my concerns, after Paula asked me to be her Executor, but it was to no avail. Regardless of my experience as a clinical psychologist, I was a family member and considered by Paula's treating team to be 'unobjective'. While traveling, as

promised, I called Paula from Auckland airport while in transit back to Australia. No answer. When I arrived in Toowoomba, a NZ Policeman called me to tell me that my sister had been found deceased at her home. She was 6-months short of her 50th birthday.

Enraged, I directed my fury at my mother and was promptly estranged and disinherited. Paula's only son, Jordan, was so bereft while struggling with his own issues that he violently ended his 25-year life 3 months later. My husband of 7-months decided that the roller-coaster was all too hard and left me in December 2016. My father passed away unexpectedly in June 2017, and three months later my mother died unexpectedly from lung cancer. The avalanche of change, grief and loss left me chronically traumatised, and rendered me incapable of seeing clients. I referred myself to a psychiatrist and began a long road to recovery. I was unaware at the time, but it was the beginning of the end of a career I thought would see me well into my 70's.

In 2021, 10 years after founding Shine Clinical Psychology and over 1000 clients later, I retired from clinical practice, finally accepting the havoc complex trauma had wrecked on my brain. Holding compassionate space was contaminated by my identification with the suffering of others. I kept seeing "me" on the couch and was repeatedly triggered. Professional boundaries became increasingly difficult to maintain. Compassion fatigue is as real as metal fatigue - dangerous.

The production of this book, which synthesises my professional development, education, and lived experience as both a clinician and a client, is in itself an act of healing and self-compassion. It is my hope that problematic patterns of intergenerational trauma can be healed through the development of self-awareness - psychoeducation and self-disclosure - and achieved through acts of kindness, curiosity, and courage. Suicide need not be your best solution to the pain of living.

Thank you to my husband, Steven Gould, for literally saving my life. Without your presence, kindness and support through these difficult years I doubt I would have survived. Thank you, Paula, for arranging our meeting from your new planet! My heartfelt thanks to my friends, colleagues and Skilled Helpers who have validated and supported my decision to 'change direction'. It is important to practice what you preach. And mostly, to the hundreds of clients I have had the privilege to help over the years - I will never forget your courage, or the contribution you have made to the richness of my life. Namaste.

Nicola M Gould
Toowoomba,
Australia, 2022



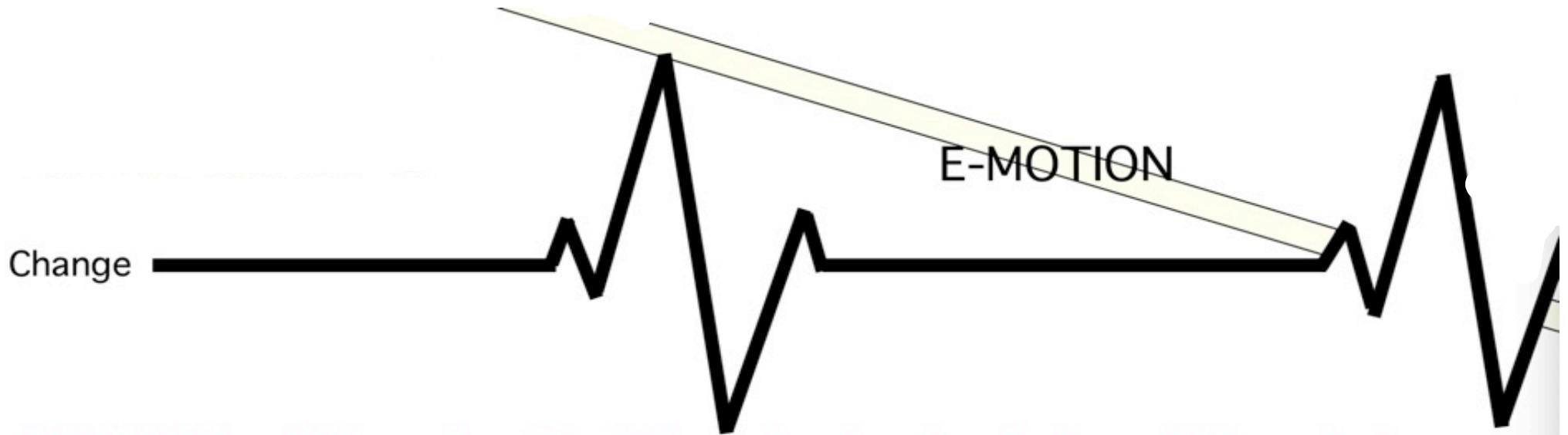
Who is a skilled Helper?

Skilled Helpers come in various forms - psychologists, counsellors, kinesiologists, hypnotherapists, physiotherapists, massage therapists, music- and even art-therapists to name a few. You might have a preconceived idea about what they do, and I encourage you to open your mind.

A skilled Helper ideally ought to have a recognised qualification from an accredited body, preferably at least a master's degree in the field of Human Behavioural Science. Their practice should be informed by the scientific method and be evidence-based. They should not already be colonised by an idea of how one 'ought' to think or feel, nor work from a narrow worldview. Ask your friends and colleagues to recommend a skilled Helper, and then investigate their experience and skills yourself. Your doctor can be considered your primary skilled Helper, who can then refer you in the right direction.

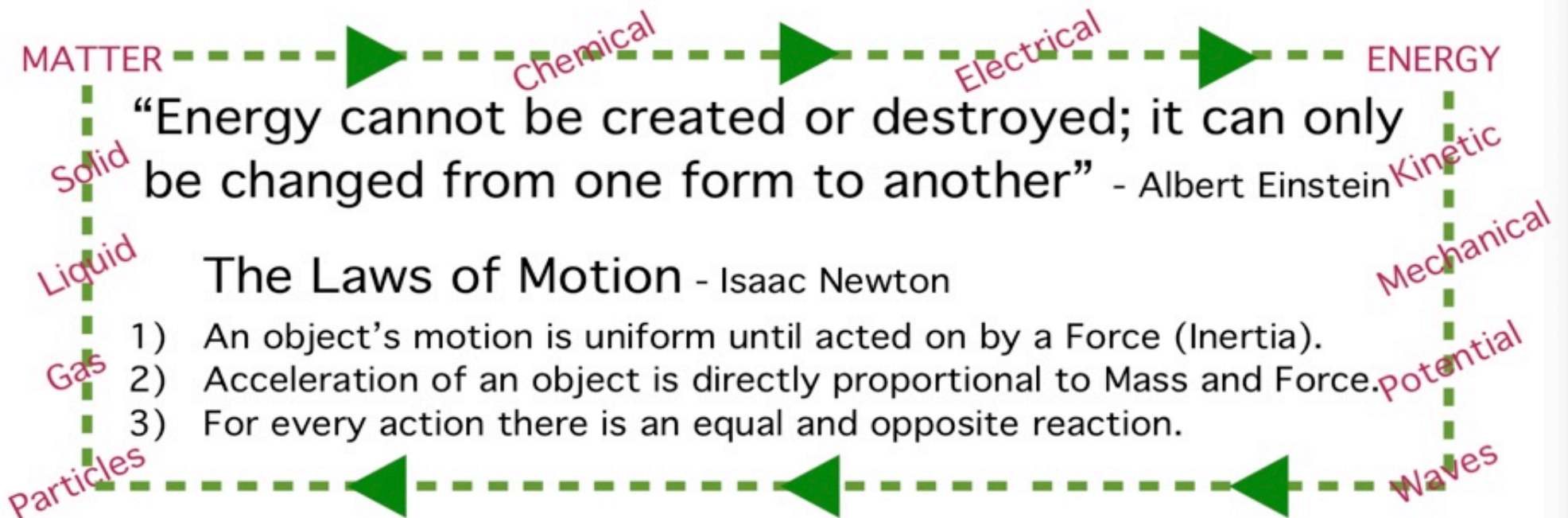
A 'good enough' skilled Helper with the courage to help you explore uncomfortable terrain will help you much more than any so-called 'expert'. However, once you have narrowed down your particular area of concern, you may wish to consult with a specialist, such as a clinical psychologist, psychiatrist, or even a Futurist.

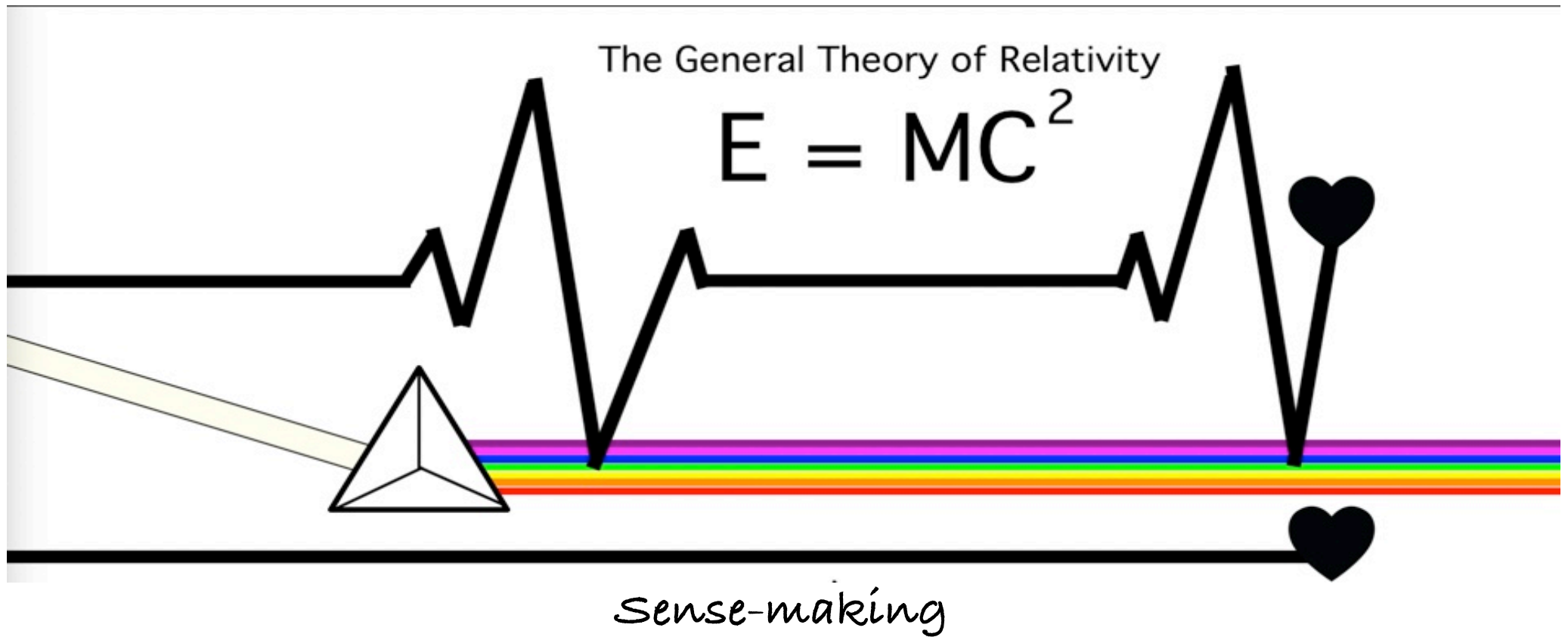




Metaphor: (noun) A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable. A thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else.

No change





I have always been curious about how things work. As a clinical psychologist, I often drew on what I would call 'Natural Laws' to normalise the sometimes-painful realities of human existence. While attending a Conference in San Francisco, in 2017, I met up with the son of Irvin Yalom, Victor. Irvin was one of my all-time psychology heroes. A bit start-struck, I pinched myself as we chatted about the conference. Victor asked me to explain Dr Dan Siegel's idea of "Mindsight". He had heard Dan talk about Quantum Physics and Mindsight in the same sentence and was confused. I humbly suggested that, for example, one could theorise with a small knowledge of Quantum theory that being able to imagine and time travel in mind (i.e., be two placed at once) is like a Quantum Reality at the nuclear level, while at the same time our bodies are hostage to the big gravity of General Relativity. He politely said, "but that's just a metaphor!" Embarrassed in such proximity to my perception of greatness, I took it on the chin.

It got me thinking, however, about the power of metaphor. Borrowing heavily from Eastern Philosophies, Acceptance and Commitment Therapists use metaphor liberally to help clients understand how our innate tendency to avoid pain is the root cause of suffering. I have found that the use of metaphor relating to the Natural or Physical world can be understood by even the most emotionally challenged client. Perhaps metaphor holds the key to emotional literacy. "If I hold up this pencil and drop it, what do you think it will do?" Pretty much everyone can guess the answer to that one. Self-limiting beliefs about capacity and competency melt away when we realise the knowledge that we absorb on a daily basis but may not be able to access. This allows curiosity to emerge and take centre stage, bringing our attention along with it.

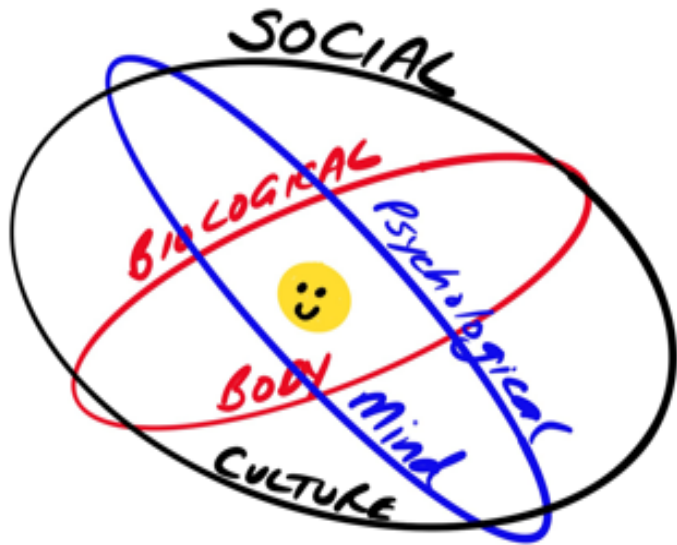


Metaphor

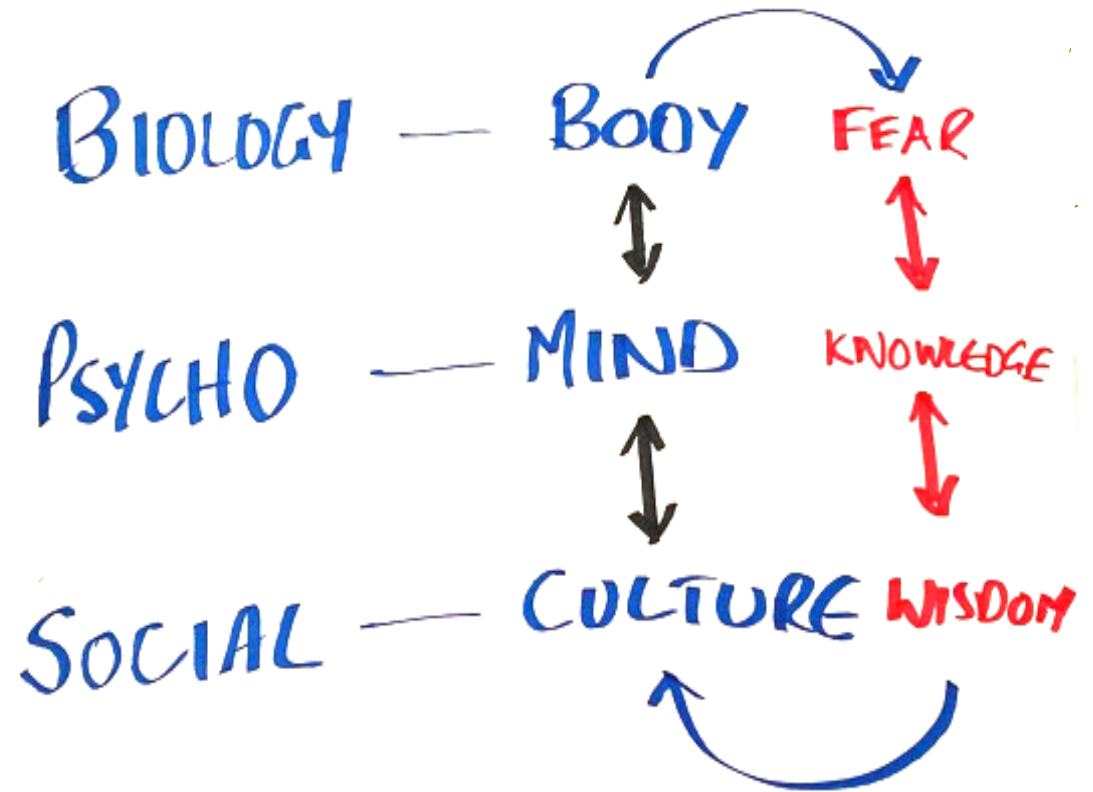
The use of metaphor helps with the process of integrating thinking (mental) and feeling (physical) states in order to make sense of something. The metaphor of a gyroscope aims to share that we have the ability, within ourselves, to register when something 'is not right'. One or more of the spheres, if not harmoniously balanced, aligned, or attuned with the other, will clash, resulting in either or both an uncomfortable sensation, and what psychologists' term 'cognitive dissonance'. Much of your life can be spent in

the pursuit of (consciously or unconsciously) removing or avoiding this discomfort, perpetuating addictive and/or dysfunctional behaviour. With kindness, curiosity, and courage, Helping is aimed at converting fear into knowledge, and knowledge into wisdom: the ability to mindfully discern what is within your capacity to control or give power to, and what is not. What is mainly riding your bike - your body, your mind, or your culture? What CAN you control?

