

Foundations of Teaching Mindfulness

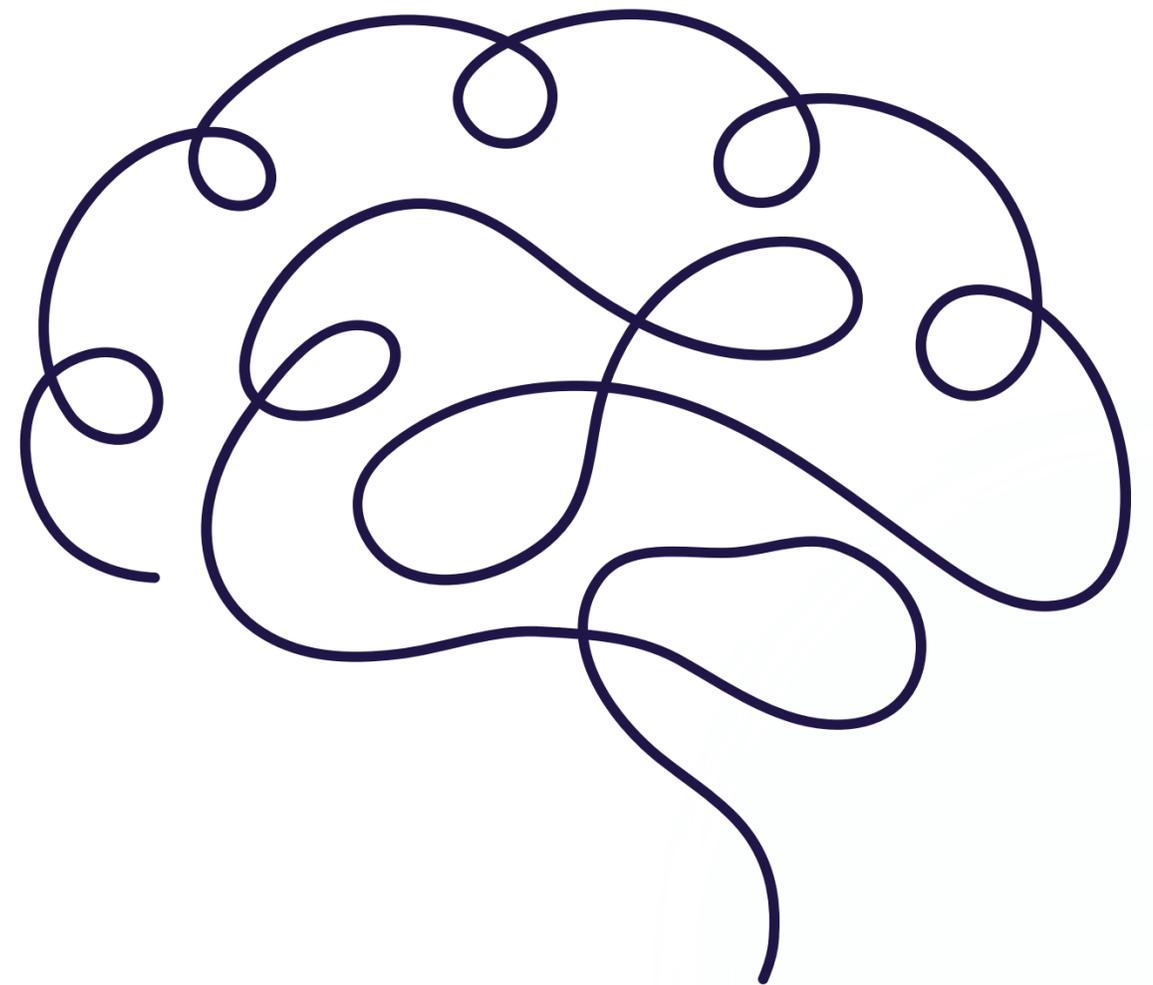
Thursday, March 6, 2025

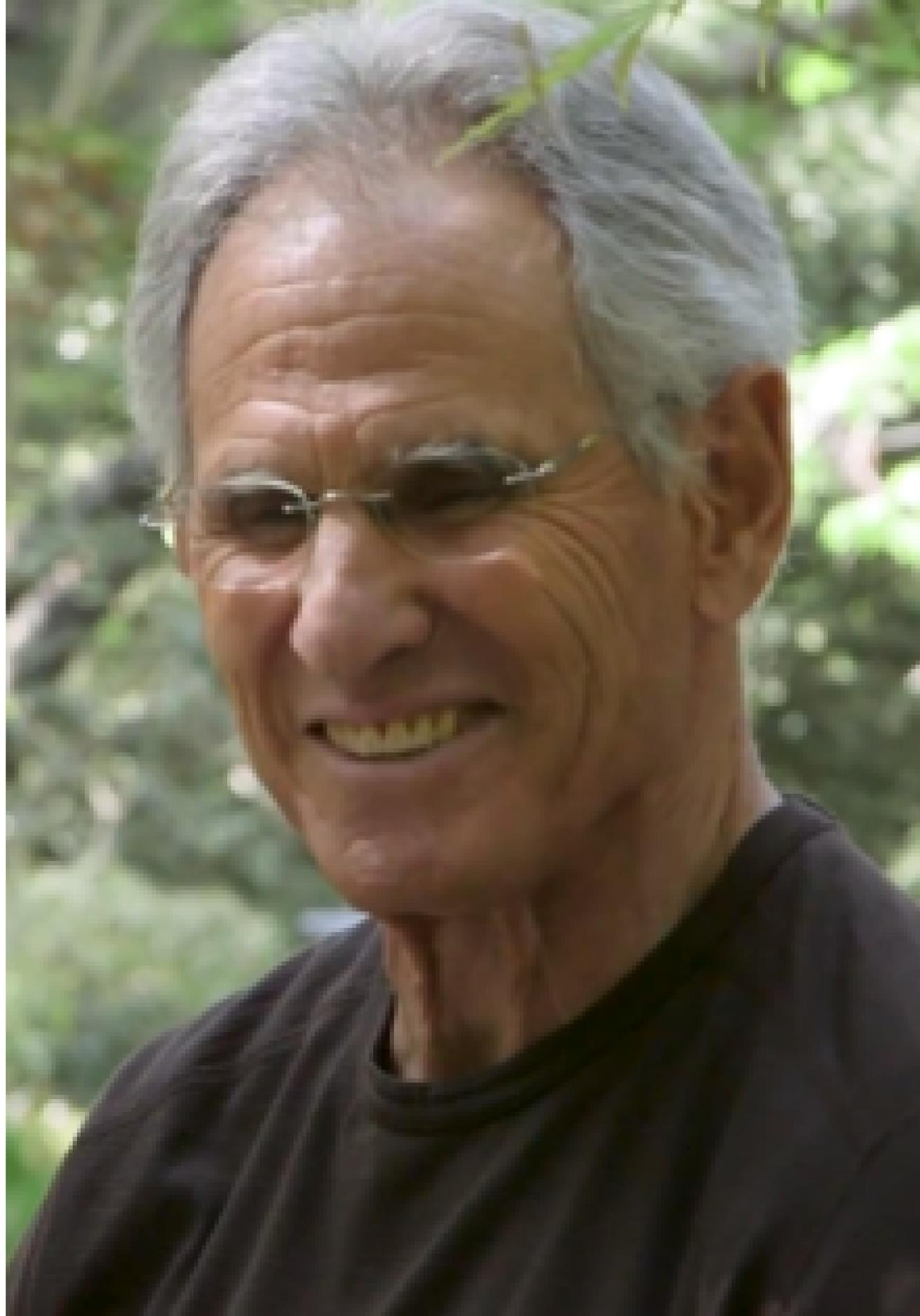
Mentor vs Peer Meetings

	Mentor Group	Peer Group
Who attends?	Trainees + Mentor	Trainees Only
Length of meeting	1.5-2 hours	1.5-2 hours
Focus of Meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. One trainee facilitates a group session (35ish min)2. Mentor facilitates feedback from everyone.3. Q+A on topics related to the training	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. One trainee facilitates a group session (35ish min)2. Host facilitates feedback from everyone.3. Host leads a discussion of homework.
Who hosts/coordinates meeting?	Mentor	Person leading homework discussion



