

# COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY IN FORENSIC PRACTICE

A TRAUMA SENSITIVE APPROACH TO WORKING WITH OFFENDING

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## TOPICS

- Human nature and human harmfulness
- Theoretical foundations
- Key aspects of the model
- Framework for forensic CFT
- Outcomes of CFT

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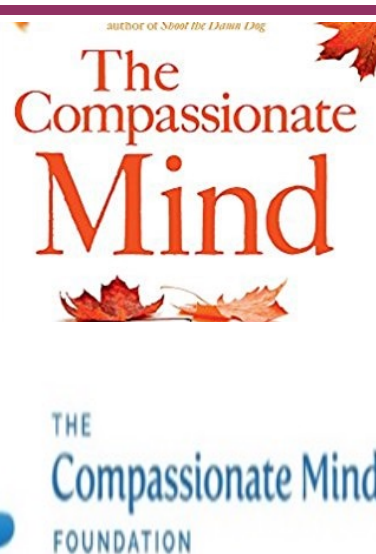
## COMPASSION: AN ANTIDOTE TO HUMAN HARMFULNESS?

- CFT explicitly addresses human harmfulness
- CFT aims to build compassionate motives
- CFT builds the capacity for grief, guilt and remorse
- CFT aspires to promote helpfulness not harmfulness

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### Compassion Focussed Therapy

Drawing on the pioneering work of Prof Paul Gilbert and the Compassionate Mind Foundation



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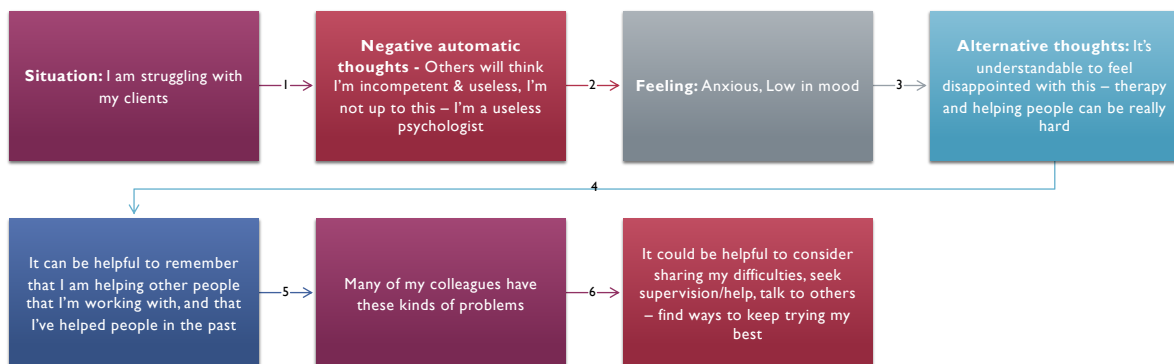
## HOW DID CFT START?

### 20 YEARS AGO USING CBT

- Noticing the hostility in the alternative thoughts or when engaging in 'helpful' homework
- Negative self-monitoring is constant – even in training in mindfulness – but it's the emotional tone that does the damage (Whelton & Greenberg, 2005)
- Noticing the strong fears blocks and resistances to affiliative emotions in the alternative thoughts or when engaging in helpful homework

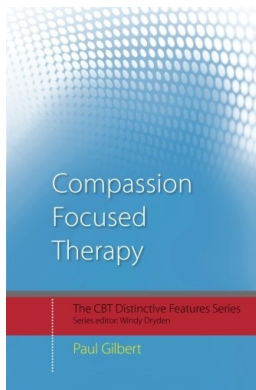


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## COMPASSION FOCUSSED THERAPY (GILBERT)



Focus on building compassionate motivation



Formulation (unintended consequences of safety seeking)



Focus on impact of early experiences



Focus on therapeutic alliance and experience of being "held in mind"



Body and mind awareness (imagery, mindfulness etc), compassionate mind training

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An integrative, process-based therapy that utilises insights and wisdoms from many of the main schools of psychotherapy.

Motives

Emotions

competencies

Behaviours

CFT aims to build psychological and physiological infrastructures for creating internal sense of **safeness**.



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## Motives



- Motives designed to satisfy basic life strategies to survive long enough to allow us to reproduce.
- Three groups of motives based around the core life tasks that support survival and reproduction.
- Motives require us to be alert and orientated to key signals.
- We are designed to behave in certain ways in response to signals and behave in certain ways to elicit signals
- Based on algorithms
- Motives can change the way we use competencies

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## Emotions

Emotions are specialized states that adjust physiology, cognition, subjective experience, facial expressions and behaviours in ways that increase the ability to meet the adaptive challenge of situations that have reoccurred over the evolutionary history of the species

Nesse (2019)



### Anxiety

Signals danger and motivates a defensive reaction (move, run)



### Anger

Signals a threat to us (or people we care about). Can include a block to our goals.  
Motivates us to challenge others or fight



### Disgust

Signals something harmful or poisonous. Motivates us to stay away of expel.



### Sadness

Signals a loss or separation of some type.



### Happiness

Signals that something is valued and important to us. Encourages us to pursue goals with rewarding outcomes



### Shame

Signals that our behaviour may lead to rejection. Motivates us to behave in ways that promote belonging and minimise rejection



### Guilt

Signals that our behaviour has brought harm to others. Motivates us to repair and prevent further harm.