GYROSCOPE



Balanced Attuned Aligned



In tension with tension? Meet your chain

Given the propensity for people to avoid 'bad' feelings and situations, it's no wonder that stress, anxiety, and depression are virtually endemic in our modern society. We seem to have lost the ability to hold healthy tension, and in that process are missing the point of living - to feel and experience, marvel and wonder, appreciate and love. We need to get better at identifying the tension in our lives, and fine tune it - rather than trying to get rid of it.

Do you have too much tension? Not enough tension is just as bad! Are you a captive of your feelings or a hostage to your thoughts? Can you even tell the difference between a thought and a feeling? Have you ever taken time to sit in your body and appreciate all it is trying to get done moment to moment? The power resulting from tension in a bike is distributed by the chain - without a chain connecting forces together, a bike won't be going anywhere. Keep it well-oiled and not too tight or too loose and you'll find it will go a long way.

Translating this metaphor to your Self, a chain is any form of connection linking two parts together. The pathways between your body and your brain could be considered a system of 'chains' using this metaphor. Sometimes, if your chain has been neglected, it might feel shameful to ask for help to adjust and oil it, which makes asking for help an act of courage. You may observe the quality of your chain in the relationship between your attitudes and your behaviour. For example: Rules are the 'what' to do in a particular situation. Rules help increase the amount of order in a system, to increase safety and security. Values are the 'how' to live your life. Values help navigate chaos in any situation. Too many rules, and you'll never be able to explore. No sense of your values, and you won't be able to navigate properly out in the big wide world.

If your behaviour is congruent with your values, and you are mindful of your context in any given moment, you will likely have a well-lubricated and appropriately tensioned chain. If you overly attach to your values, becoming rigid about their application, your chain is too tight, and you will overly focus

on obeying your internal rules. Your chain might break. If your behaviour is devoid of your values, your chain may be considered too loose, and you won't give enough consideration to internal OR external rules. Your chain could simply fall off! A human without proper tension will not function at all well. They may even lose the plot!

GRIDLOCK = STOP
Too Much or "Hitting the brakes"
Not enough TENSION
"GO Foot on the gas!"



"Prisoner"
stuck
trapped

BIOLOGY/BODY
"CAPTIVE"

Psycho/Self

"Warden"

"CAPTOR"

Social/Culture

Colonised by
belief & theory

TENSION →
IS ESSENTIAL

Gridlock!

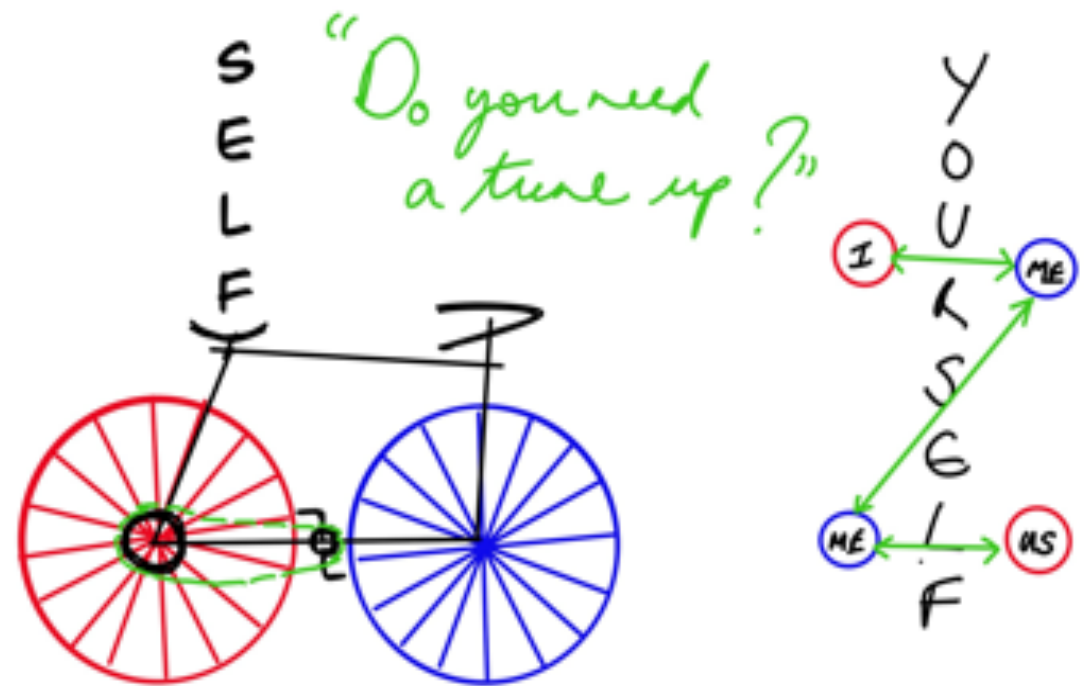


Let's assume your bike has a chain, and it is connecting your Self: *the rider* (your psychological identity) with your Physical Body, (the bike) which has two wheels: Control (direction) and Power (energy).

Let's assume your chain is functional.

QUALITY: REALISE IT

- Is your tension within yourself, or between yourself and another?
- Do your relationships breakdown and misunderstandings follow you everywhere?
- Do you feel confused about what is expected of you or are your expectations of yourself unrealistic?
- Do you understand personal boundaries of others or are you neglecting your own?
- Are you misfiring and poorly tuned in to what is happening in your environment, or not able to make sense of your own emotions?
- Do you feel or act like a child sometimes, or like a demanding parent?
- Do you need a tune-up?

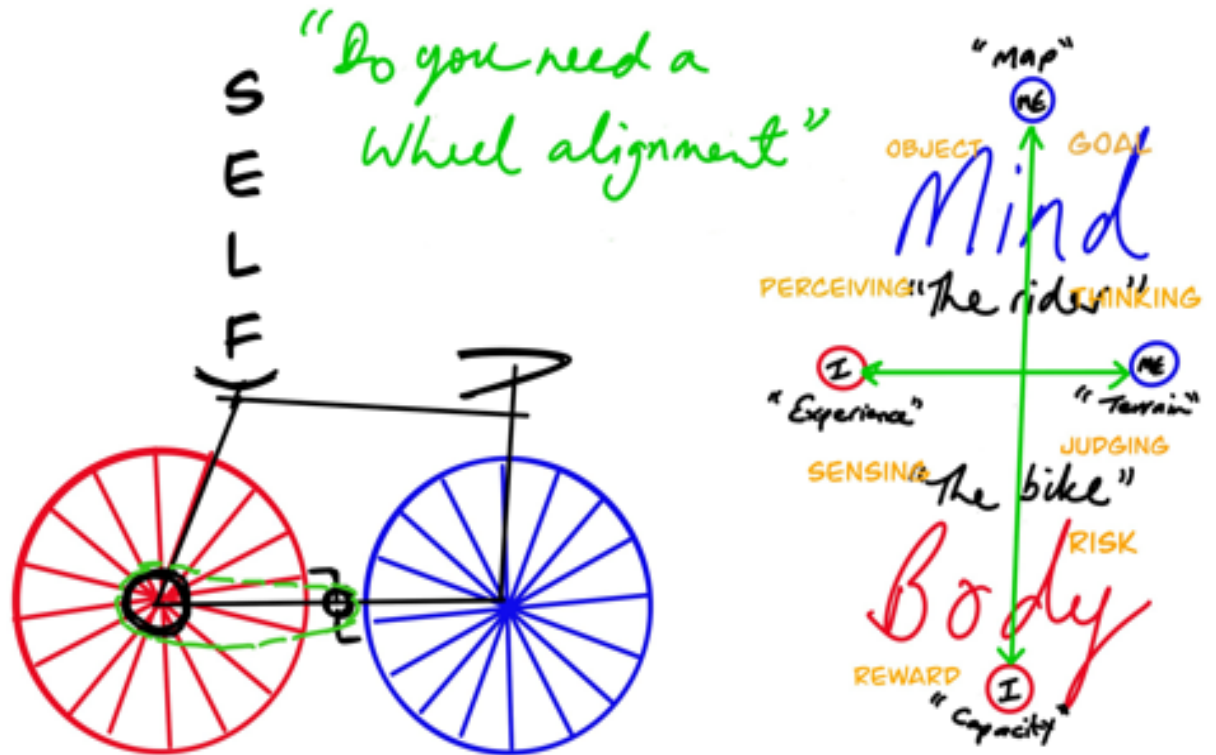


--- HOW IS YOUR TENSION? ---

PLACE:

NAME IT

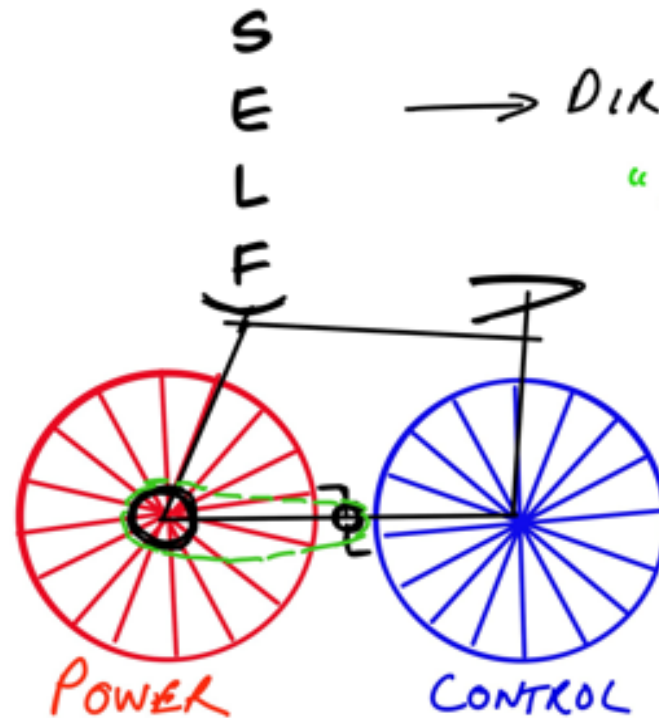
- Do you have racing thoughts, paranoia, intrusive images or is your mind completely blank?
- Are you unable to stop work or slow down even though you are exhausted?
- Are you pushed by uncontrollable urges to clean, move, or look after others?
- Do you suffer from chronic headaches, pain, nausea, shakiness, sweating, tearfulness, yelling, or stone-wall silences?
- Are you unable to remember, dissociative, confused, and lonely?
- Is your tension in your mind or your body?
- Do you need a wheel-alignment?



— — — WHERE IS YOUR TENSION — — —

CONTENT: DESCRIBE IT

- Is your tension between where you are now and where you want to go?
- Do you feel stuck, unable to move, petrified by change? Are you always annoyed, frustrated, short tempered and unsatisfied?
- Do you have difficulty controlling your aggression, and find yourself breaking rules?
- Are you in complete control or do you feel powerless?
- Do you feel deflated or elated?
- Do you need a puncture repair?

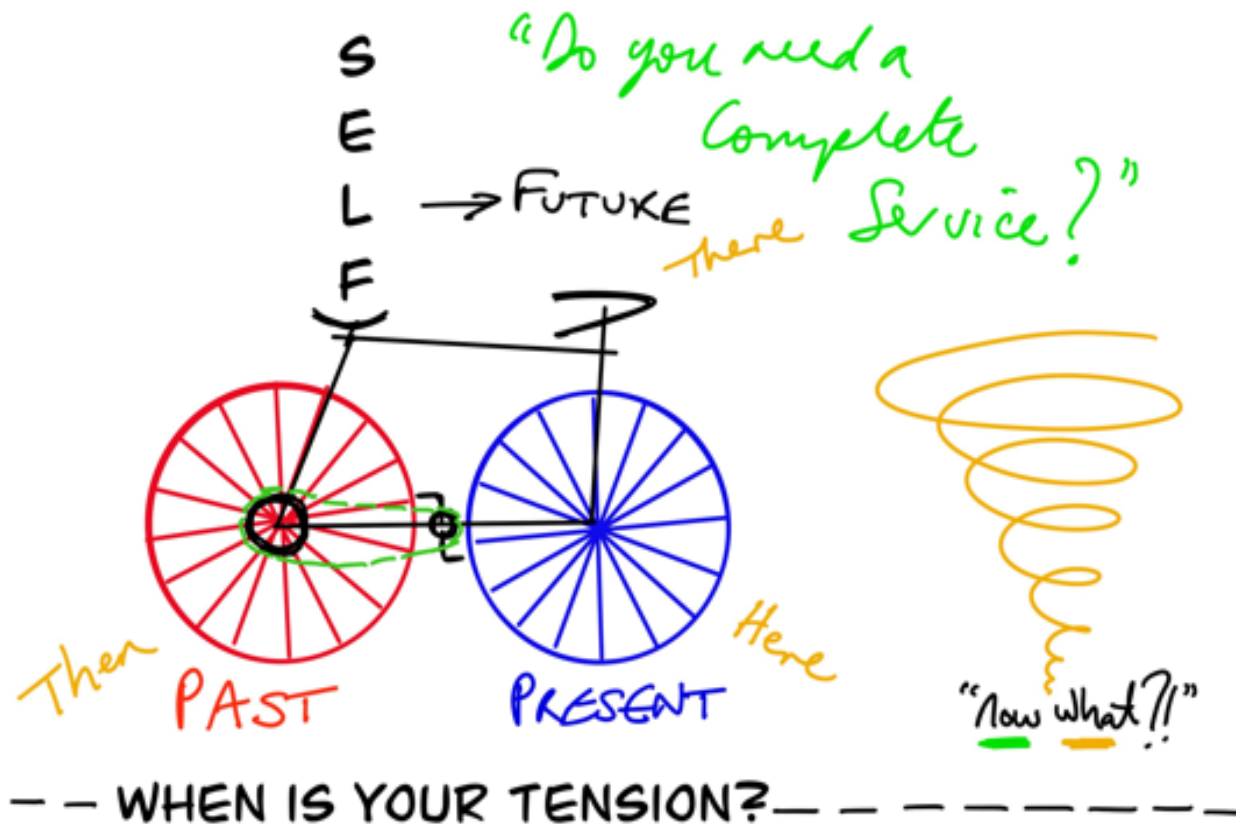


-----WHAT IS YOUR TENSION?-----

CONTEXT: SITUATE IT

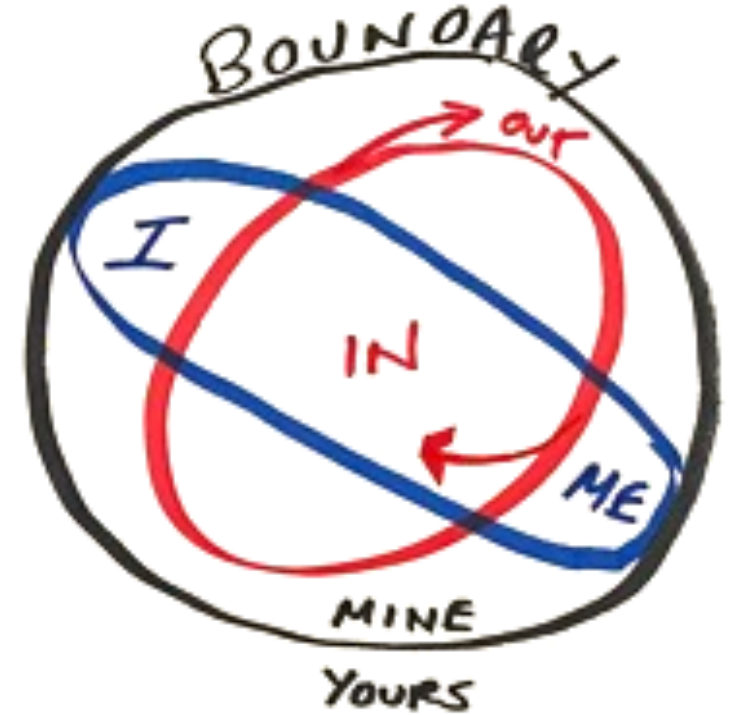
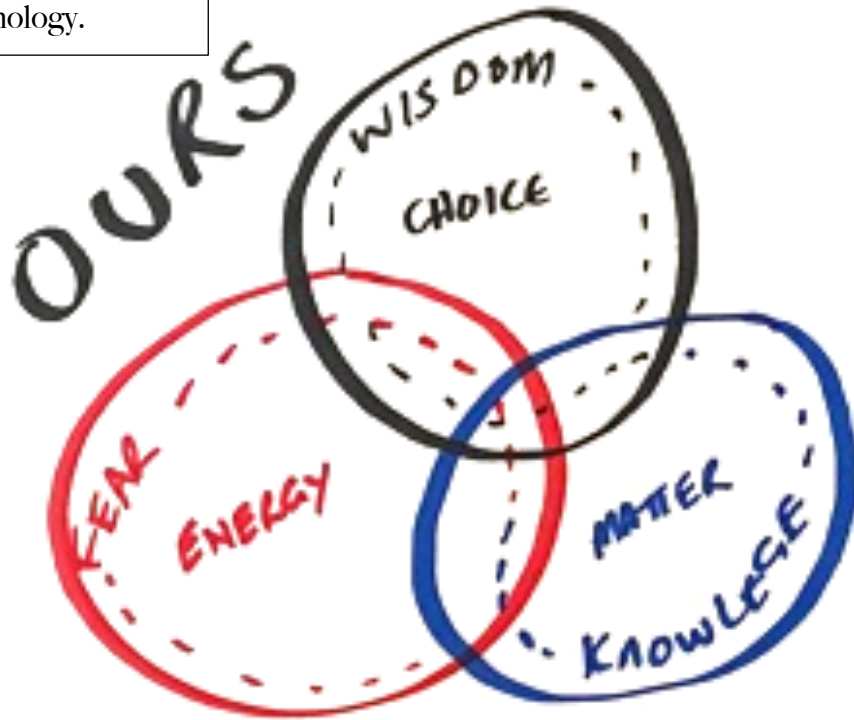
- Do you feel like you are going crazy?
- Can you no longer trust your judgement or anyone else's?
- Do you have nightmares and flashbacks of horrible experiences?
- Do you feel a sense of meaninglessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, and powerlessness?
- Do you have tension in your mind, body, and soul?