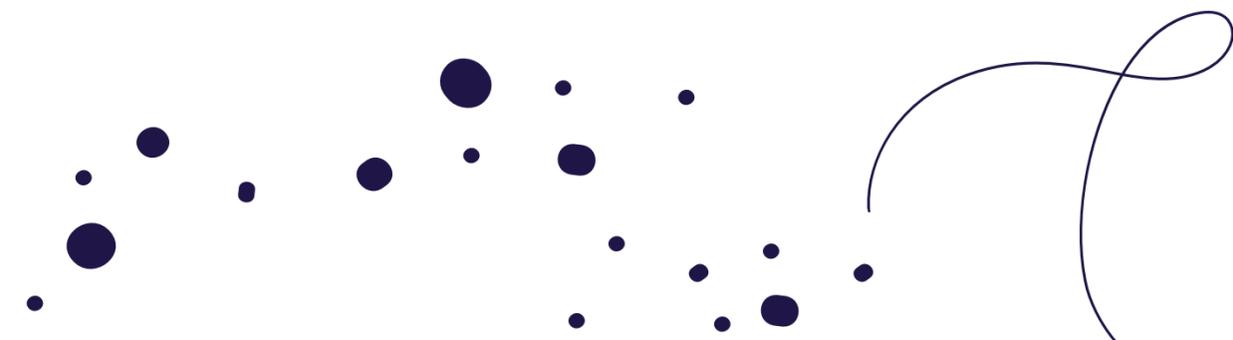
Introduction to the Mindful Brain



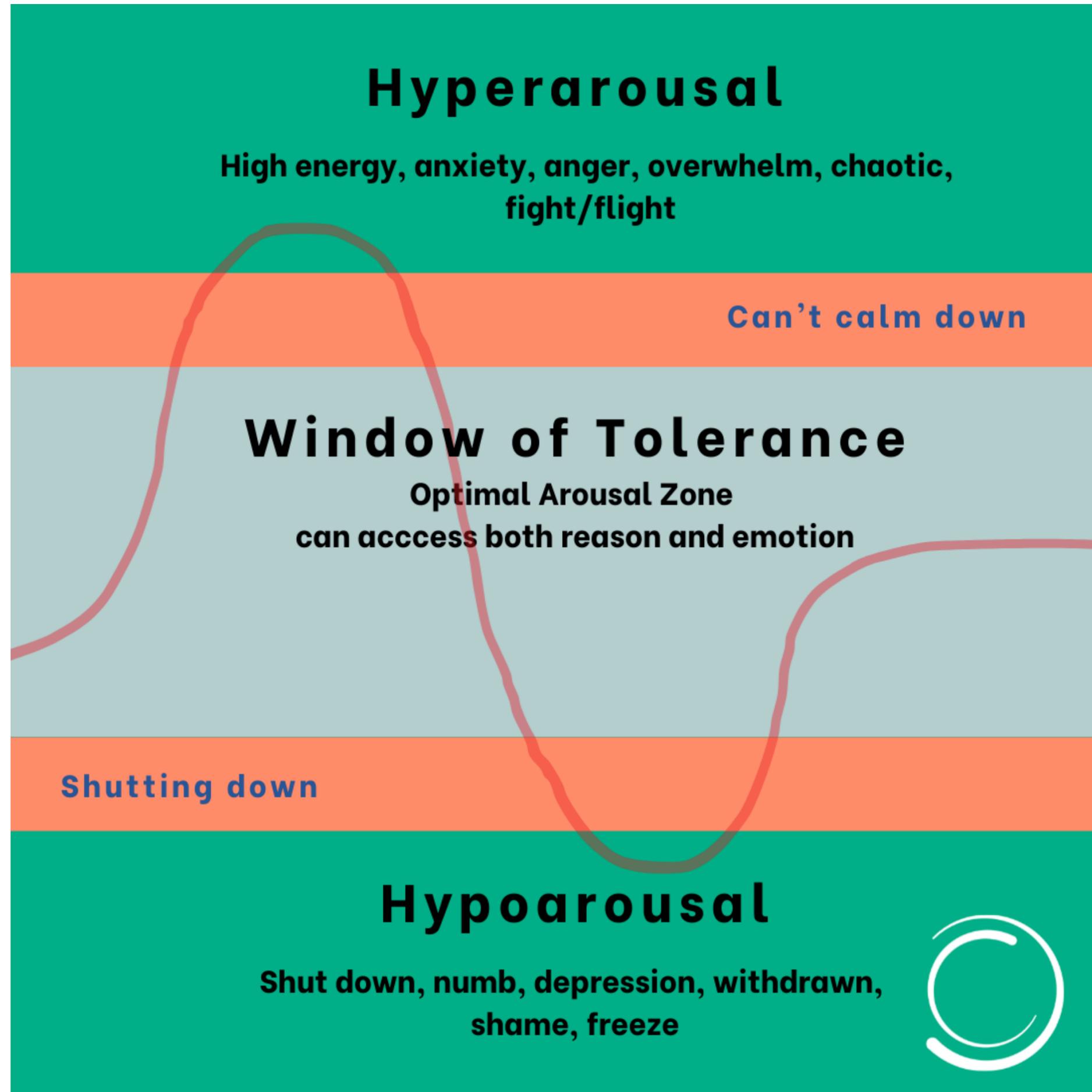


Jon Kabat-Zinn

**Professor at UMass Medical School
“Father” of MBSR**

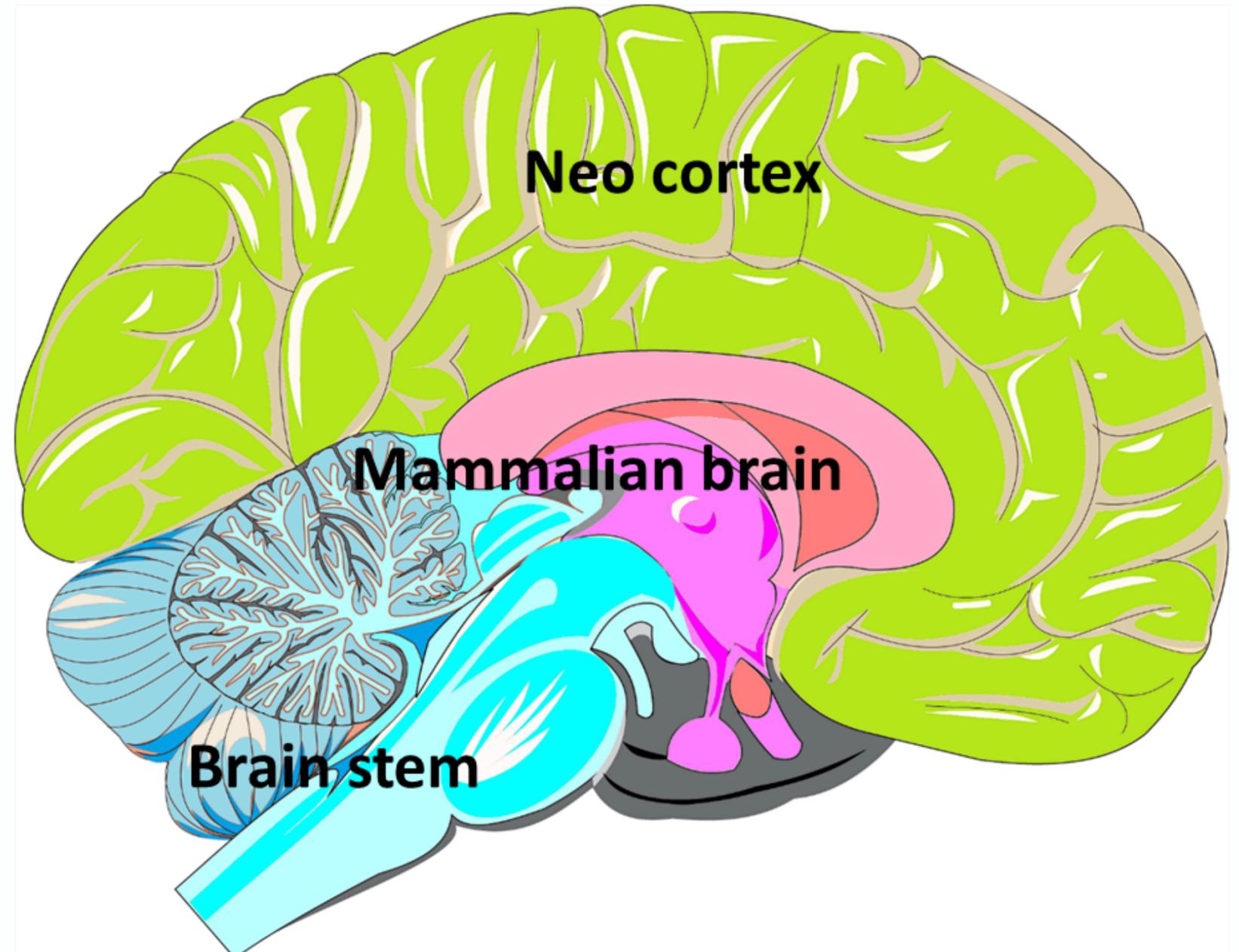


Mindfulness
+ Stress



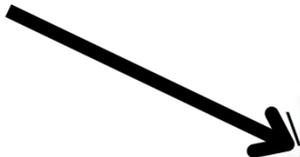
Areas of the Brain

- **Reptilian brain**- brain stem, basic functions
- **Mammalian brain**- limbic system, emotions
- **Neo Cortex** -- thinking and planning