### Contentment

Signals safety and allows us to rest and repair.

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## competencies

### Unique human competencies

- Competencies for engaging
- Competencies for action
- Skills and abilities that enable us to satisfy key life tasks.
- Flavour of competency depends on motive
- Our reasoning and planning abilities – we can think in time and plan for tomorrow, next week or next year
- Empathy and mind awareness
- Awareness of awareness

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## Core processes in CFT

### Definition: motive and algorithm(s):

Sensitivity to suffering in self and others with commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it

### 3 functions of emotions

1. To detect threat and activate defence-protection behaviours
2. To detect opportunities for resource securing behaviours
3. To detect opportunities for safe rest and digest recuperative behaviours

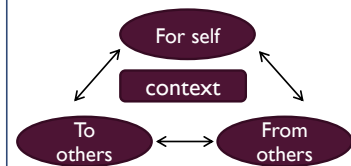
### competencies

1. Engagement: attention, sympathy, distress tolerance, empathy, openness
2. Actions: attention, imagery, thinking, behaviour, body, feeling

### compassionate self

An identity derived from the awareness of compassion with a commitment to try to live to be helpful not harmful

### Flows of compassion



### compassionate mind

Has the psychological and physiological competencies to engage compassion

**Facilitators:** courage, wisdom, sacrifice

**Inhibitors:** Fears, blocks, resistance/cost

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# SWITCHING MOTIVES



Therapeutic  
process/journey

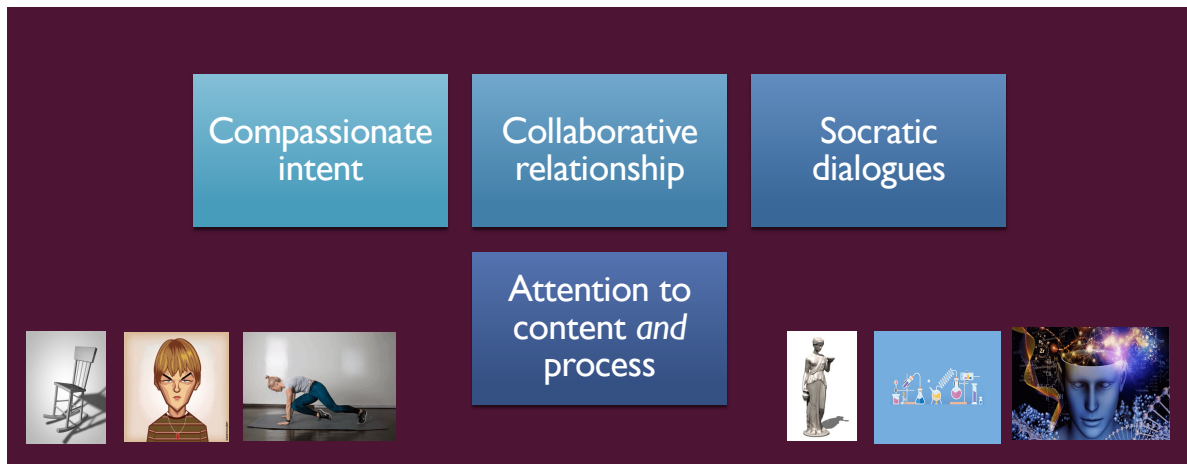


*Down rank*  
Social comparison- inferior  
External shame  
Submissive  
Striving  
Angry Self- - critical

*Up rank*  
Social comparisons –superior-entitled  
Humiliation  
Aggressive  
Striving  
Other blaming/critical

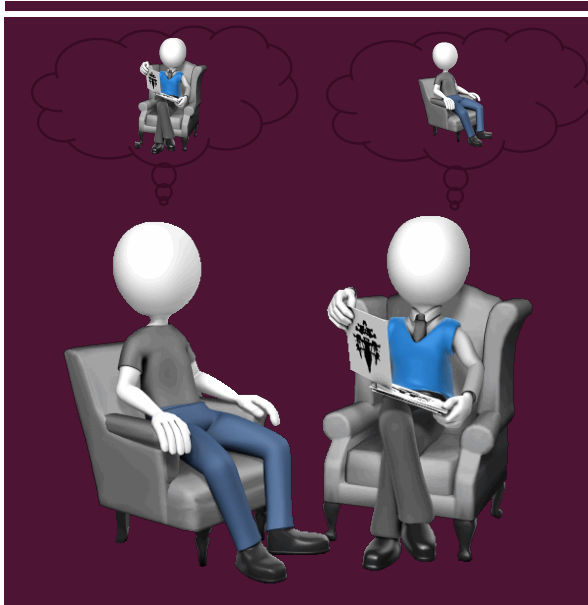
Distress sensitivity  
Able to help  
Distress tolerant  
Soothing-active  
Joy-guilt  
Empathic  
Self-reassuring

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**APPROACH: METHODS & TECHNIQUES | COMPASSION FOCUSED**

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## EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP

- Transference
- Counter-transference
- Projection
- Shame

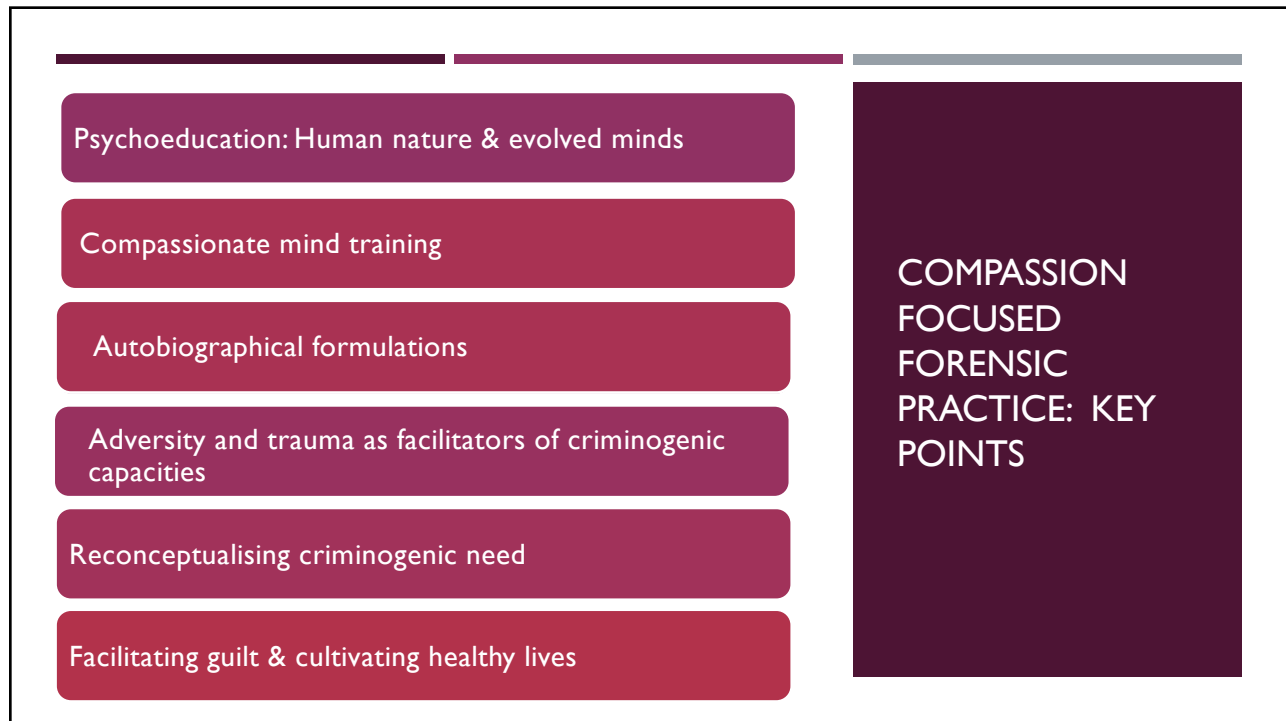
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## SHAME, EXCLUSION & THE THERAPEUTIC ALLIANCE