If you answer yes to most of these questions, then you definitely need to seek out a skilled Helper for a complete service before your chain falls off!!



INTEGRATION ...

A good place to start looking for a Helper is one skilled in the practice of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, with a solid foundational knowledge of neuroscience and developmental psychology.



NOWWATT

BIO - PSYCHO - SOCIAL



NOWWATT

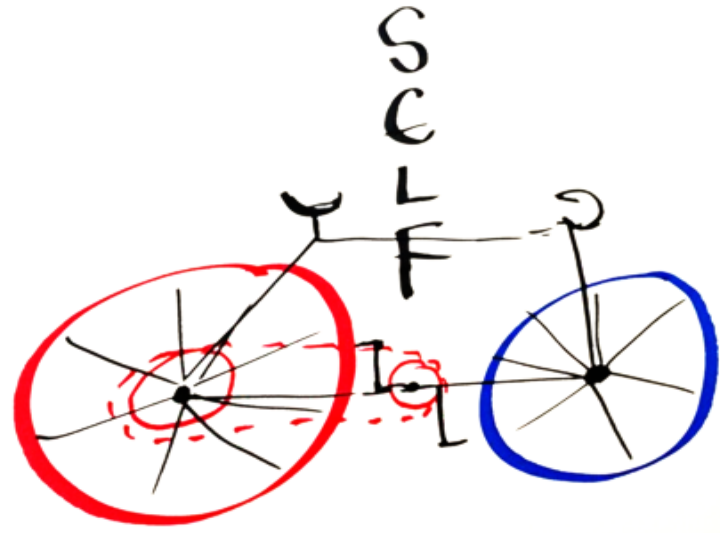
Rather than fixating on “now what?”, NowWatt refers to how much energy (watts) you have now (this moment in time) given the context you are in (your physical and cultural environment). It validates how you DO feel - the first step in self-compassion. As you can see, it is not a simple case of ‘there’s something wrong with me’ and then setting out to ‘fix it’. The ‘Me’ you think you might be is a product of tension in your biological, psychological OR social system. Sometimes it takes a skilled Helper for you to figure that out, and then together, you can develop a set of strategies to regain, or develop, a healthy sense of Self and functional ability.

When you share your experiences with a skilled Helper, through empathic listening and a developing understanding of your ‘big picture’ – it’s as if a bridge to a second brain is created. This allows for a bit of extra wattage - some power - to find you - maybe even enough power to get your physical self - your bike - moving again. Of course, you still have to ride your own bike and conduct your own chain and wheel maintenance! You can’t stay hooked up to the Helper’s brain forever!

The idea that ‘there is something wrong with me’ can also feel extremely isolating, and trigger existential anxiety (e.g., the physical feeling stemming from basic realities that a) we are all alone, b) there is no inherent meaning, c) death is inevitable, and d) freedom is not free). This type of anxiety is not something we can ever truly rid ourselves of. Some of us never register it at all due to a busy lifestyle or well-developed comfort zones. We can choose to put the ‘wattage’ or energy (no matter how uncomfortable) that is derived from existential anxiety towards something meaningful - like writing this book! What is defined as **NORMAL** is always dependent on the context in which it is measured. Sometimes we can lose sight of context, and again, a skilled Helper can make all the difference in helping you gain a healthy perspective and reset your inner ‘gyroscope’ via healthy integrated thinking and feeling. Sometimes we just need a bit of reassurance that our experiences are more common than they feel or be helped to appreciate that what we have experienced is quite remarkable. Skilled Helpers are qualified to make these judgements.

We grow from babies to children, and children to adolescents. Not all of us make it to adulthood. We emerge into adulthood after a long process called Differentiation: from being dependent to independent. To function with healthy autonomy, adults need to achieve a state of Integration. From there, healthy interdependent societies can develop. As a society then, health would be improved if we all had a basic appreciation of the human condition. As a fully-fledged member of society, you can help the world by appreciating how nature and nurture interacted to result in YOU.....your SELF. Then, you can appreciate more fully other Selves and how they might be thinking and feeling.... called empathy.....the cornerstone of healthy relationships.

If your question really is “now what?” you can use Foresight as a method for identifying your ‘futures’ in the present moment. Your Skilled Helper will be called a Futurist. They usually work with organisations rather than individuals, however the methodology they use is very similar to CBT. Think of a Futurist as a Pro-Biotic: good for you gut brain as well as your head brain, because they will help you investigate your Story about the past before to help you figure out the Now Wattage for your “now what?” future.



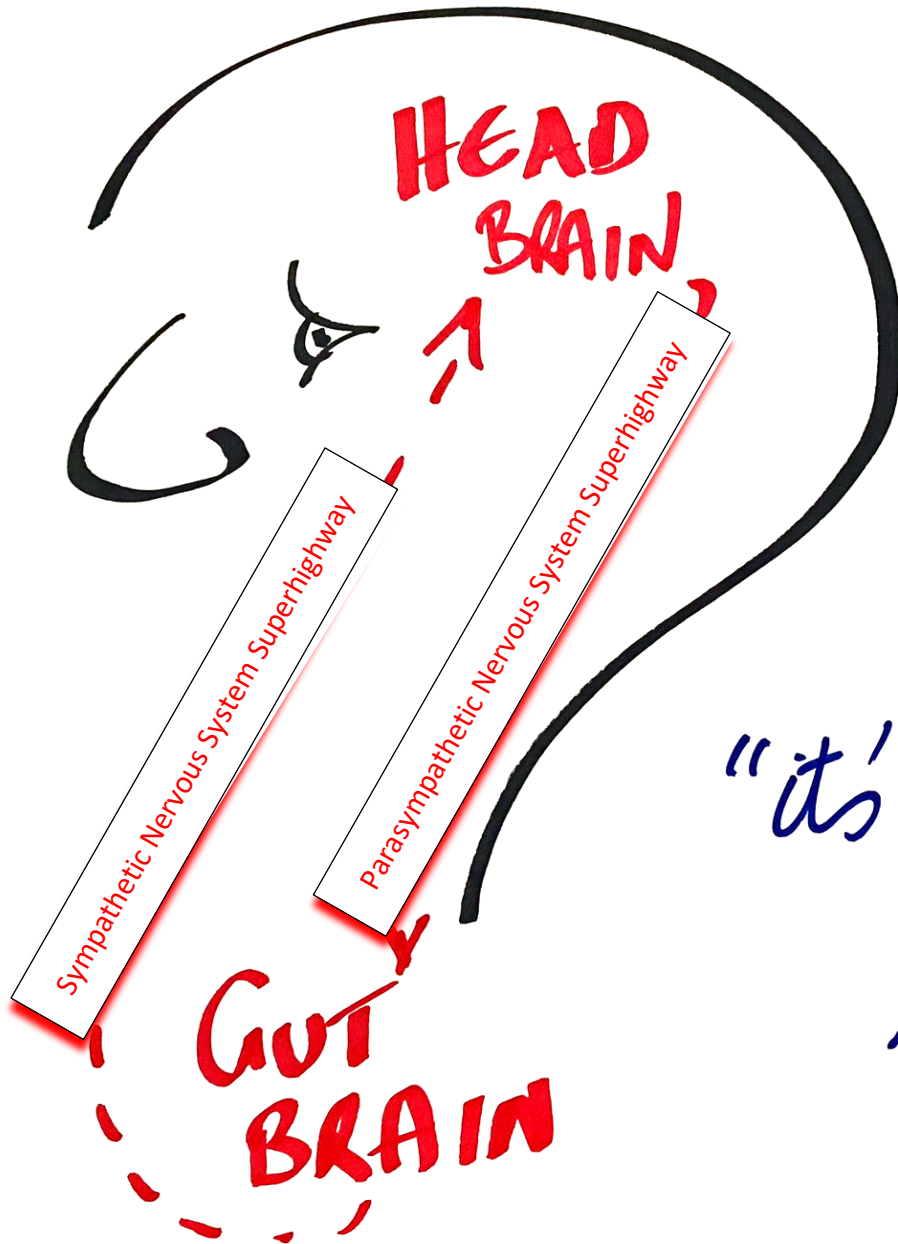
HOW? WHERE? WHO? WHY? WHAT?
SO

.....**EXACTLY**.....

NO...W...W...A...T...T...
-----**ARE**-----

YOU?





YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.

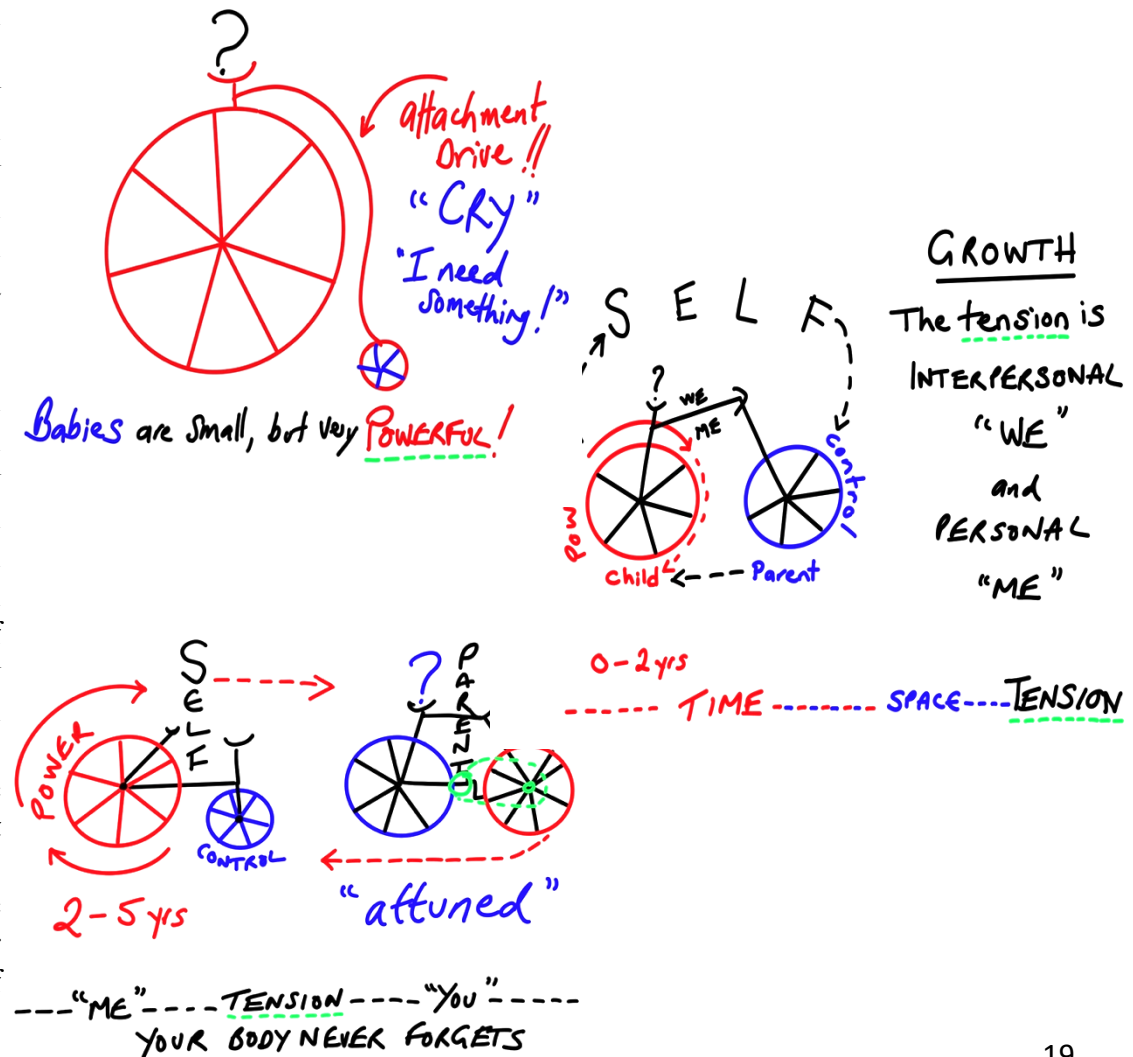
"it's a two-way
Street!!"

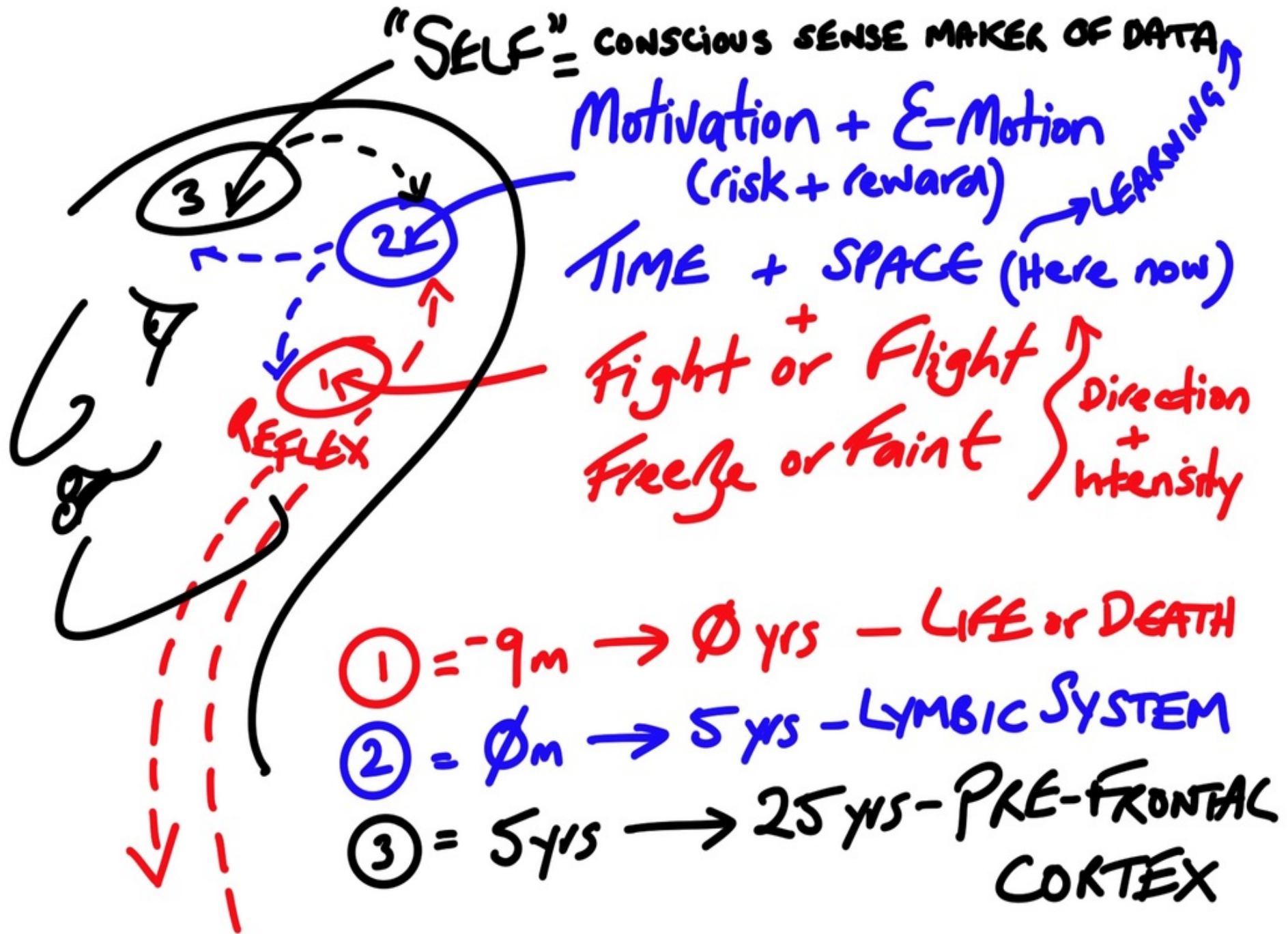
In the beginning,

You literally have two brains.....one in your gut, and one in your head. There are two neural super-highways connecting them together: your Sympathetic Nervous System (to up-regulate - 'fight or flight') and Parasympathetic Nervous Systems (to down-regulate - 'rest or digest'). The traffic (chemical and electrical signals) on these highways can get very busy and travel in both directions. If you are up for a deeper dive into your neurological system, I highly recommend "Overloaded: how every aspect of your life is influenced by your brain" by Ginny Smith, 2021. At birth you are completely helpless and unable to fend for yourself, so your Head Brain's command centre is entirely at the emotional level, connecting directly and working with your Gut Brain to ensure your most effective and rapid chance for survival. When either brain senses something is new (regardless of whether it is good or bad), it sends a signal up and down the pathways to generate messages to the world: noises, contorting facial muscles, or even crying to let someone bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind know so they can get busy sorting out what you need and figure out how to get it to you ASAP! Through this interaction your brain wires up to learn that "I am good enough", "the world is basically trustworthy and will show up for me", and that "I can make my needs known with reasonable success". Thus begins the development of an Internal System which, when working effectively, ensures your capacity for self-determination and autonomy. You must feel Safe, Connected, and have some degree of Control to be OK. By the way, comfort eating has its roots in these early experiences, with food being associated (or classically conditioned) with proximity to loving protectors.