Parts of the Brain

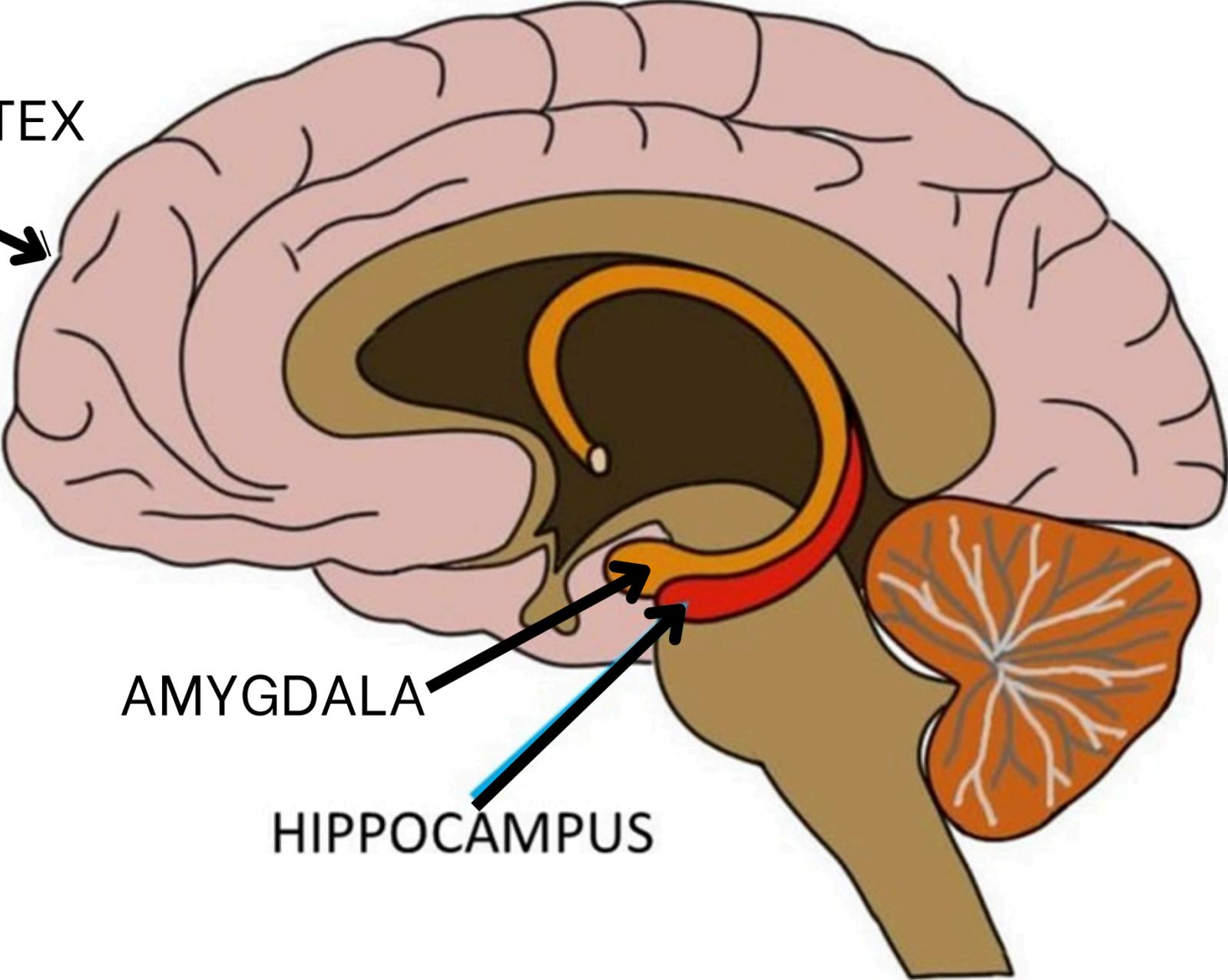
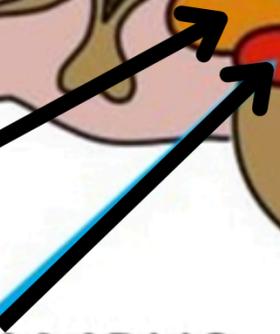
PREFRONTAL CORTEX



AMYGDALA



HIPPOCAMPUS



Parts of the Brain



**Prefrontal Cortex
(Wise Owl)**