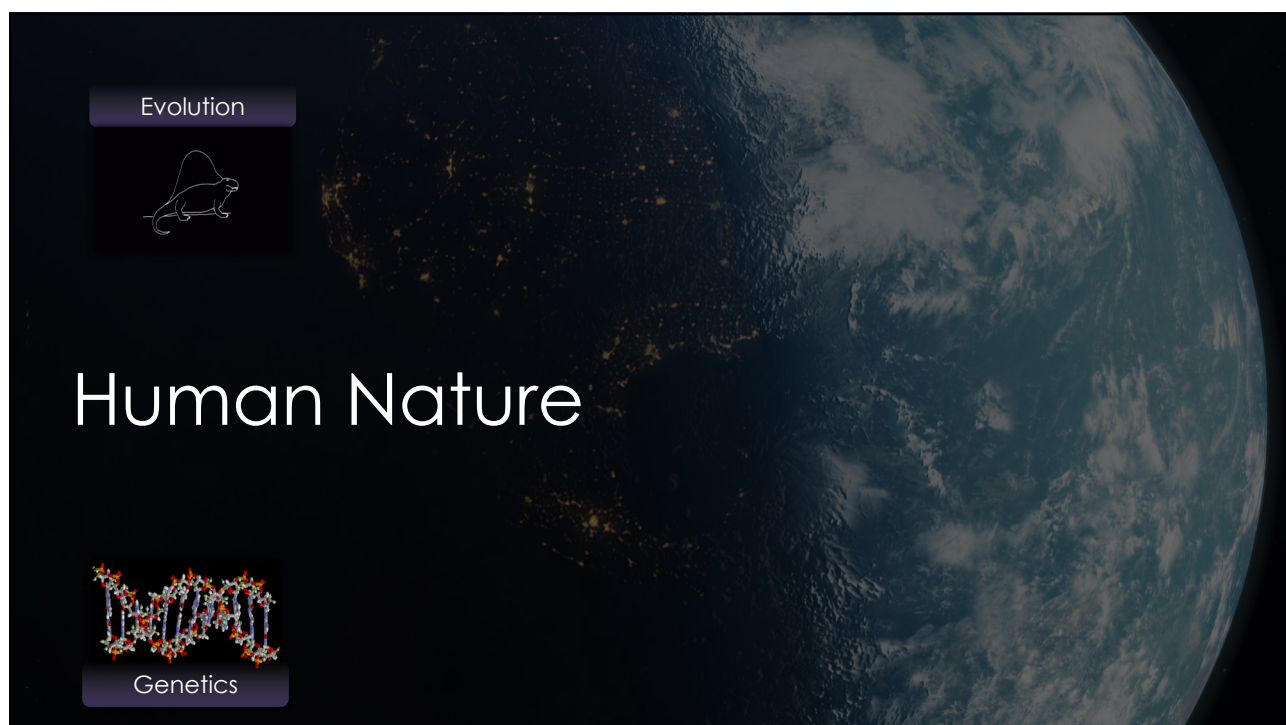


- 67% of adults who have experienced childhood abuse never disclose to their therapist (Burczycka 2017).
- Shame – something negative is exposed about us that invites criticism, rejection and disconnection (Lewis 1992). Implications for risk focused interventions.
- Common sources of shame include the body, fantasies, thoughts etc.
- People can conceal shameful parts and then feel shame for concealing them

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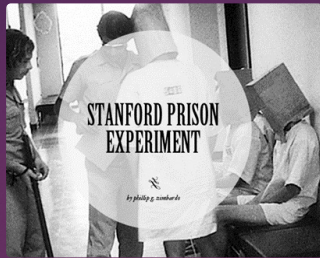


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We are capable of wonder

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But history shows us our true nature:  
People cause harm to people

AND THAT WE ARE ALL CAPABLE OF HARM | CONTEXTUAL BEHAVIORISM


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CRUELTY

WE ARE CAPABLE OF REMARKABLE HARM AND INDIFFERENCE



£500000  
per week



IN THE UK TODAY  
**1.6 MILLION**  
CHILDREN ARE  
GROWING UP IN  
**SEVERE POVERTY**


CALLOUSNESS

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HUMAN NATURE

Children engage in prosocial behaviour from an early age. Whether children will reliably provide compassionate help to a suffering individual is unclear. To investigate this, 73 4-years-olds were presented with three novel tasks in which they and a puppet had opportunity to win stickers by completing respective versions of the same tasks. In all cases, the puppets were unable to complete their tasks. The puppets 'reacted' by being either upset or not upset. While children provided help when it did not cost them, their inclination to do so was significantly diminished when it incurred a personal cost.

Green, M., Kirby, J. N., & Nielsen, M. (2018). The cost of helping: An exploration of compassionate responding in children. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 36(4), 673-678.



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COMPASSION



WEDNESDAY

CRUELTY



MakeAGIF.com

HUMAN  
CHARACTERISTICS  
AND MOTIVES

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How ca we  
understand our  
nature?

Evolution



Genetics



Early  
experience



Adult  
experience



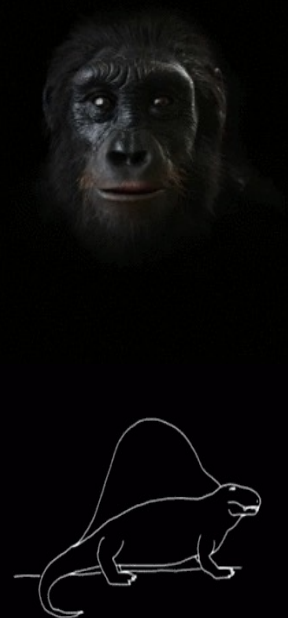
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# Evolution

- ▶ Key tasks: survival and reproduction
- ▶ Our brains and bodies have evolved over millions of years
- ▶ Evolution operates slowly
- ▶ Which means there are parts of our brain that evolved for our ancestral environments
- ▶ And we have competing motivations that support us to complete differing social tasks.



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## EVOLUTIONARY GIFT I:

Satisfy key life tasks



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## EVOLUTIONARY GIFT 2: A TRICKY BRAIN

	old brain	new brain
		
Motives:	harm-avoidance, food, sex, caring, status	Imagine   plan   anticipate   self-monitor   empathy   perspective-taking
Emotions:	anger, anxiety, sadness, joy	Ruminate   predict   self-consciousness
Behaviours:	fight, flight, shut down, courting, caring	<b>Self-criticism   self-loathing   shame   humiliation</b>

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EVOLUTIONARY  
GIFT 3:

Group affiliation &  
need for  
connection

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Evolutionary gift 4:

Brain:body connected and communicating

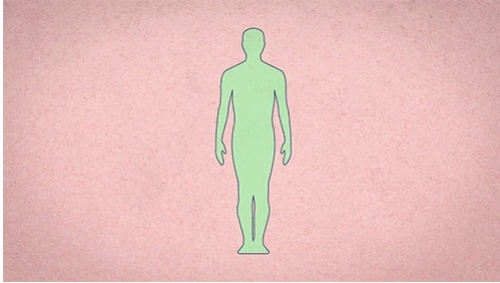
Story follows state

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-  Evolution operates very slowly
-  Evolution is not intentional
-  Characteristics that exist now were selected for in ancient ancestral environments.
-  Our brain has built on ancient architectures (old and new brain)
-  Which means that we can be organised by ancient motives and drives (rank, sexual competition, resources)