Your primary relationships are key to your development, but they are not the entire picture. Your genetic make-up interacts with your environment (which includes your culture) to produce your unique Self. Biological, psychological, and social factors all work together, as in the gyroscope metaphor, to keep you balanced, aligned, and attuned. If you have genetic or biological variations from "normal", this will influence the development of

your psychological Self, which will in turn influence the development of your social antenna. Conversely, if your social world is "abnormal", your psychological and physical development will be influenced regardless of how "normal" your genes were. When a psychologist says, "tell me about your childhood", they are not asking a stupid question! Have you ever had a gut feeling? Do you trust it or stay open for more information? Our genes plus early experiences predispose us to patterns of behaviour: this is called temperament, or a personality.





Meet your head brain!!!

There are three main parts of your Head Brain to be aware of. As a baby and small child your brain is developing incredibly rapidly. As such, experiences that occur at a young age can have a profound effect on the wiring of your brain, which in turn can go on to affect how you process information as an adult. Referring to the previous diagram:

- 1) Your reptilian brain. This part of your brain is completely wired up before you are born, and if it isn't fully wired up and functional at birth, you will die without assistance. This part of your brain is lightning fast and super old. For example, it contains information about things such as spiders and snakes, triggering your reflexes to JUMP when small crawling objects invade your peripheral vision! This is the part of your brain that keeps you physically alive and you cannot exist without it. After all, a psychological Self needs a body to live in! Do you know your birth story?
- 2) Your Limbic System - otherwise known as your emotional brain. This part of your brain is like an accelerator. It is not quite as fast as the reptile brain, but it remembers and learns, appreciating and balancing the equation of risk and reward, pleasure and pain. All that lovely wattage, or energy, that you are deriving from connections with your environment (your parents, food, any sensory information) is wiring up your Head-Gut neural superhighway to either be a person who approaches, avoids or surrenders to novelty when it arises. Of course, positive nurturing experiences affect the extent of this pattern developing - but no-one is perfect nor escapes the legitimate disappointments of childhood. As a small child, this part of your brain is running the show, in which case it is important to have parents with reasonably well-connected brains and good executive functioning to help you understand rules and boundaries that exist in society to maintain order. Were your parents on the same page?

- 3) Your Neo-Cortex. This part of your brain takes care of executive functions and contains your identified Self. It is new and slow compared to the other parts. Children generally don't start formal schooling until around 5 years of age to allow for this part of the brain to wire up enough to inhibit impulses, so you can sit down and learn. The Neo-Cortex continues to wire up in line with your life experiences until you are about 25 years old. This part of your brain acts like a brake. Your Gut Brain might want to eat all the lollies in the supermarket, but your Neo-Cortex sends a message to the Limbic System that it might not be a very good idea and so you don't. If this pattern happens often enough, it becomes a habit. If you injure your Neo-Cortex, you will likely become disinhibited or notice personality changes. Do you take responsibility for stuff that doesn't belong to you?

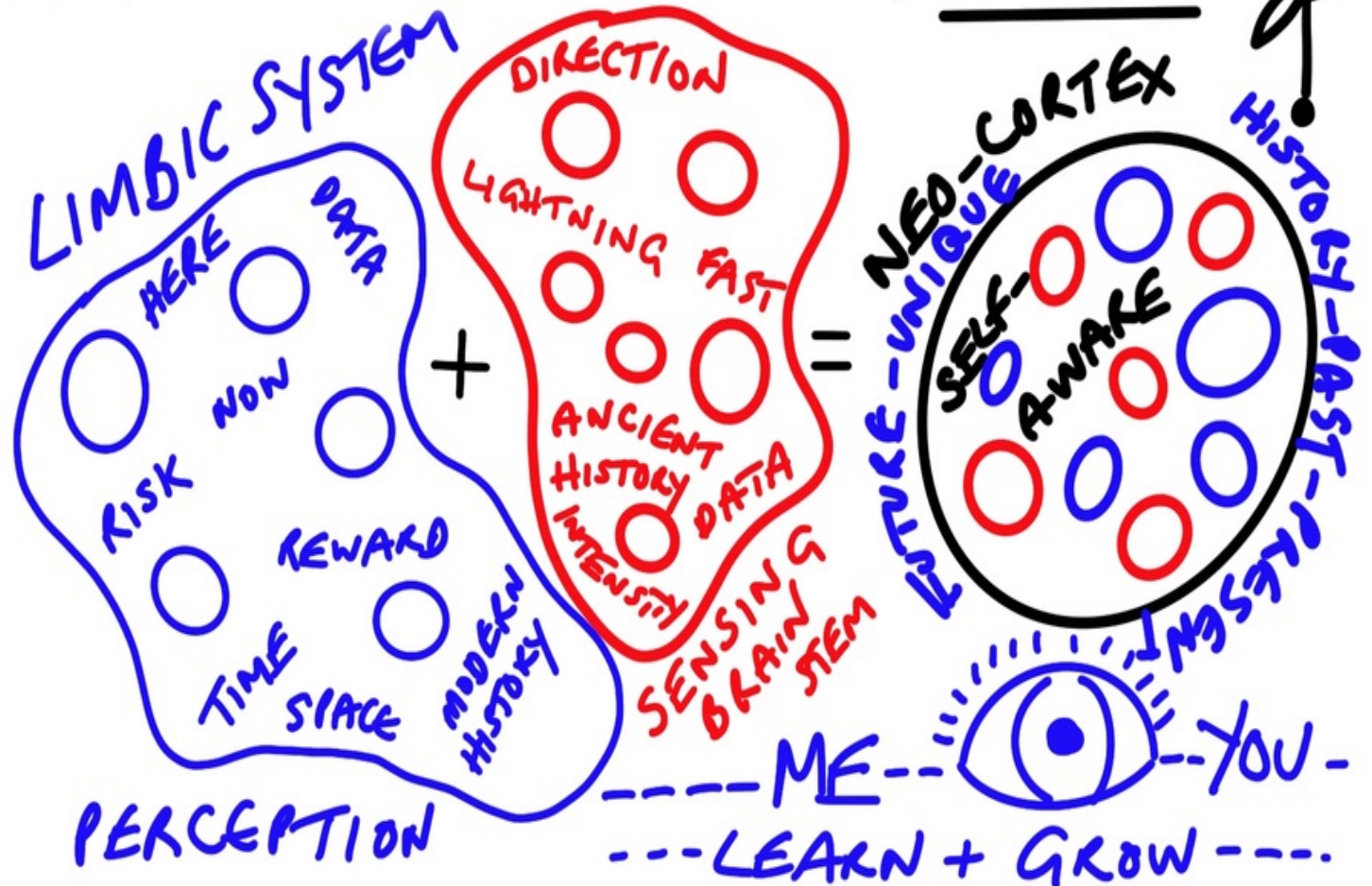
The connections between these three regions of your brain are profoundly important. The more elegantly and efficiently they are wired together, the better you will function under stress or duress. Normally the 'accelerator' and 'brake' work together unconsciously, however when you experience chronic stress, your Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Nervous System can become out of sync. They are supposed to come on together to maintain equilibrium, but sometimes your Fight or Flight (Sympathetic) stays on, or wears out, causing our Freeze & Faint (Parasympathetic) to overshoot and shut down your ability to think and feel. When triggered, your emotions can transport you back in time to when we WERE defenceless and vulnerable. It is very helpful to be able to recognise, as an adult, when your Limbic System is riding your bike. You might notice yourself over- or under-reacting relative to others in a similar situation. When the neural networks between your limbic system and your neo-cortex become impaired, you are in serious trouble. A trip to a skilled Helper is most warranted at this time.



DIFFERENTIATION + INTEGRATION needs to happen in your brain before

you become an ADULT

Your brain needs age-appropriate stimulation: too much attention and it will suffer - not enough and it will fail to thrive. Most importantly, your brain needs another brain around to wire up properly! The best kind of stimulation for a baby brain is a human face, with a loving, interested and expressive gaze. Adults often socially withdraw when feeling depressed, which is ironically exactly the opposite of what your brain needs. Similarly, anxiety often leads to overstimulating behaviour, rather than healthy time-out.



Content versus Process - do you know the difference?

When engaging with a Skilled Helper, there are two things going on in the interaction. Firstly, the Helper is listening to **WHAT** you are saying: the Content, or the Story, for example, the who, what, and when details you care to share. Secondly, the Helper is listening to **HOW** you are saying it: the Process, which infers your RELATIONSHIP TO the Story. For example, they will observe the tone, speed, and volume of your voice, how much or little you have to say, and especially your body language. Your body is basically the keeper of the truth of what you have experienced, however your mind is able to sanitise and alter this reality to help protect you! Psychodynamically-trained Helpers refer to this process as your Ego Defence Mechanisms. Resistance, or the urge **NOT** to do something, is a natural phenomenon to opening up about Stories or feelings that are difficult. Your Helper is trained to recognise resistance and work with it.

Your Helper should be able to become involved in your Story, without becoming overly attached to it. They will share their observations with you, with permission, which can sometimes feel very uncomfortable, or, very exciting depending on your attitude towards exploring your **SELF**. These interactions build trust and develop a working alliance between you. If you engage with a Helper for long enough, you hopefully learn to use mindful awareness and self-reflection to catch yourself attaching to narratives or using strong justifications to validate or remove preferred feeling states.

You can develop 'blind spots' due to the very self-protective nature of your brain's wiring. Furthermore, you may not have enough distance from, or have lived long enough, to be able to see the patterns in your own behaviour. The nature of the Process remains hidden in your subconscious.

You are conscious of only about 5% of your brain activity, while the remaining 95% is engaged with the serious task of sorting out the myriad of sensory and perceptual data available to it (e.g., taste, touch, smell, sight, sound, orientation along with automatic judgements - direction, speed, intensity etc). Learning involves the integration and storage of individual pieces of Content into a seamless stream of unconscious Process. Imagine if you had to remember how to walk or speak every day!

Thank goodness for automation, however this very process can lead to some very unhelpful patterns of behaviour being entrenched at a very early age. Complications, when the "What" to be stored is a major traumatic event, can make the storage and integration process difficult, predisposing syndromes associated with complex trauma - such as anxiety, stress, and depression. The job of your skilled Helper is to basically help reveal your unconscious motivations and legitimate needs and make them conscious to you.

When you experience a **REALISATION**, this powerful experience is enough, in itself, to re-set your gyroscope. It doesn't even need to be a conscious realisation. Your head and gut brains will update the database automatically unconsciously, if not interfered with by an effort to control the process of realising. Your gyroscope can then engage in healthy choice making and update your Internal System about your current age and abilities. Sometimes, given the right conditions, your gut and head brains assume you are 3 years old again, rendering you either speechless or throwing a tantrum! Distress about your distress is like adding fuel to a fire.



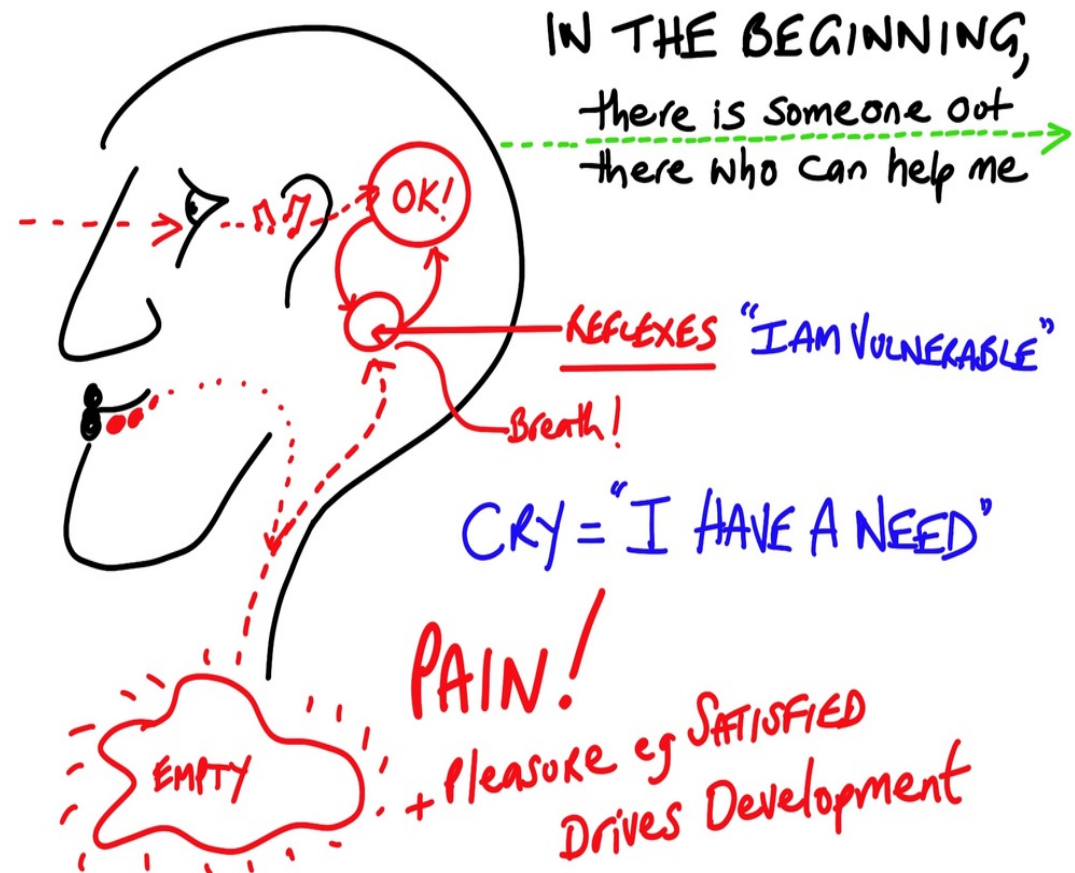
The Attachment Drive

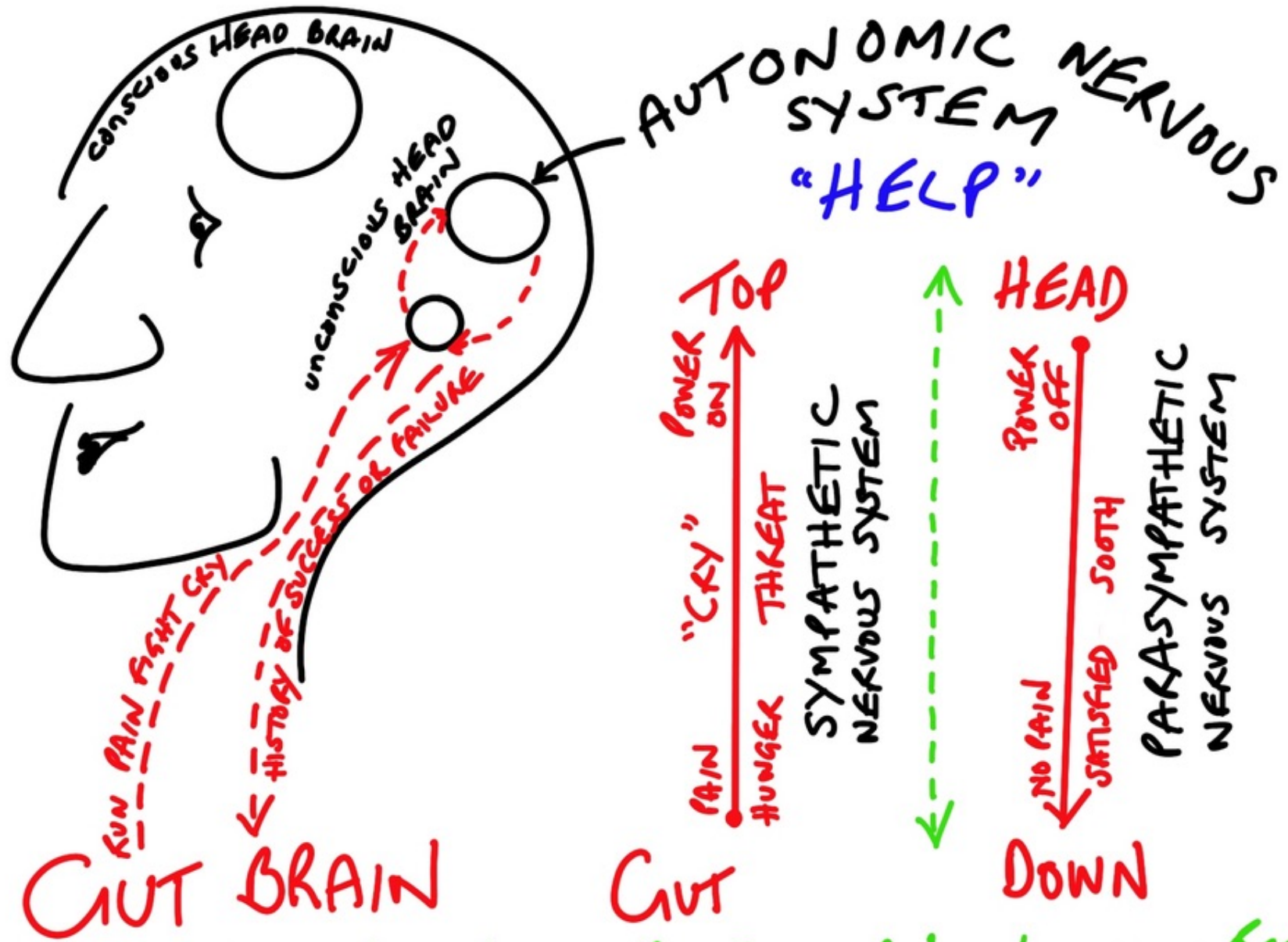
We are wired at birth to bond with someone else to take care of our needs