**Hippocampus
(Computer)**



**Amygdala
(Alarm)**

Additional Brain Parts

Posterior Cingulate

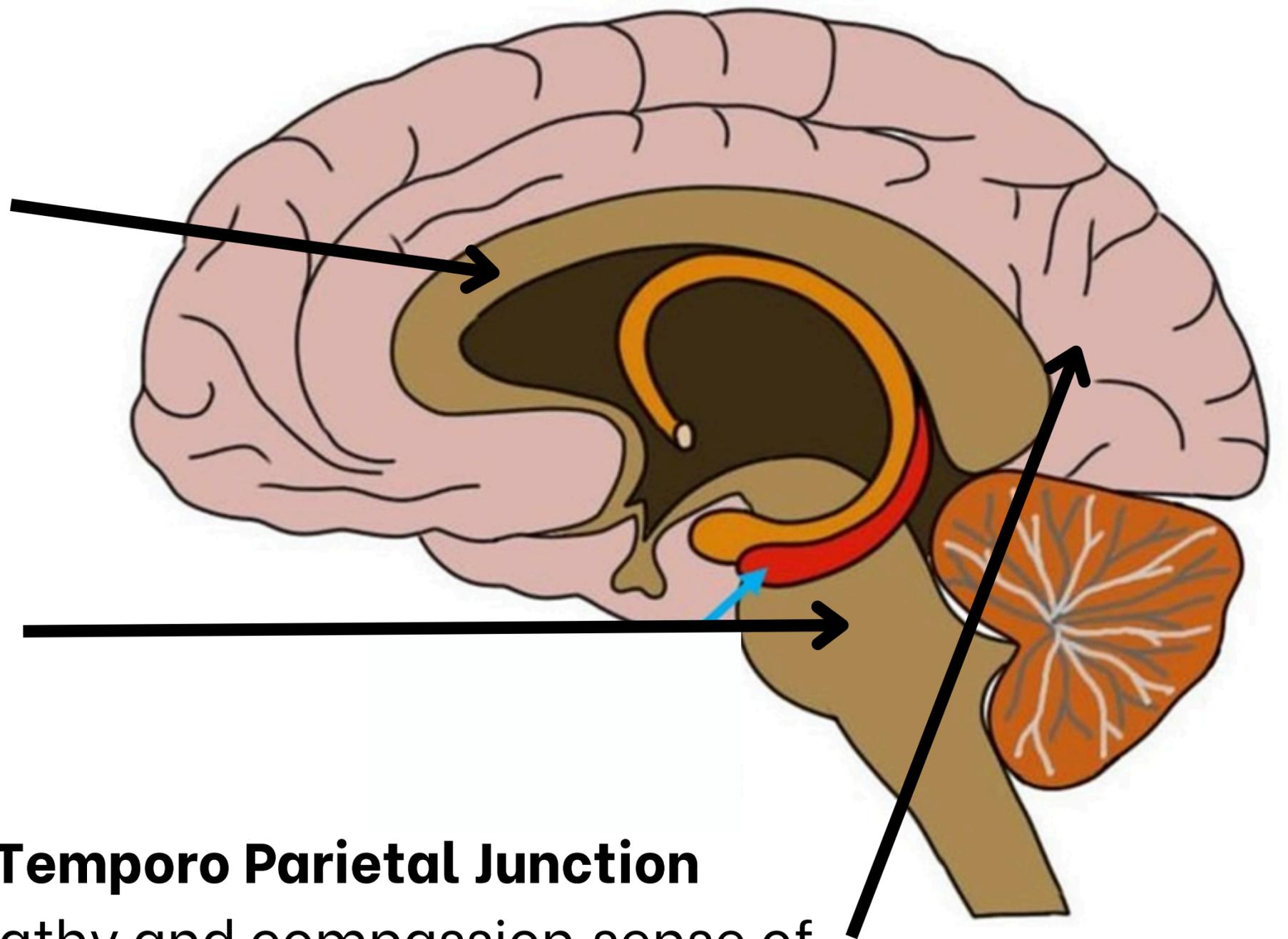
Connected to wandering thoughts and self-relevance