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## GENETICS



- We are gene built
- We do not select our genes
- We are predisposed to certain characteristics
- We are not to blame for our predispositions
- Our early experiences may shape our phenotypic expression (epigenetics)

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disadvantage

intolerance

poverty

discrimination



Inherited trauma

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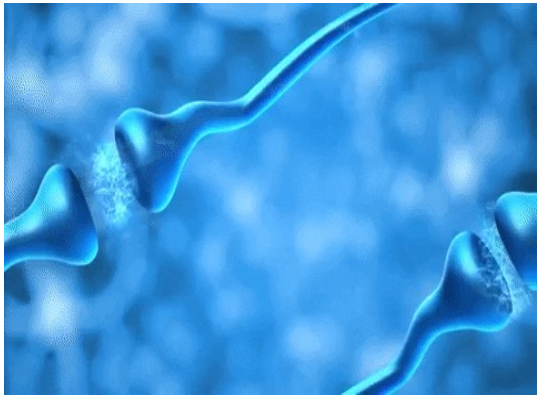
## CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY CREATES A CONTEXT FOR ADULT ADVERSITY

Study	Population	n	Prevalence (%)	
			1 ACE	4+ ACE
Felitti & Anda (2009)	US citizens	13500	52	6.2
Bellis et al (2014)	UK citizens	3885	47	8
Levenson et al (2014)	Men with sexual convictions	679	84	50
Levenson et al (2014)	Women with sexual convictions	47	80	41
Morris et al (2020)	Adolescents in secure health care	36	91	58
Taylor (2021)	Men with sexual convictions and ID	21	100	83

On 31st March 2019 there were 400,00 children in need in the uk.  
52,300 children subject to a child protection plan

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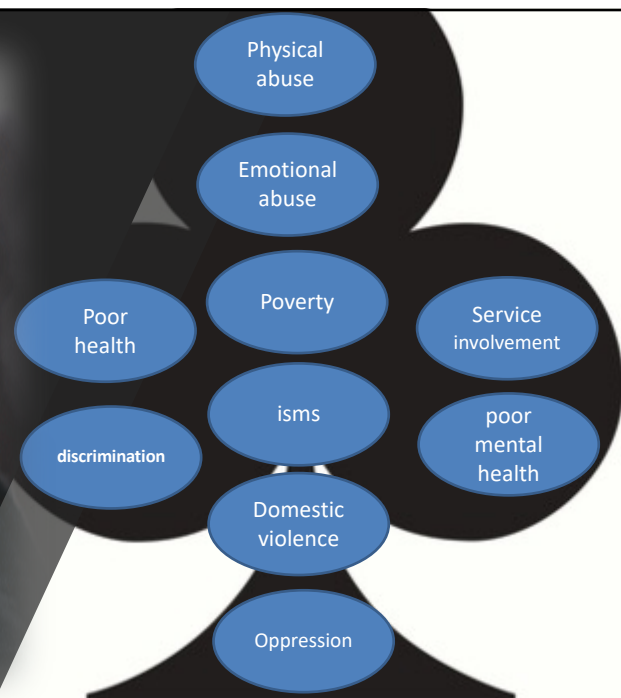
## SYNAPTIC PRUNING



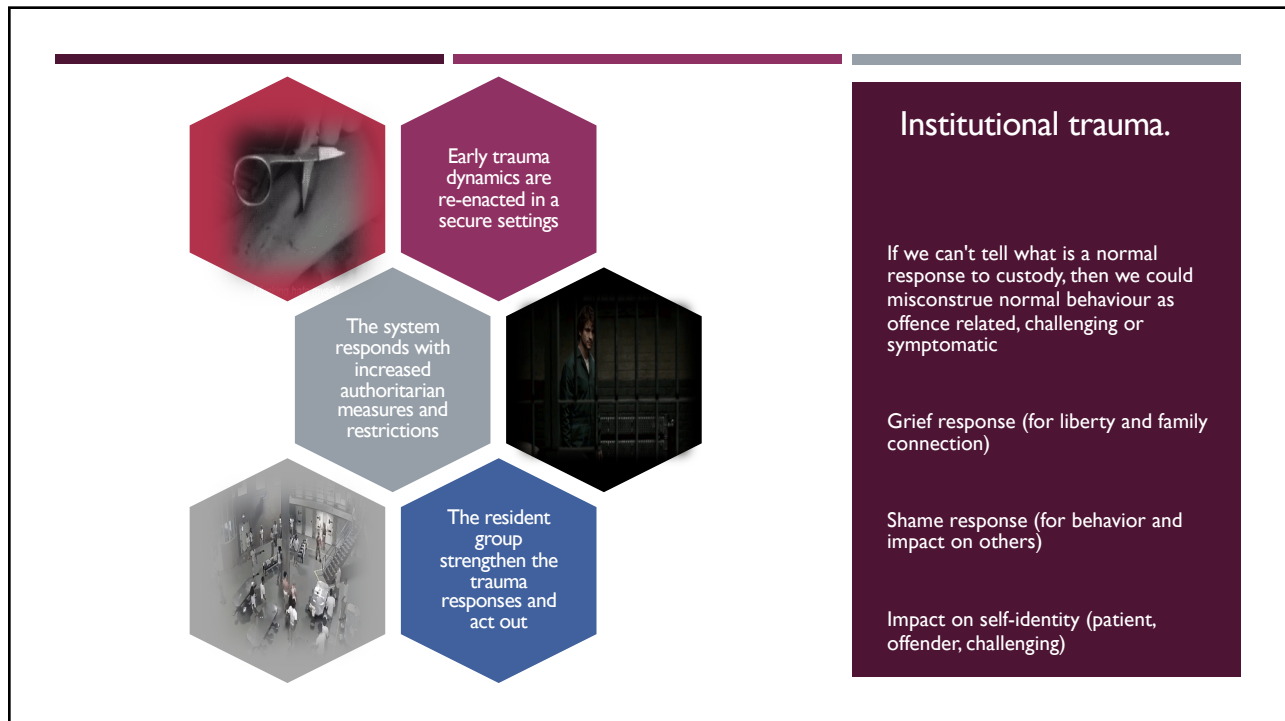
- Efficient neural pathways are preserved across development
- Inefficient neural pathways are pruned away
- Efficiency depends on the environment
- The neural system that emerges is designed to be maximally efficient within the environment in which it developed.