Somewhere between your 2nd and 3rd birthday, your consciously identified “Self” came online. Up until that point, your sensory system was wiring up your brain according to how the world met your legitimate, yet uncontrollable needs. Others, usually your parents, had control over when and how you were fed, clothed, comforted, and protected. It is natural, because no-one is perfect, for you to have experienced such extreme disappointments as a baby, that your nervous system has encoded disappointment as a threshold feeling state in your body. It remains in your body, ready to be triggered by something completely innocuous many years later. At the basic level you are literally driven by the Pain-Pleasure Principal. This states that if something feels good, you desire or want more of it, and if it feels bad, you want to stop or get rid of it as soon as possible. As your Neo-Cortex wires up, you develop Willpower (the ability to delay gratification and move away) and Empower (the ability to seek gratification and move towards).

As you age, however, your Head Brain starts to encode your history and make sense of the patterns. If you are constantly left wanting for more, you might expect less. Conversely, if you get plenty, you might explode at the merest hint of scarcity. Your brain can also develop a preference for organising information such as by systematic classification or by vibration and frequency (hence humans all end up on some kind of “spectrum”). Your Head Brain and your Gut Brain communicate with each other along neural super-highways sending messages to each other about needs. An absence of something you need is registered the same way as the presence of something painful! You are largely oblivious of this happening. It is automatic. Your Gut Brain will send a signal upstairs to say it has a need, and your Head Brain will quickly scan the database of experiences to determine how likely that is to be met. It takes a while for you to wake up to the fact that you can express these needs and ask for things, with intent. Language

acquisition appears to happen automatically, but few parents take the time to improve emotional literacy or help put into words what all those pesky feelings in your body mean. It's a wonder any of us survive but in fact, what this shows is that you are incredibly resilient by nature, able to go long distances without food, and endure quite a bit more pain than you think you can. Pain is an interesting idea. It is RELATIVE. There is no such thing as a quantifiable amount of pain that can be registered by a range of people the same way. Pain is perceived according to your experiences, and the way your environment responded to you when you were in pain at some time in the past. Pain management is something a Skilled Helper can help you with, and studies have shown that 30% of the intensity of pain can be regulated by skills learned in therapy.





physical pain, and unmet needs use the same networks in your BRAIN!

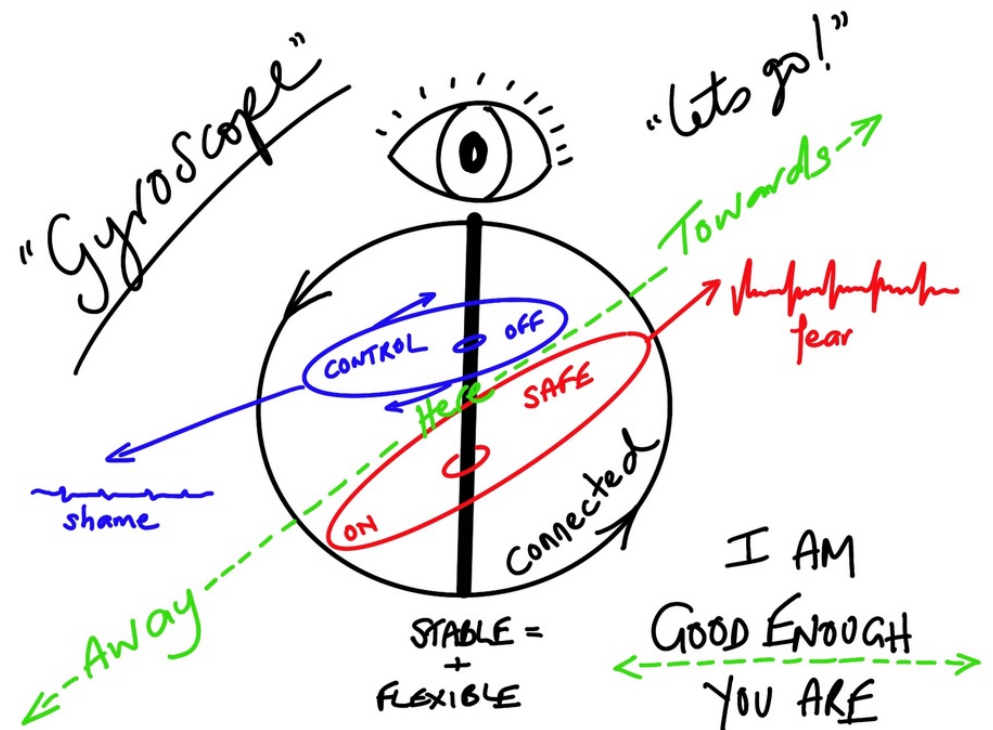
Moving + Connecting = Functional

The Attachment Drive ensures your survival and bonding with your caregivers. It is the foundation of Trust. If you have trust, you have the basis of security (connection), and from there you can explore your world (move). By seeking a relationship with a Skilled Helper, you might even be able to rewire pathways in your brain (and subsequent patterns of behaviour) created by problematic attachment relationships.

If you stop eating, your body will run out of energy and stop moving eventually. Your mind needs energy too and connecting with other people is the best way to get it (pets and places can also be energising). Movement and connection need to be carefully balanced in a functional system. If the tension is balanced, you can move and connect, creating a self-reinforcing system called "Me". Using the bike metaphor, not enough movement and you will fall over. Too much movement and you lose control. Too much connection and you're stuck. Not enough connection and you can't get going. If the energy or power that has been absorbed can't be used in movement, it is stored as potential energy. If all that potential energy can't be shared or put towards a goal, it will gather mass and start attracting MORE energy (sometimes even in the form of food to feel better - double edged sword!). A metaphor of a Black Hole might help you appreciate this process. It sucks everything in, and you can't see over the event-horizon! Don't ignore the warning signs. You would need to recognise the pattern and find some energy to blast yourself in a different direction! As mentioned, connecting with a Skilled Helper might just give your power supplies enough energy to change. Energy stored on your body is called FAT (extra weight), whereas too much emotion stored in your nervous system creates a DEPRESSION (also feels heavy and weighed down). If it gets too big, that energy can even cause self-destruction, even self-annihilation, just as fatty clogged arteries will eventually kill you. Your physical health is fundamental to your mental health. Thus, if you do nothing more than focus on improving the quality of your diet, your level of exercise, and the quality of your sleep, you will have done a good job of DIY Self-Maintenance.

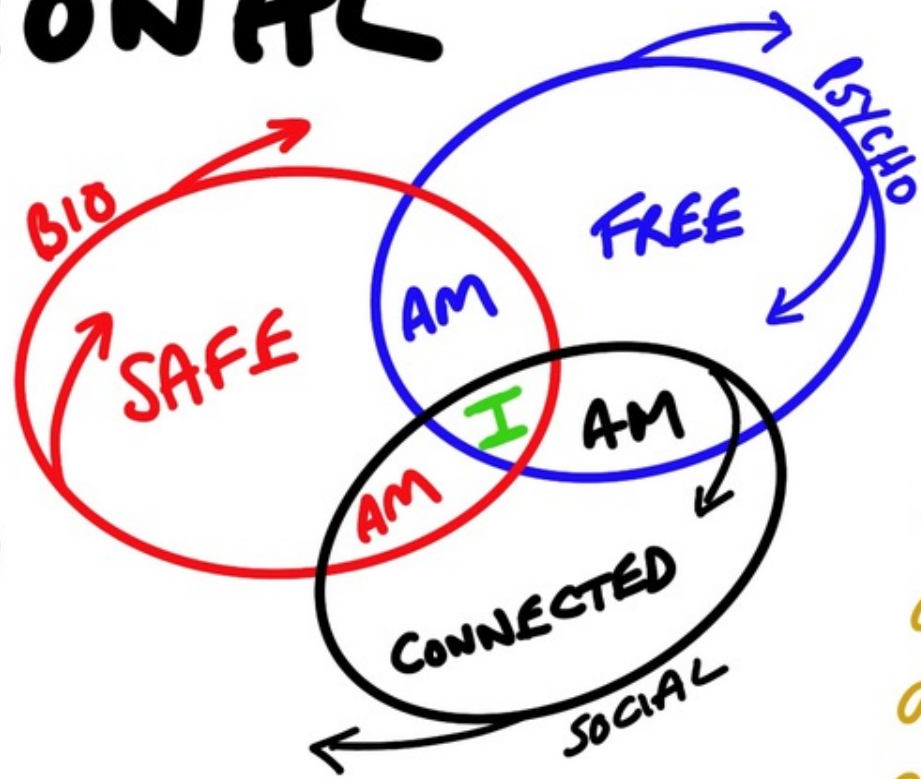
Without AWARENESS, (the 5% of your conscious brain), all that moving and connection can't be organised in a coherent way by your head and gut brain.

The Eye represents the purest form of awareness that results from your Being, or Spirit. This part is often referred to as "The Observer Self". It has no judgement and no opinion: it just IS. When you choose to connect to this part of your SELF you can assist your gyroscope to re-align. It is not possible to remain connected to the Observer Self for long. Self-maintenance requires a commitment to return to this orienting point repeatedly. Then, by practicing Attention, Acceptance, Appreciation, Affection, and Allowing, you will have a good chance of gaining contact with and remaining your Adult Self. (David Richo, 2002).



FUNCTIONAL

I = Moving + Connecting
"ATTUNED"

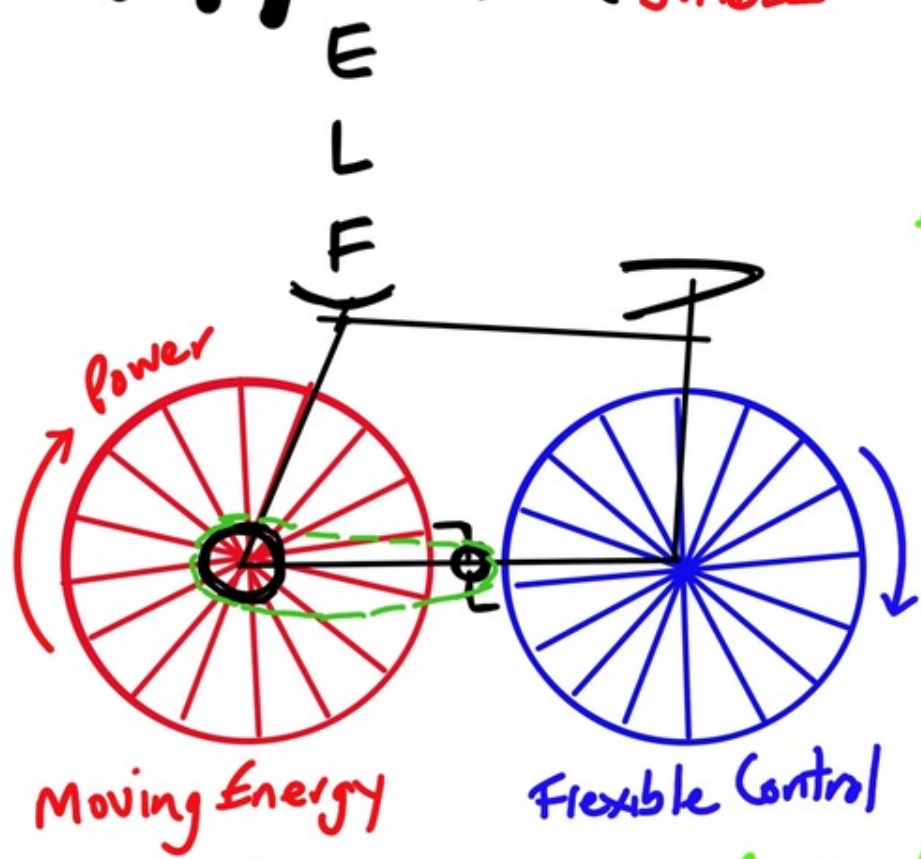


I
aware
awake
attention

TENSION IS BALANCED + ALIGNED
• your chain"



When I am **MYSELF** = "I feel I am coping"
I am **STABLE** + **FLEXIBLE**

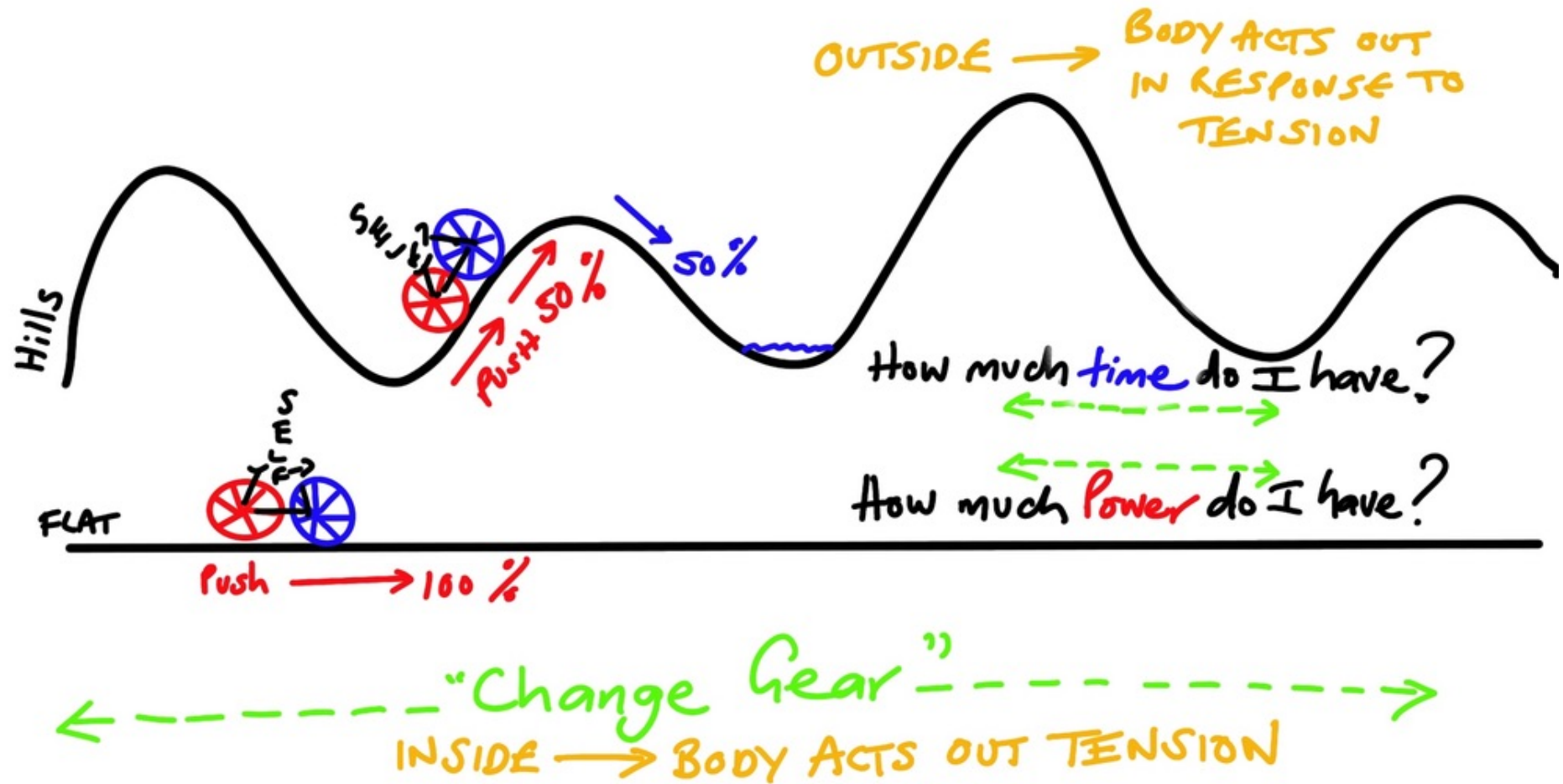


Self-worth
"I matter to me
+
I can change
direction if I
want to...."