Pons

Where neurotransmitters help regulate brain activity.

Temporo Parietal Junction

Empathy and compassion, sense of perspective



Modern Triggers for the Amygdala

- Being treated unfairly
- Lack of respect
- Feeling (perception of) not being appreciated
- Feeling (perception of) not being heard
- Too high expectations
- Too much to do
- legal, economic, housing, and social stressors



SAFE



VENTRAL VAGAL

Feeling safe, present, relaxed, calm, engaged, and connected to yourself, others, and the world around you.

.....

Relaxed body and muscles, normal heart rate and blood pressure.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT



SYMPATHETIC

Feeling angry, fearful, panicked, anxiety, irritated, out of control, overwhelmed, and stressed.

.....

Tense body and muscles, increased heart rate and blood pressure, and high energy.

FREEZE



DORSAL VAGAL

Feeling detached, shut down, depressed, hopeless, numb, helpless, and ashamed.

.....

Decreased heart rate and blood pressure, slow breathing, low energy, and low sensation.

Polyvagal Theory

Our Stress Response

What is Polyvagal Theory?

3 Core Ideas

We have a
**3 Part Autonomic
Nervous System**



ventral
vagus
(safe mode)



dorsal
vagus
(shutdown)



sympathetic
system
(fight/flight)



The brainstem
detects danger
or safety



from
environment,
body, memories,
mindset

*& determines
our neural state*

This process
is called
Neuroception

Co-Regulation
is the strongest
safety cue



An under- or
over-activated
nervous system
returns to safety
through resonance
and mirroring

Infants and children require co-regulation for normal development.
Co-regulation deficits can be repaired at any point in life.

3 Core Ideas

Photo credit: Trauma GEEK on
Facebook

How does Mindfulness support the Brain?



- Increases activity of areas in the PFC related to focus, attention and emotional control
- Reduces reactivity in the amygdala by strengthening connection to PFC
- Promotes neuroplasticity
- Increases efficiency of processing sensory information
- Increases gray matter and volume in parts of our brain dedicated to learning and memory

RECAP

Compassionate Communication

Practice speaking and listening with presence. (4 min each)

- **BOTH:** Take a few moments to sit quietly and center yourself. (close eyes, take a deep breath, feel the weight of the body, find presence)
- **Listener:** Listen silently with your full attention. Notice how it feels just to listen without commenting, asking questions, responding verbally, trying to fix or solve anything. See if you can keep a small amount of awareness with your body—for example, sensing your hands, or the overall feeling of being here.
- **Speaker:** Before you begin, set a clear intention in your mind to take your time and speak with awareness. Consider this an experiment; the goal is not to relay information but to practice staying aware as you speak. When you're ready, speak for up to four minutes about how you're doing in general.
 - Can you feel your body at all as you speak? Your hands, feet, your heart?
 - Does it help you stay present to slow down a little or to pause?
- After each person has taken a turn— discuss what you noticed.
 - How was it to speak and try to stay present?
 - How was it to just listen with presence?
 - What was challenging, easy, surprising?