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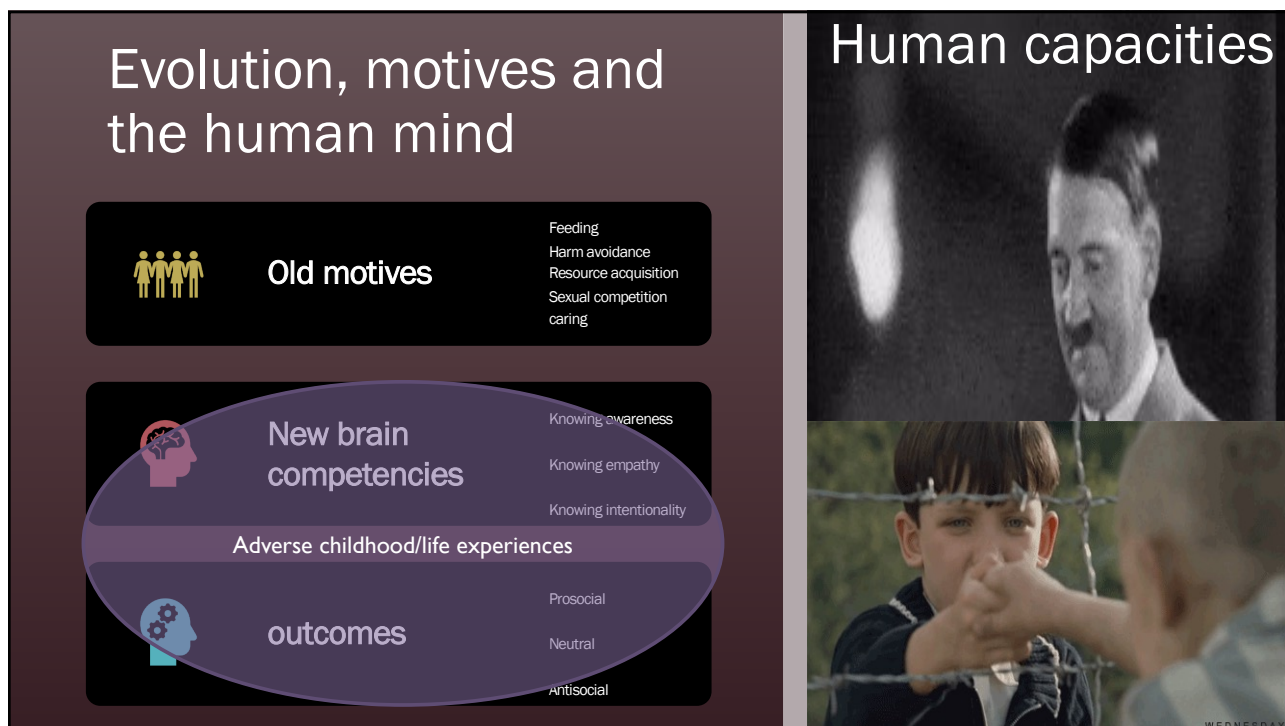
## Adverse Adult Experiences



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Psychoeducation: Human nature & evolved minds