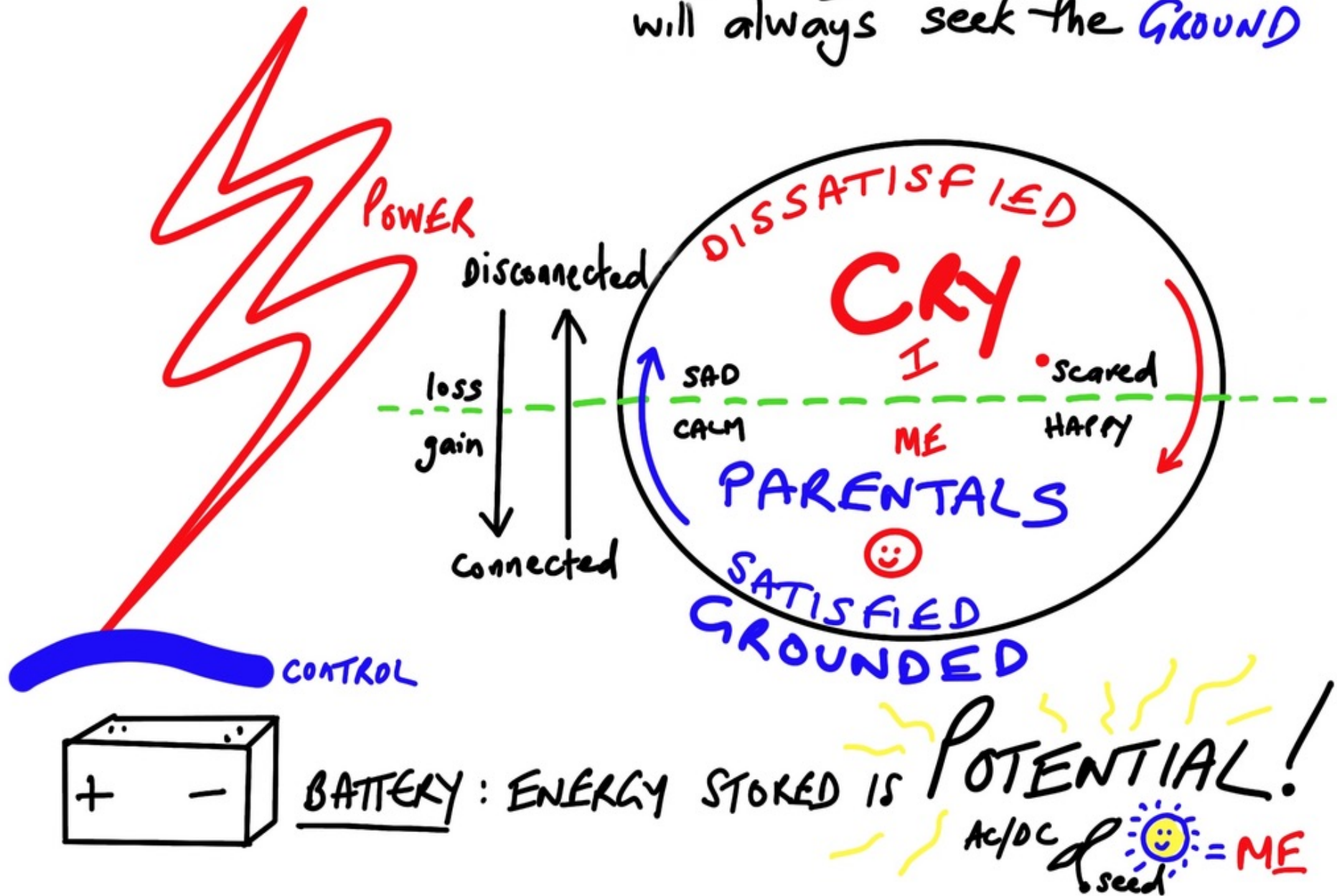
And every bike needs a chain to keep it together!
... I FEEL NORMAL. "AM I?!"



When I 'feel' I am coping, the GYROSCOPE is working,
and adjusts to the terrain automatically →
"if it makes sense, no worries"



Just like lightning, the **POWER** will always seek the **GROUND**



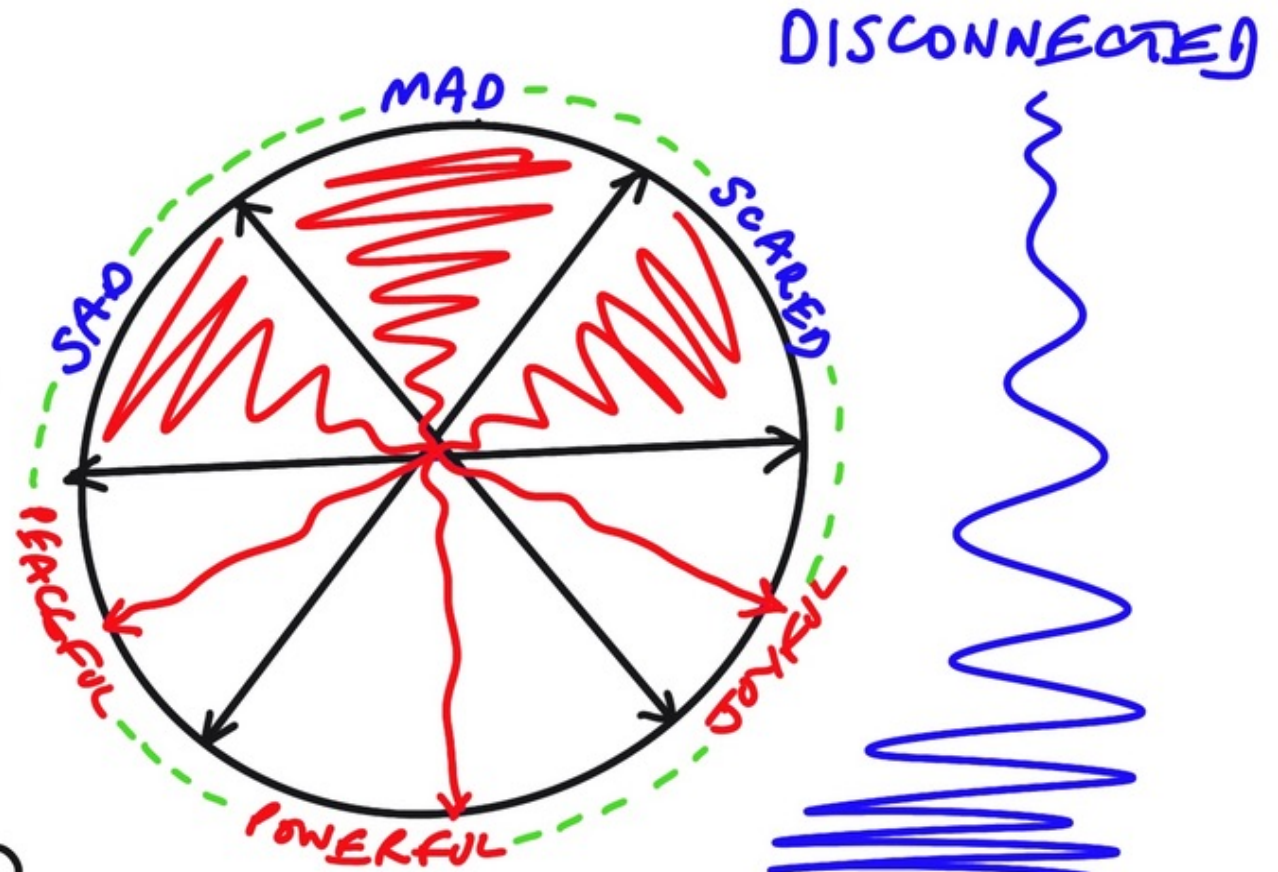
When we are "ATTUNED", we learn what body sensations mean.

E-MOTION

"You turn me on... I'm a radio"
Which station is playing?
I can hear + see you !!

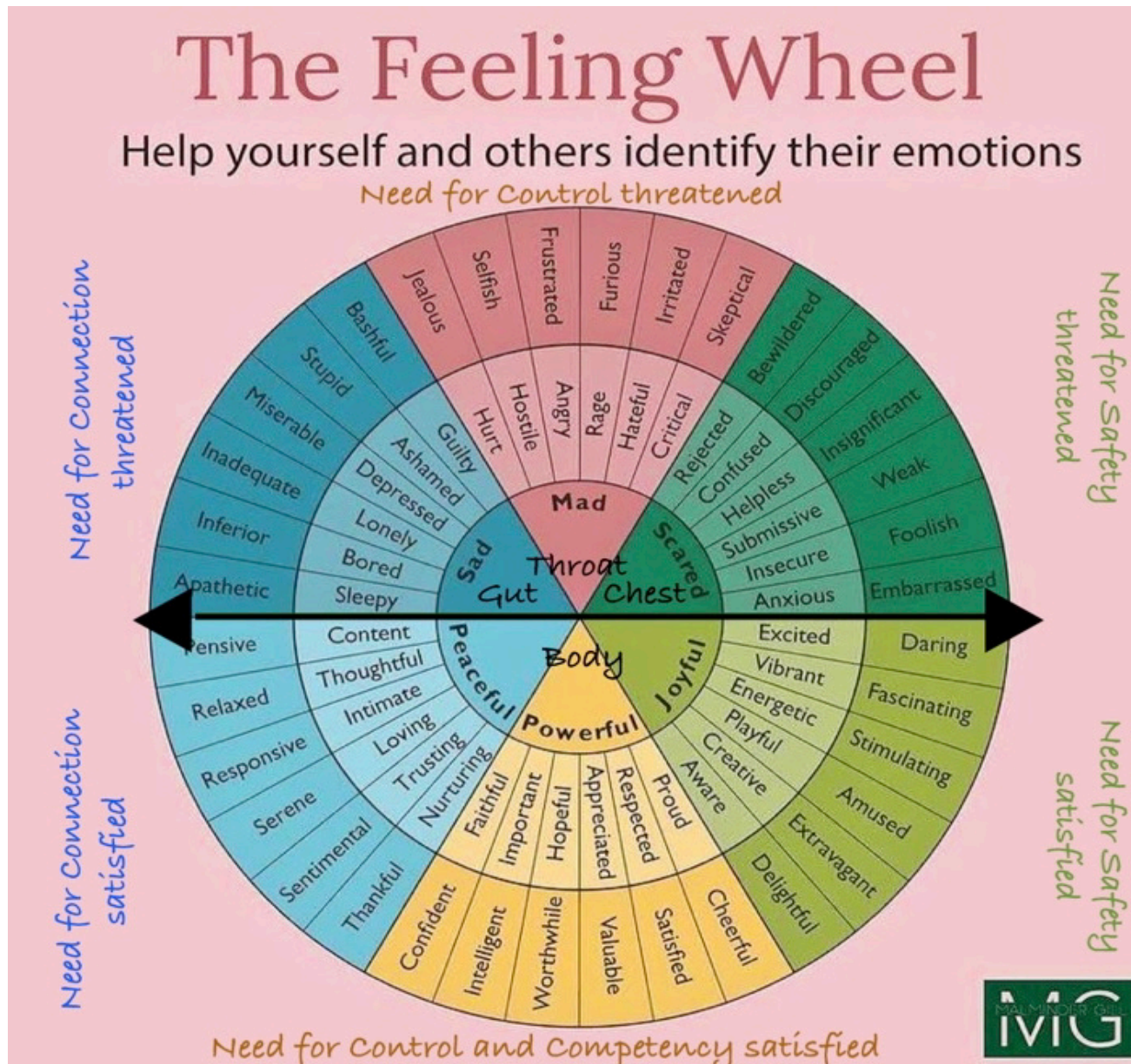
POWER STATION IS SAFE
THERE IS RESISTANCE +
TRANSMISSION = SOUND

Non-Verbal
Communication



MOVING + CONNECTING = GROUNDED

You experience different feeling states as the context and your needs change



If the diagrams on the previous pages confused you, don't worry. It is extremely difficult for most people to name their emotions, tell the difference between thoughts and feelings, or even between feelings and behaviours, let alone understand exactly what they mean! This Feeling Wheel (credit to Malminder Gill) can help you make some sense of how you feel.

The Blue represents your need for Connection, resulting from your human nature as a Social Being, and your innate attachment drive. The satisfaction of this need results in your basic sense of security.

The Green represents your need for Safety in Exploration, to leave your safe base and go out into the world and live your life!

The Yellow/Pink represents your need for Control: to be Independent and be able to trust the judgement that you can get your needs met, plan, predict, and control yourself and your environment with a reasonable degree of success (Freedom and Autonomy).

These are the three core needs which, when satisfied, result in a basically self-determined human being, or in other words, an Adult (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Positive Psychology draws on Self Determination Theory to help people focus on what is functional, rather than what is 'wrong'.

The Feeling Wheel

Help yourself and others identify their emotions



When sensations in your body are automatically appraised in context, they register as 'emotional' data. Emotional data can then be experienced as a good or bad "thing" rather than as energy passing through your body like a wave - just like energy passing through water is perceived as a wave. Emotions may even be perceived or experienced as a problem in certain contexts. Your attempts to control your emotions when they get big usually only serve to make things worse. You instinctively pull your front brake ON, increasing the likelihood that the power in your back wheel will throw you over the handlebars! Sorry to mix metaphors, but you don't see surfers trying to control the waves - they learn to surf. To handle large emotions, you need to learn to surf too.

The Feeling Wheel aims to help you appreciate that ALL feelings are data. If you can learn to accept and appreciate the data, you can learn what your body needs and then find effective ways of getting those needs met using functional methods.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is the gold standard treatment qualified Psychologists are trained in. The premise behind this methodology is that thinking and feeling motivates behaviour. CBT aims to correct cognitive biases or 'errors' in thinking. For example, your gut-brain and head-brain may have difficulty telling the difference between hunger and loneliness, so you compulsively eat, store excess energy as fat, and become a passenger on an addictive bicycle! In my opinion, emotional literacy will help break this cycle by helping you communicate your feelings AND needs with words AND PREPARE YOU FOR THERAPY. If you think of emotions as energy in motion, you can accept strong feelings like a swell in the ocean.

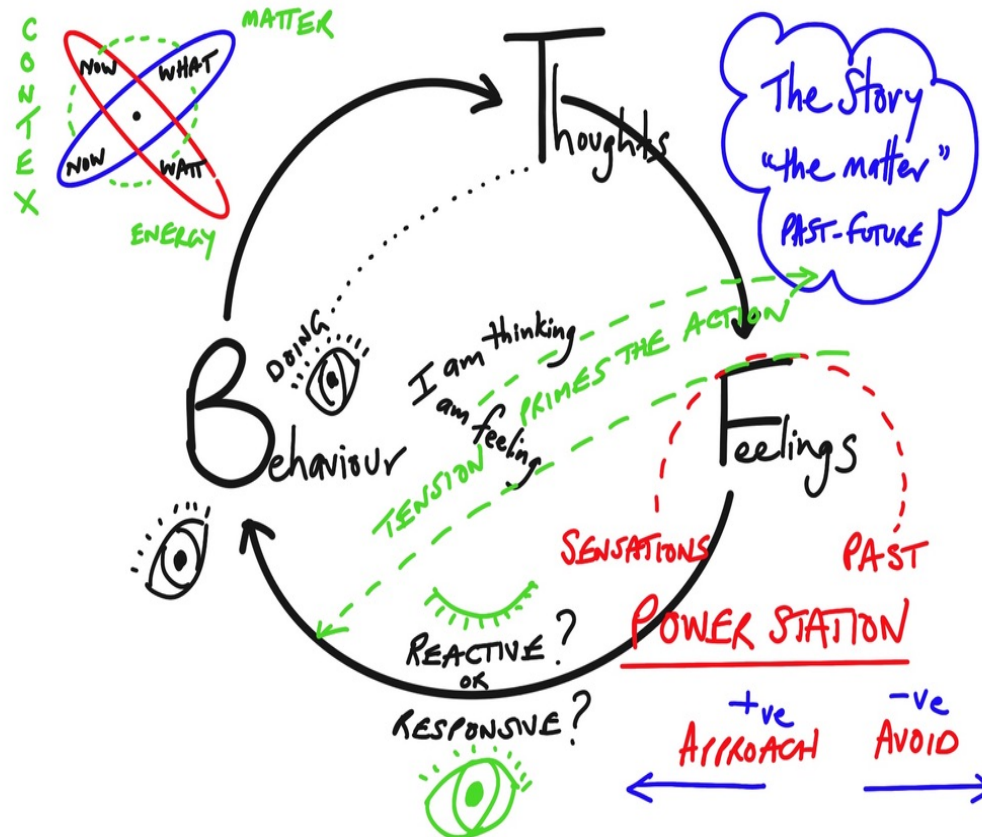


What can you control – thoughts, feelings, or behaviours?