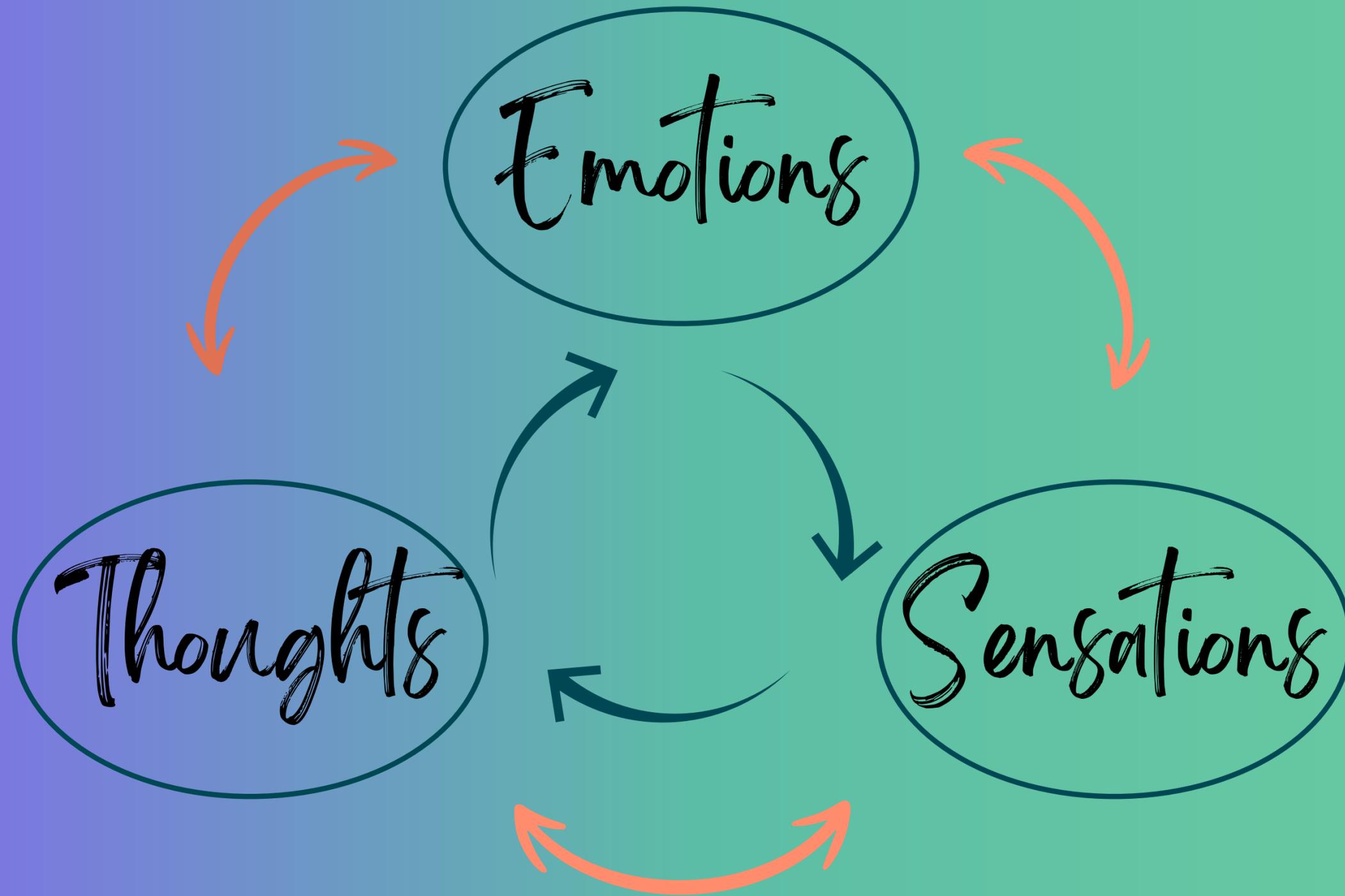




Illustration: Lauren Simkin Berke

The Understory

– Mark Nepo

I've been watching stars
rely on the darkness they
resist. And fish struggle with
and against the current. And
hawks glide faster when their
wings don't move.

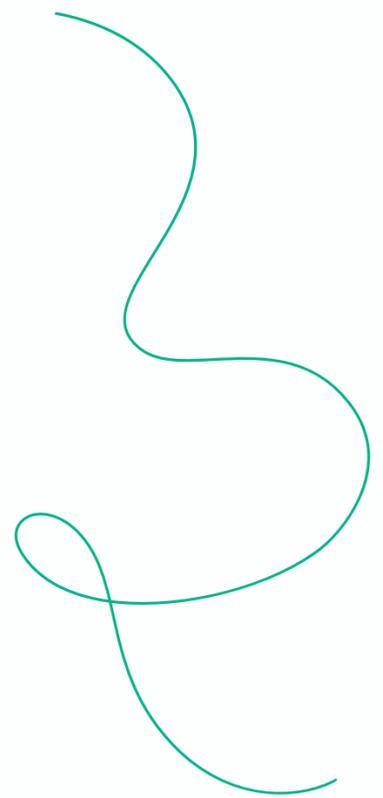
Still I keep retelling what
happens till it comes out
the way I want.