Compassionate mind training

Autobiographical formulations

Adversity and trauma as facilitators of criminogenic capacities

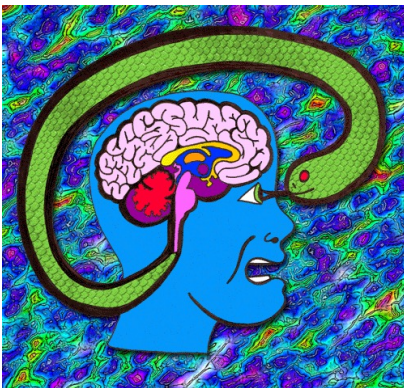
Reconceptualising criminogenic need

Facilitating guilt & cultivating good lives

## COMPASSION FOCUSED FORENSIC PRACTICE: KEY POINTS

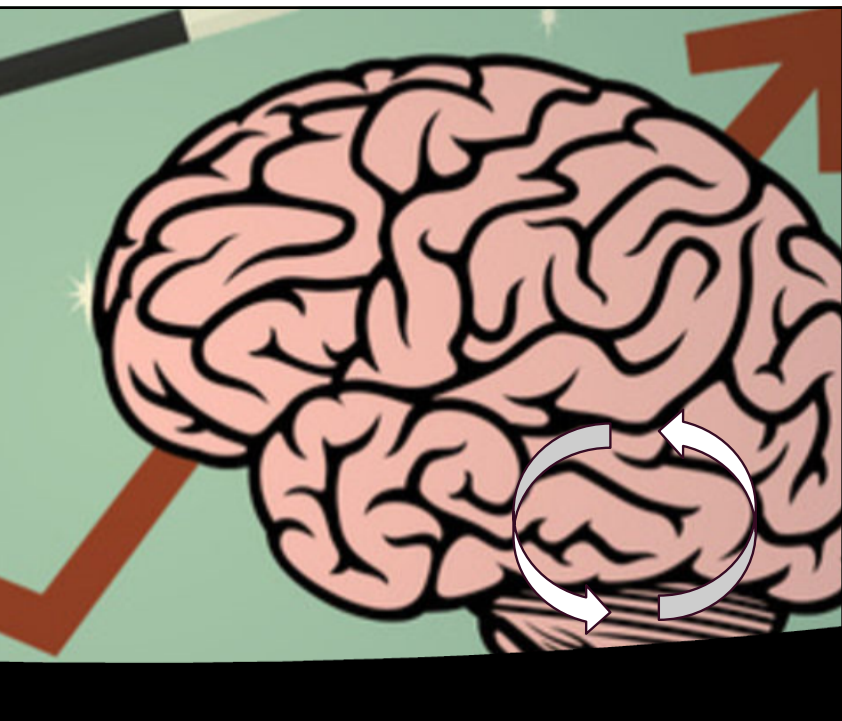
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## COMPASSION FOCUSED FORENSIC PSYCHOTHERAPY | MODULE ONE : PSYCHOEDUCATION



- Aims and hopes
- Tricky brains
- Three circles: multiple selves
- Embodiment
- Compassion
- Fears, blocks and resistances (intuitive wisdom for protection and caution)

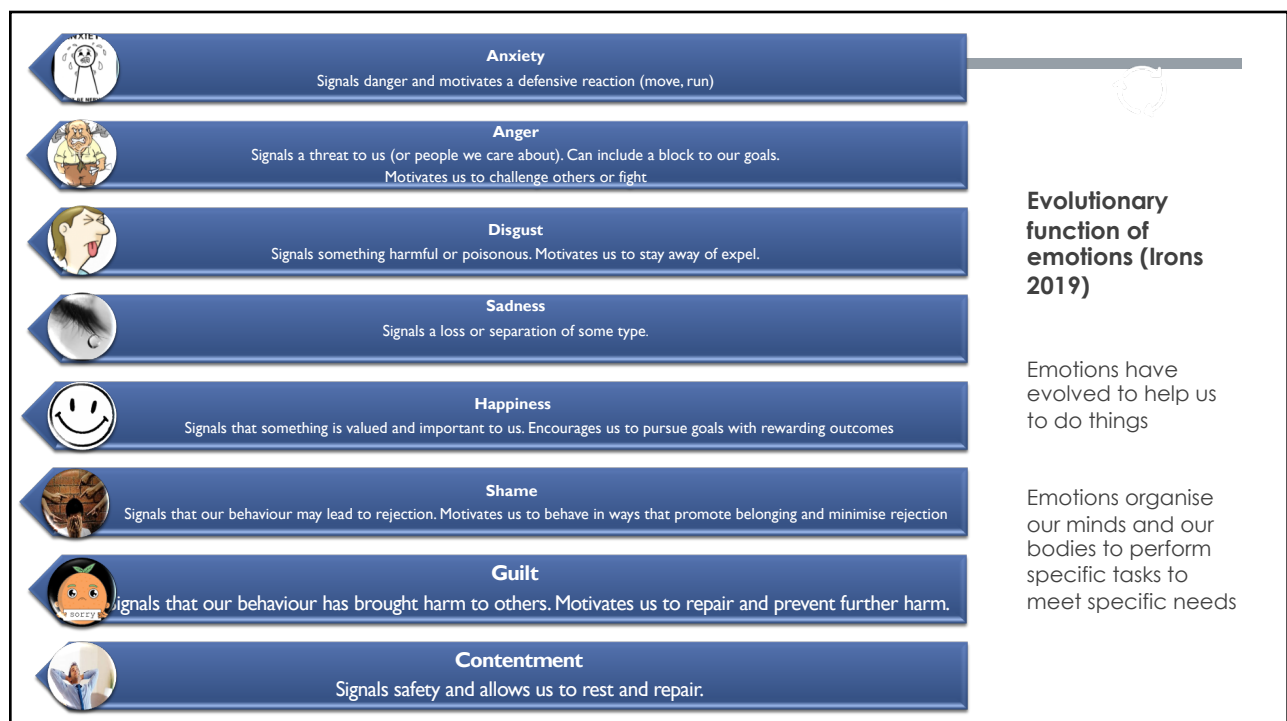
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## TRICKY BRAIN