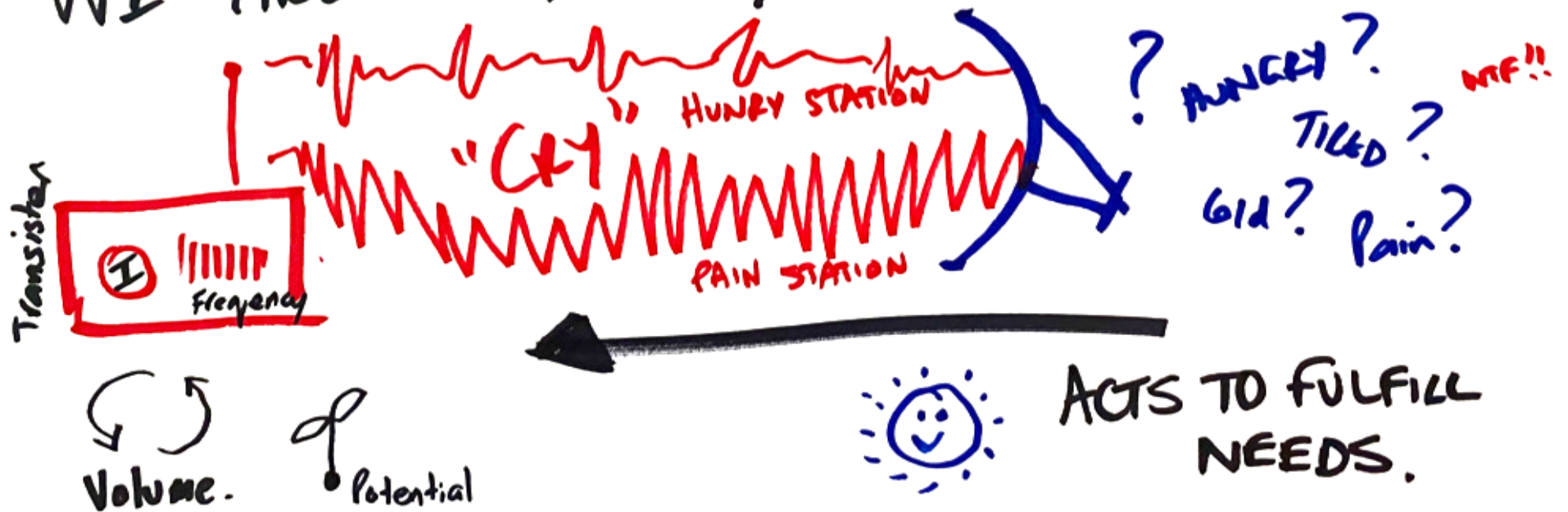
At birth, your body is full of energy, sensations, urges, and non-verbal communication aimed at getting your needs met. As you grow and learn to coordinate your body, you can control your behaviour to get your needs met. When your mind develops to a point that you can speak and use language, you are able to hold thoughts in your head that at times mimic reality so well that our body FEELS as if things that *aren't* happening right now, *actually are*. This is where we enter the realm of EMOTION.

Emotions (energy in motion) are basically sensations in your body with a Story attached to them (either unconscious or conscious) that compel you to move towards or away from something, or just do nothing until more information comes to hand. Thus, the emotion-words on the outer rim of the Feeling Wheel are suggestive of a dominating story, and the emotion-words in the centre of the Feeling Wheel are suggestive of a dominating physical sensation in your body. We associate the emotion-words in the lower half of the Wheel as positive, and those in the upper half of the wheel as negative, however, mental and physical health requires your willingness to experience ALL of these emotion states. Tension is held in the Wheel between opposite sides. The idea is that optimally the Wheel remains balanced, stable, and flexible - moving towards or away, up and down - as necessary. In a nutshell, the more you think, the less you feel, and vice versa. Feelings and thoughts in themselves are out of your control and emerge as private experiences in your body and mind. However, their quality, and hence your behaviour, can be influenced by the quality and direction of your attention. Thinking and planning are cognitive behaviours, as are judging, perceiving, comparing, and describing, for example. The theory suggests that if you displace the Story in your mind with an alternative story, your feelings change accordingly. As my Lecturer in Research Methods, Dr Hong Eng, would often say, “garbage in, garbage out!”. Thus, if you are very good at avoiding feeling scared, you might enjoy the security of connection, however you never also experience the pure joy of independent exploration. This might prime you towards becoming depressed if your proximity to human connection is ever threatened, and then engage in unhealthy ways of ‘feeling better’. Similarly,

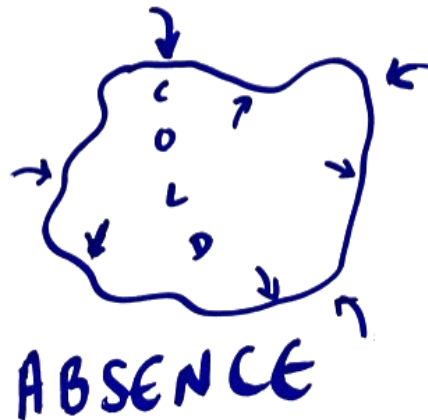
anger gets a bad rap in society. We seem to assume as a species that we are “normal” if we are “happy” (read “The Happiness Trap” by Russ Harris). Note that the word ‘happy’ is absent from the Feeling Wheel. Happiness is likely the sum of all these feelings being on the menu of lived experience, combined with an internal sense of “I am basically good enough”. In later pages, I will touch on what happens when you have learned you ‘are not good enough’, through no fault of your own or anyone else’s malicious intent. This kind of cognitive bias can result in a very flat, lop-sided or bumpy Feelings Wheel that is unable to function effectively.



WITHOUT WORDS, all we have is Energy - EMOTION - to convey a story about what we need. WE ARE Completely VULNERABLE.



What if now & then
the attunement is
MISSING??



“ORDINARY
ISSUES”

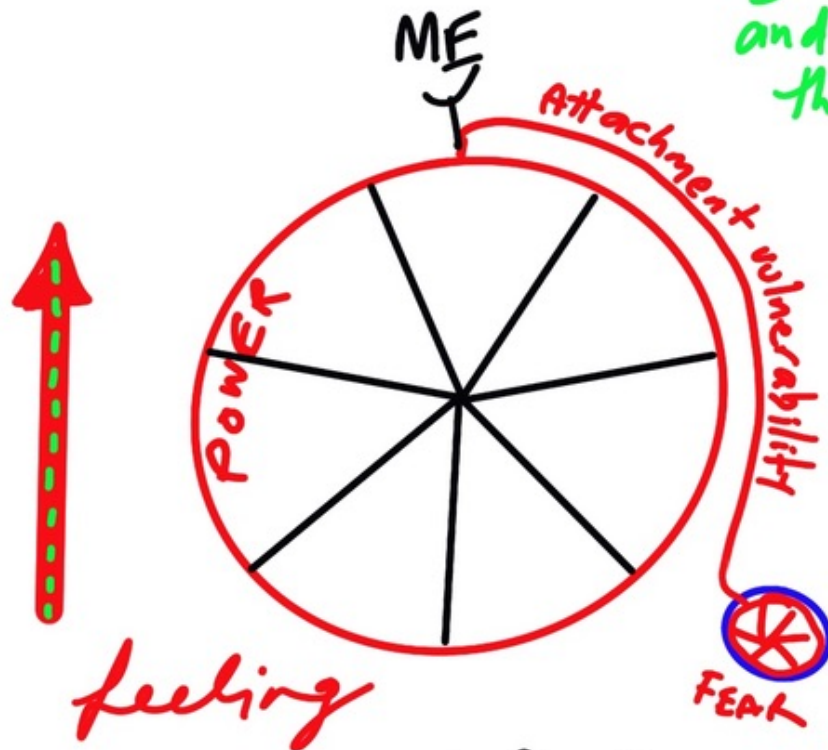
Whatever environment you grow up in, you will assume it is “normal”. How would you know any different? What if your primary carer had to tune in to other things besides you? You likely weren’t offended, but a small part of you remained unattended, dormant, and not ‘switched on’. This part might, one day, decide to wake up and make its needs known – through emotions, sensations, or acting out behaviours. Adolescence can herald an onslaught of interesting phenomenon as a product of the Differentiation process. Trauma can occur years after an event, when your mind has your mind has finally

caught up with your body! The absence of satisfaction for a legitimate need can cause more harm in the long run, than the presence of something obviously harmful, because it is invisible and without seeming cause. You are left with a ‘cognitive error’ that you are responsible, “it” is your fault, and that you are simply not good enough - not to mention a chronic emotional pain impossible to sooth on your own.



Small-t trauma means thinking and feeling don't always line up: the chain can be prone to disconnect

You might avoid things you need, and approach things you don't!



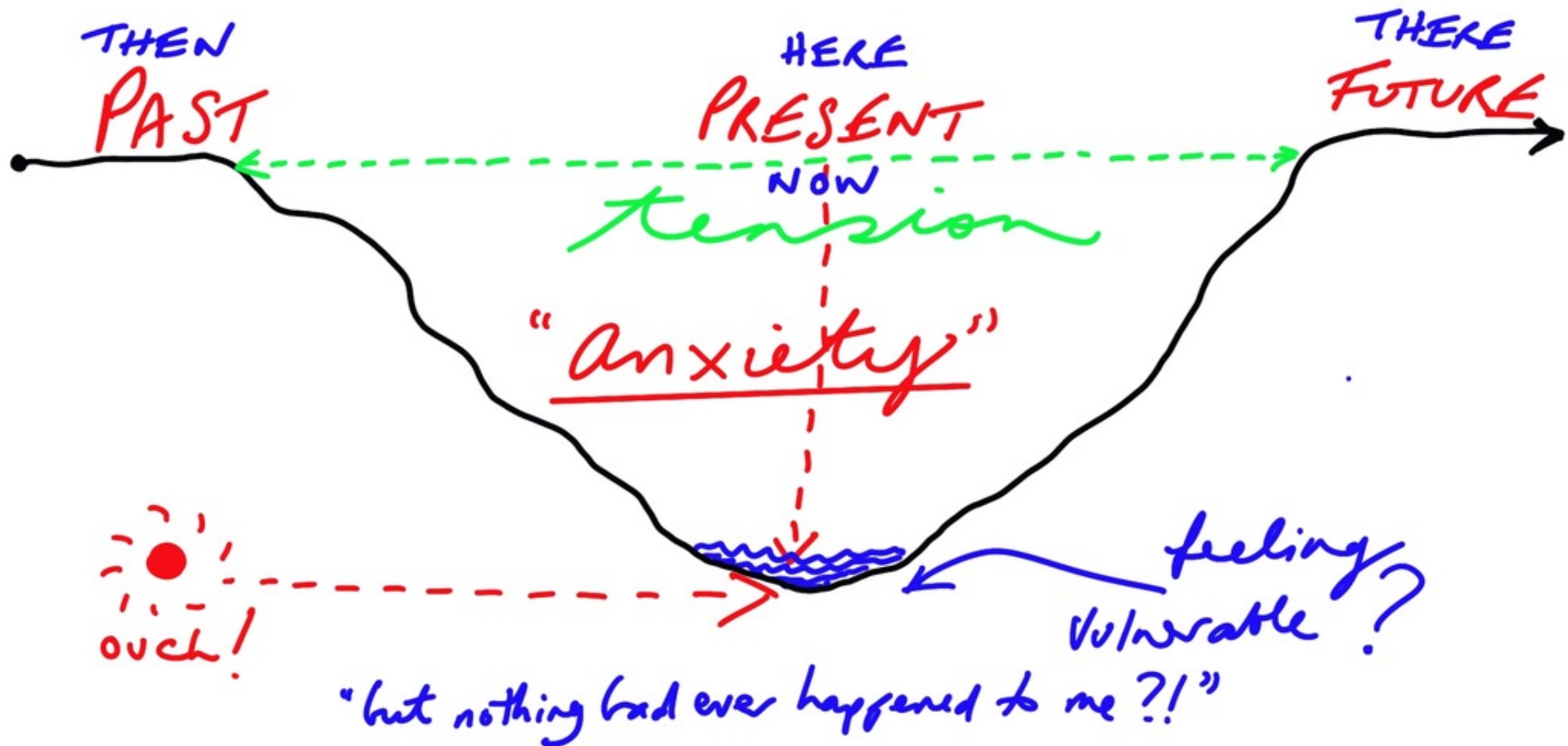
"It's not fair"
NO CONTROL



"I am not good enough"
NO POWER

Small-t trauma feels like a Grand Canyon:

- a small pain or dissatisfaction, a long time ago, stored for a Long time, in your Body



E-Trauma can set your GYROSCOPE without you realising. To you, everything is NORMAL!

Possibilities
 FAILS feeling
 INFP +
 Introspective - Intuitive
 HEADS = BOTH SIDES OF A COIN
 ESTJ =
 Extraverted - Sensing
 Thinking Probabilities
 OPPOSITES!!
 Collected together
VALUE!

WE NEED the Same things to "feel" NORMAL



= Self-determined
I am good enough, I can try, I am ok.

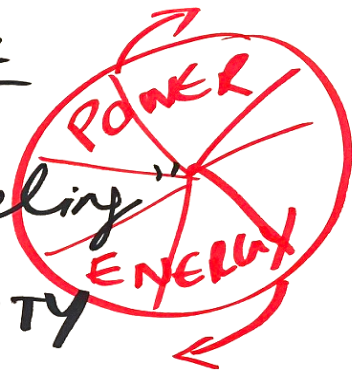
BUT might VALUE them differently ----

it depends on YOUR EXPERIENCE
PAST.....PRESENT

THE MORE VALUE

THE BIGGER the "feeling" of VULNERABILITY

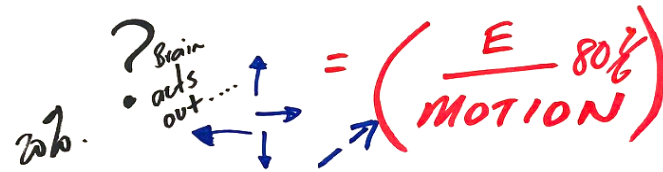
when it is THREATENED.



VALUE = RESOURCE = ENERGY = MOVEMENT !!
Without Value/Resource/Energy - YOU ARE STUCK

MOVEMENT = POWER.

= ENERGY



The Matter = **ACTION**
80% Narrative HEAD.
Story

20% POWER. BODY



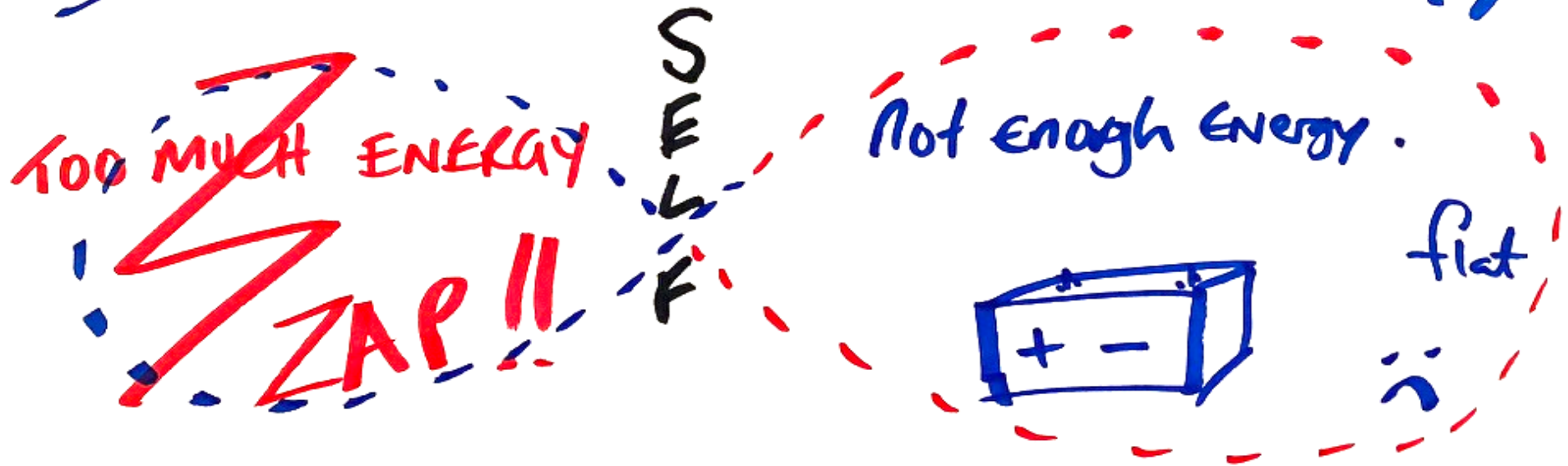
YOU ARE NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
YOU ARE NOT WHO YOU FEEL.
YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO NOW



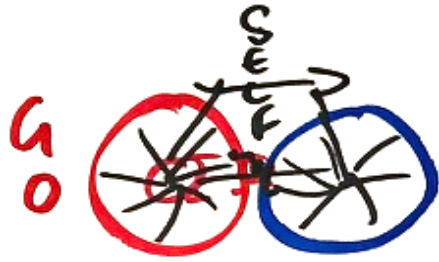
YOUR POWER STATION

if you ARE an ADULT

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY



THE MORE FEELING ENERGY = THE LESS Control thinking MATTER



→ Crash the bike!