We try so hard to be the
main character when it is
our point of view that
keeps us from the truth.

The sun has its story
that no curtain can stop.
It's true. The only way beyond
the self is through it. The only
way to listen to what can never
be said is to quiet our need
to steer the plot.

T Chart

Shifting Beliefs



Write down a limiting belief that you have about yourself.

Example: *I can't fall in love because I'll get my heart broken.*

What limiting thoughts does it generate?

Example: *Don't put yourself out there to protect yourself.*

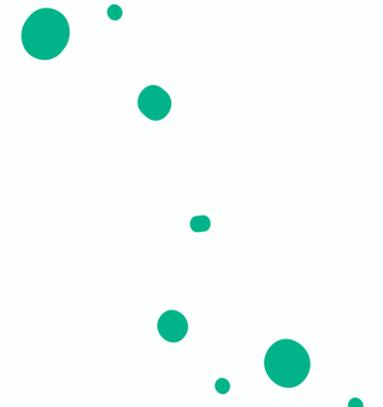
What limiting behaviors result from this belief?

Example: *Avoid social situations, and turn down dates.*

- **What end results occur as a result of this belief?**

- Example: *Never have the joy and life-affirming experience of love.*

Shifting Beliefs



Now, imagine the extreme opposite of this belief.

Example: I fall in love many times and experience deep loving joy each time.

What empowering thoughts does it generate?

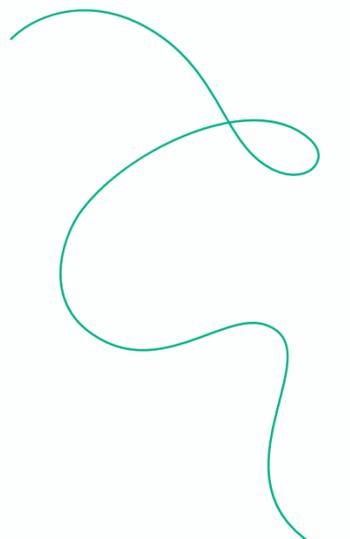
Example: The opportunity for love is everywhere.

What empowering behaviors result from this belief?

Example: I put myself in many situations where I might find and experience love, and I didn't hold myself back from being me.

What empowering results occur as a result of this belief?

Example: Have the joy and life-affirming experience of love!





Turn + Talk

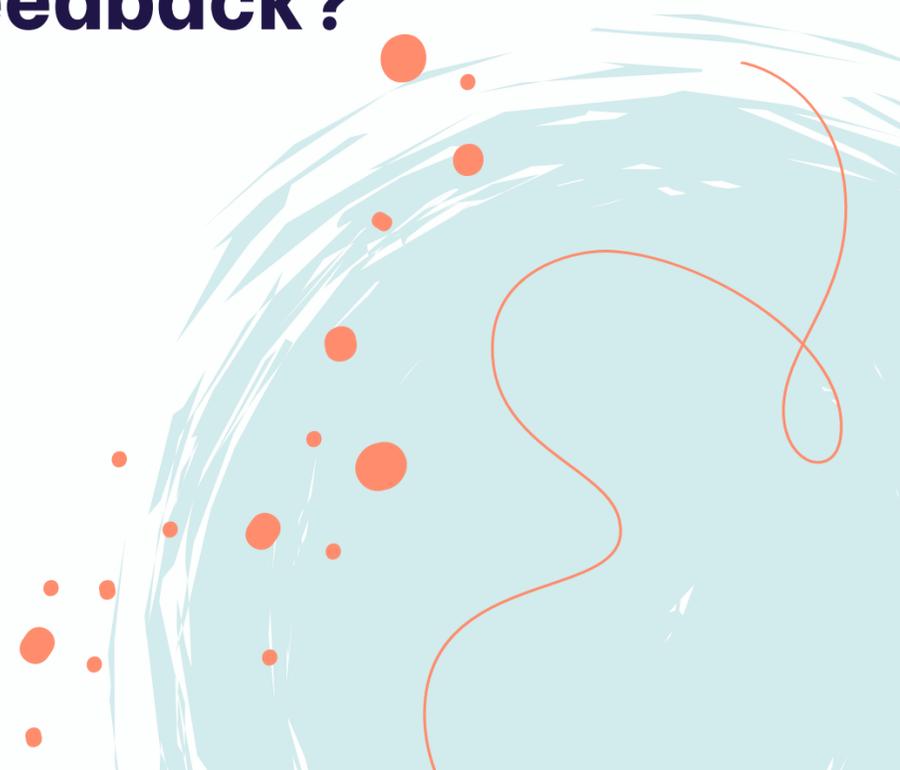
What comes up for you when you are going to receive feedback?

Thoughts/emotions?

What comes up for you when you are going to give feedback?

Thoughts/emotions?

What makes it easier to give/receive feedback?



Who you think you
are each day,
completely
determines the
universe you live in.

-Ram Dass