THE MORE THINKING Control Matter = The LESS Feeling ENERGY



→ Bike falls over!

You can't escape from CONSEQUENCES

NOT COPING ??

(unless your training wheels are still on, & then "fear" & "Shame" will keep you upright - BUT YOU WON'T BE HAPPY) **NOT FREE**

NOT SAFE



Unpleasant Allies: Fear & Shame

The Bike Metaphor gets a pair of training wheels, when small-t trauma is indicated. Brene Brown has researched this area extensively. Google her!

The presence of something horrible can fine tune your senses towards fear and shame, because these feelings were present at the event. Because the event happened in the past, fear and shame become cues that it might happen again, and so you learn to avoid these emotions at all costs. Anxiety is a product of successful avoidance - you are rewarded for the absence of something bad happening when you worry about it! This can be a highly addictive cycle (pardon the pun!). And yet, you rob yourself of the gift of lived experience!

Using the bike metaphor, fear and shame are training wheels designed to prevent your bike from falling over. The problem with this strategy is that you must keep moving, otherwise the training wheels will hit the ground and painful feelings felt. People with high levels of anxiety find it very hard to sit still, do nothing, or sustain attention for long periods. They can develop quirky strategies for focusing their mind (e.g., counting, chanting, organising - how much OCD to you recognise in your Self?). They are often so busy that legitimate needs for connection remain unmet, perpetuating anxiety.

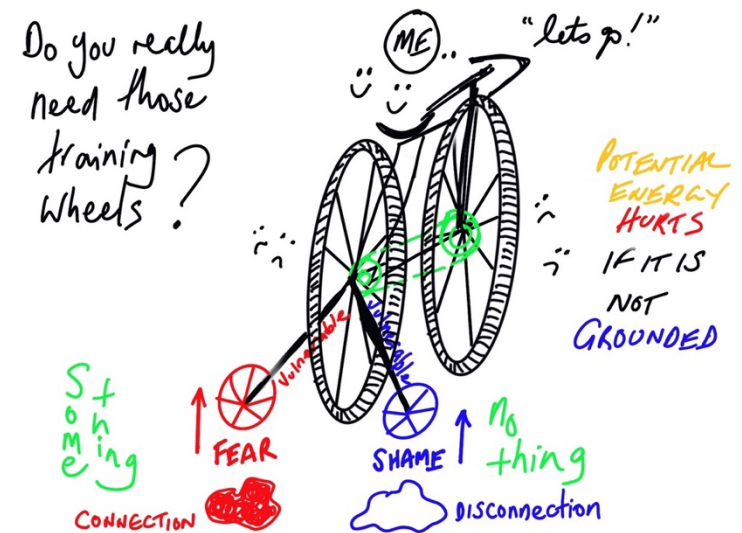
Shame is even more problematic. You need to move, or you will fall over, however the shame training wheel is hell bent on getting its connection needs met! Arising from a belief that "I am BAD" as opposed to guilt, which is "I have DONE something bad", the shame training wheel condemns you to hide behind a mask of acceptability, competency, or secrecy to avoid being found out, lest you are ejected from the tribe and abandoned forever. Your preoccupation with connection thwarts your ability to move and find authentic happiness. Unless you find a way to satisfy your human need for connection, your inability to allow your SHAME training wheel to become GROUNDED will perpetuate problematic, pervasive, and persistent behaviours in the pursuit of getting rid of it. If it is any consolation, the upside of ageing is that it liberates you from even caring what others think of you!

The idea here is to recognise that Fear and Shame are emotions. It is the fear of experiencing fear and shame that creates the training wheels on

your bike and prevents you from ever self-actualising your authentic Self. If you let fear and shame touch the ground, they will undoubtedly help you survive - hence the functional reason for feeling fear and shame as emotions in the first place. They are fundamentally protective. An absence of fear and shame can ultimately result in vulnerability and harm to self and others.

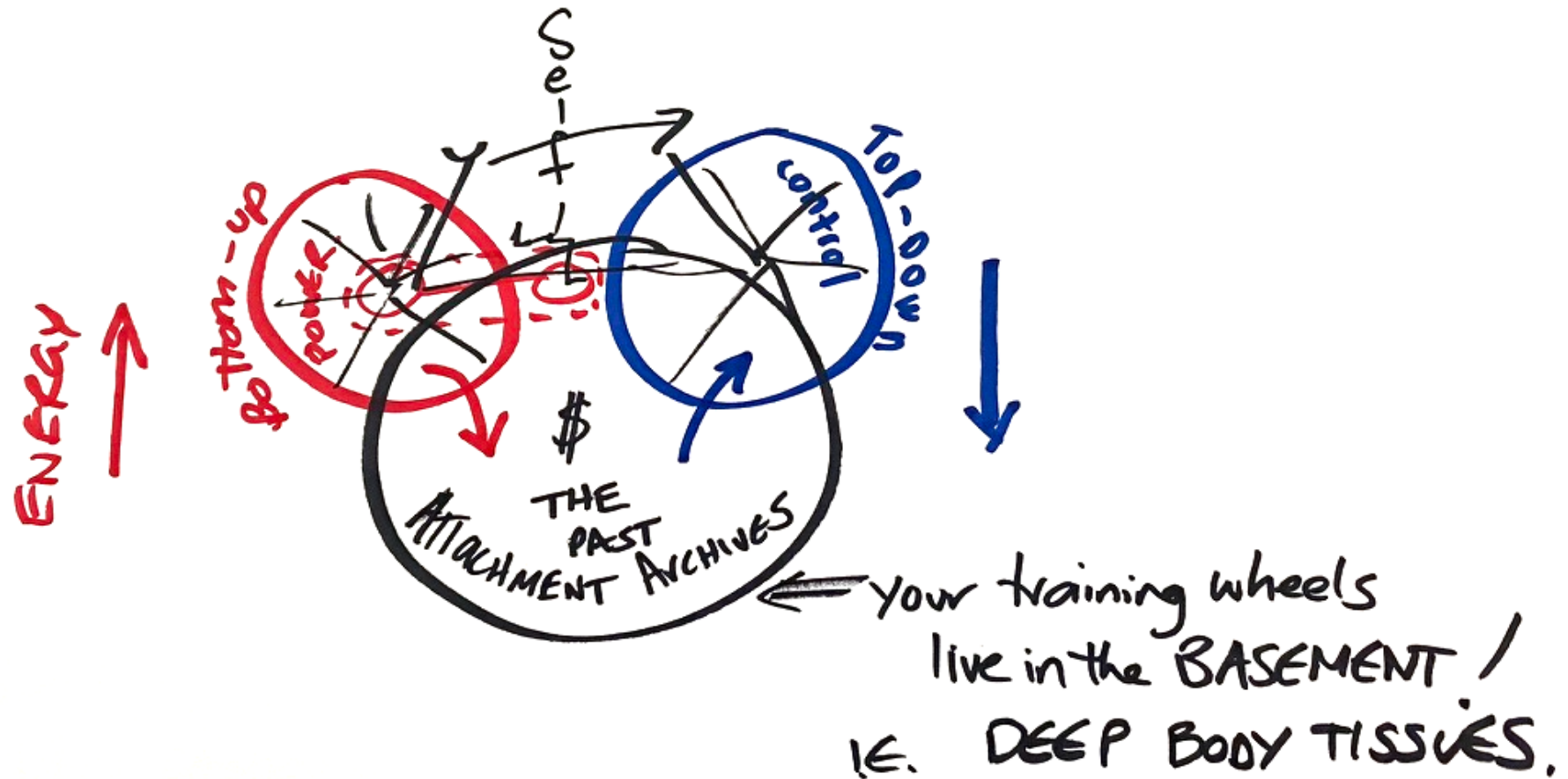
I highly recommend taking a lukewarm bath in shame now and then. It is an incredibly humbling and grounding experience and reminds you that at the end of the day, you can at least be your own best friend. You might even learn about the kindness of others.

There is no substitute for experience to challenge some of the irrational beliefs your mind has about your abilities with some actual data! Nothing like a long-distance motorbike ride to help integrate fear and anxiety! No self-respecting explorer would ever leave home without a healthy dose of fear in their backpack. Unlike anxiety, fear relates to a problem or a threat, and directing energy towards the challenge is good for your mind, body, and spirit. Fear helps sharpen mental acuity, and if you continue to act in the face of fear (with courage), you build confidence, knowledge, and wisdom. I wish I had understood this when I was younger.....I might have had more fun!



WHAT DOES YOUR BRAIN VALUE?

SOCIAL CONNECTION



Roadside Assistance - How to put your Chain back on your Bike

As illustrated in the previous diagram, the main thing that will predispose your chain coming off your bike, are historical events that were not fully appreciated and accommodated into the grand narrative of your SELF. Similarly, unprocessed and poorly integrated emotional energy that is still flying around in your deep body tissues can cause major malfunctions. Resolving PAST issues will inevitably help you face FUTURE issues realistically and competently.

At the very least I hope you have recognised that you might have some potentially redundant training wheels attached to your bike, and that you might consider getting rid of those training wheels and being willing to fall off your bike now and then. Check to see how you go at high speeds, and if in fact your brakes even work! You might find that for your particular terrain, you have the wrong tyres and not enough gears. Maybe it was never about

your ability to ride in the first place! You might need to appreciate the bike you have, with all its vulnerabilities, and develop a life-long working alliance with people who care about you and can help you be the best version of your SELF.

Good luck on your heroic journey to gain Self-Awareness. With kindness, curiosity, and courage, life will open up along with all its magnificent possibilities.

While you are seeking out a Skilled Helper, you can follow these next few ideas to help keep you moving and connecting in the meantime. Visit www.tarabrach.com for a deeper insight into RAIN: A Practice of Radical Compassion.

How to put your chain back on?

CURIOUS
① Recognise you are not YOURSELF

- You have gone into "ME" MODE

COURAGE
② TRY TO BUILD A BRIDGE back

to your SELF

KINDNESS
③ FIND the part of you MOST vulnerable
^ "that is feeling"
#HINT: IT WILL BE PHYSICAL !!! FEAR OR SHAME ?)



How to calm the storm ... **make it RAIN!!**
Cool down the fire

Soothe the hurt - empty
- pressure
find the pain **CURIOUS**

Let the hot gas out.... it will rise & cool & come back as rain - water -

COURAGE
GIVE IT SUNSHINE! Life Force
let it out of the dark

SELF COMPASSION
I WANT TO LIVE!! I NEED



Recognise



CURIOUS

Allow, appreciate, accept, attend

Investigate

TENSION
Release - OPEN

Courage

Nurture

=

Self Soothe

OPENS
TO
CONNECTION

S
E
N
S
E
S

KINDNESS

TOUCH
PRESENCE

What are you DOING? NOWWATT

GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD & INTO YOUR BODY.



RECOGNISE — "Name it to tame it"



"ME"

I AM FEELING

T E N S I O N

• BOTTOM → UP

WHERE?

DESCRIBE 'IT'... "in my stomach"
Back, shoulders....

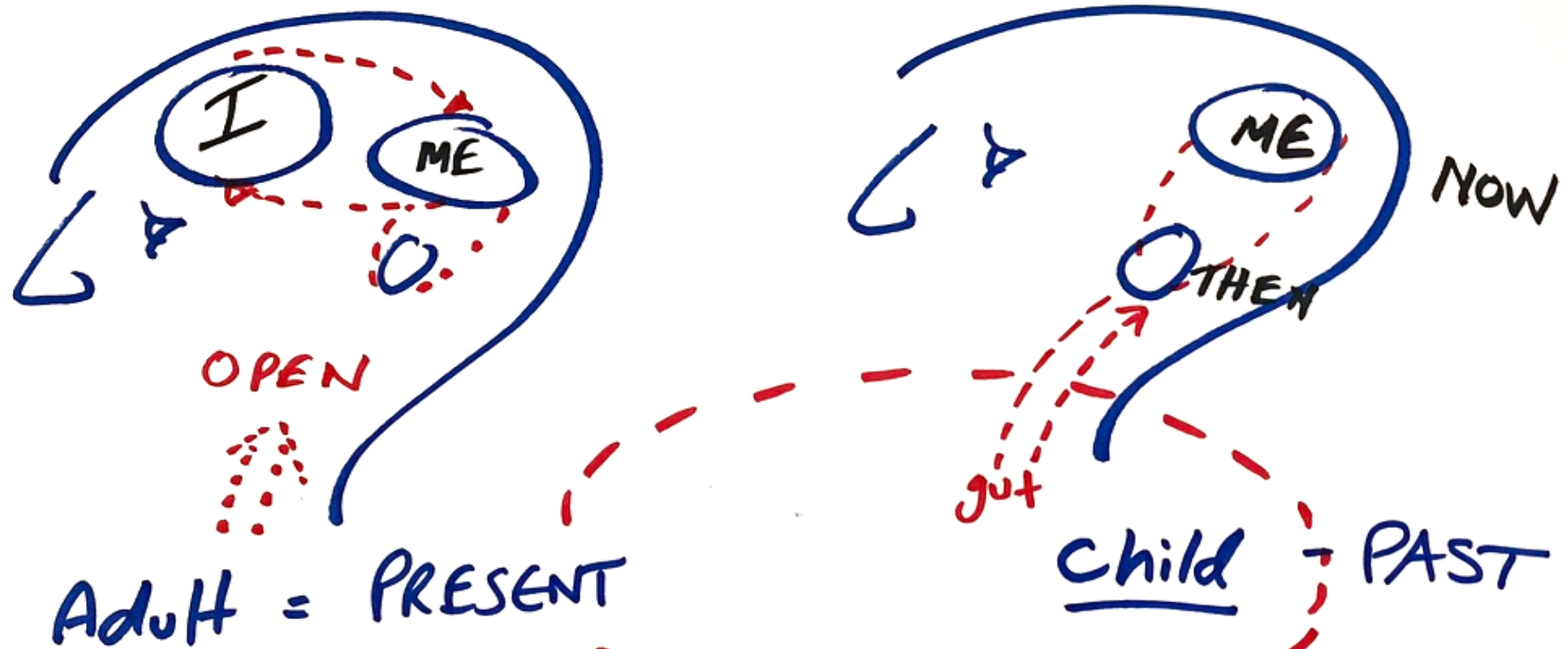
WHAT IS IT LIKE?

Hard pulsating sharp
Heavy Soft vibrating
NUMB

NOTICE IT. JUST SIT WITH
YOUR HURT TENSE PART.

Your brain will update the archives that you are safe NOW
"it" still might be there, but 'IT' is not a threat." Hello Vulnerable Part"

INTEGRATION = I can handle it Now



I am safe Now. it happened then

vulnerability

“Vulnerability is not a weakness, a passing indisposition, or something we can arrange to do without, vulnerability is not a choice, vulnerability is the underlying, ever present and abiding undercurrent of our natural state. To run from vulnerability is to run from the essence of our nature, the attempt to be invulnerable is the vain attempt to become something we are not and most especially, to close off our understanding of the grief of others. More seriously, in refusing our vulnerability we refuse the help needed at every turn of our existence and immobilise the essential, tidal and conversational foundations of our identity.

The only choice we have as we mature is how we inhabit our vulnerability, how we become larger and more courageous and more compassionate through our intimacy with disappearance, our choice is to inhabit vulnerability as generous citizens of loss, robustly and fully, always at the gates of existence, but never bravely and completely attempting to enter, never wanting to risk ourselves, never walking fully through the door.”

From
“Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words”
by David Whyte, 2018.



Go exploring!

Here are just a few readings that have influenced how I have helped people over the years in my Clinical Practice. Don't be put off by dates. The Greeks had the human condition reasonably well fathomed 2000 years ago!

"Mindfulness for Two: An acceptance and Commitment Therapy Approach to Mindfulness in Psychotherapy", by Kelly G Wilson, 2009.

"Greenlights", by Matthew McConaughey, 2020.

"Love's Executioner and Other Takes of Psychotherapy", by Irvin D Yalom, 2012.

Brene Brown: book titles include "Daring Greatly", "The Gifts of Imperfection", and "The Power of Letting Go". Check her out.

"Intimacy & Desire" by Dr David Schnarch, 2010

"An Introduction to the History of Psychology, 5th Edition", by B R Hergenhahn, 2005.

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NOW WHAT?

A final word.....after reading this book, if you ARE noticing an uncomfortable sense or feeling in your gut, or intrusive recollections of moments, events, or people from the past, then these signs could indicate that your chain needs some attention. The best lube for a chain is MINDFULNESS. The best tool to help you adjust the tension in your chain, is a Skilled Helper. It is my hope that you will not ignore the warning signs, and ACT!