- New brain/old brain interface
- There's too much info out there to notice
- Your memory isn't a recorder
- Your mind will take shortcuts (heuristics)
- You are biased (based on experience and biological imperative)

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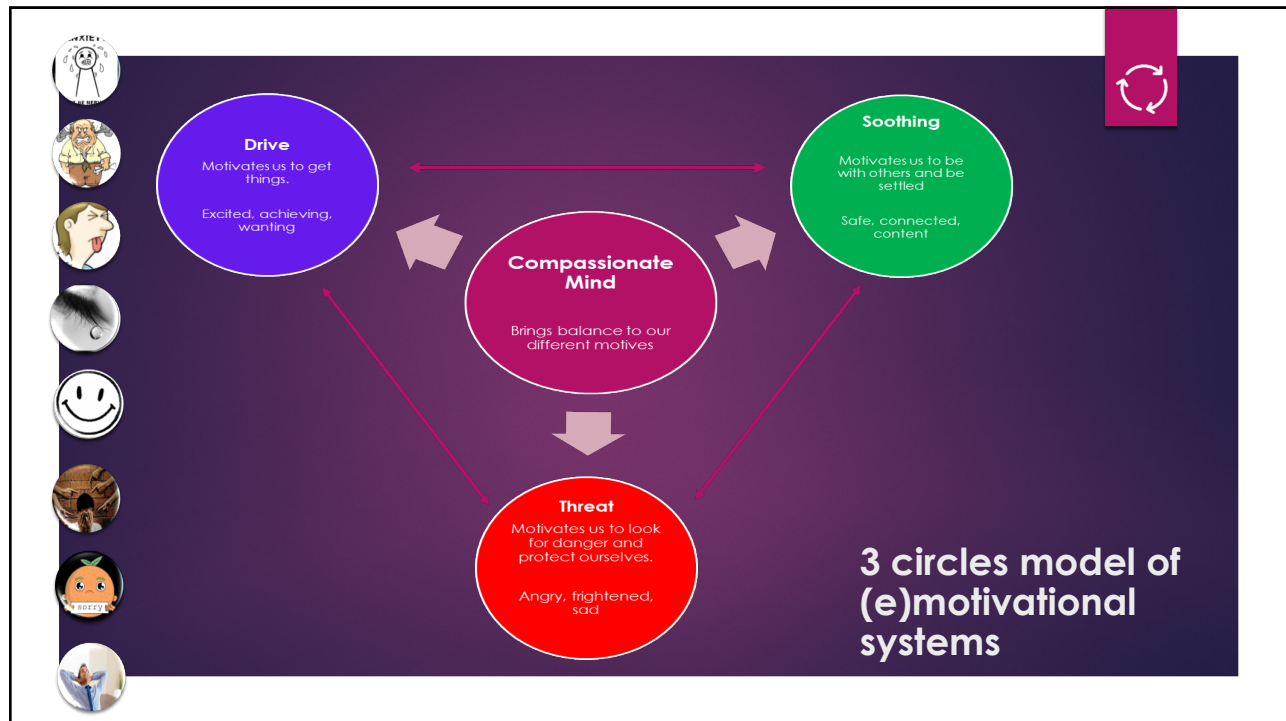
	<b>Anxiety</b> Signals danger and motivates a defensive reaction (move, run)
	<b>Anger</b> Signals a threat to us (or people we care about). Can include a block to our goals. Motivates us to challenge others or fight.
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	<b>Sadness</b> Signals a loss or separation of some type.
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	<b>Guilt</b> Signals that our behaviour has brought harm to others. Motivates us to repair and prevent further harm.
	<b>Contentment</b> Signals safety and allows us to rest and repair.

### Evolutionary function of emotions (Irons 2019)

Emotions have evolved to help us to do things

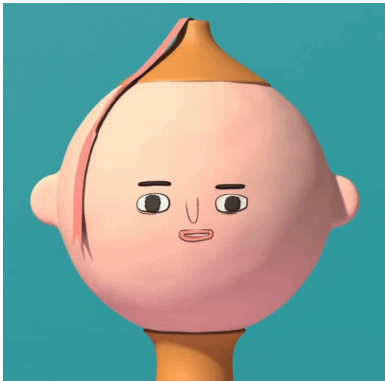
Emotions organise our minds and our bodies to perform specific tasks to meet specific needs

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## MULTIPLE SELVES



- We have different presentations – ways of being and relating.
- These different presentations have different physiologies, different ways of organising our thinking and have different behavioural repertoires.
- Context can shift our motivational state and therefore the version of self that is most effective at meeting our needs

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## GETTING TO KNOW OUR “SELVES”



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## GETTING TO KNOW OUR “SELVES”:

WHAT IS THE  
MOTIVE THAT SITS  
BEHIND THE *SEXUAL*  
*SELF* THAT CAUSED  
HARM



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## INTRODUCING COMPASSION TO OUR SELVES

- Focussing to nurture compassionate attention
- Cultivating a flow of compassionate thoughts
- Adopting a compassionate posture
- Using memories to feel compassion
- Imagining and rehearsing compassionate acts.



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## COMPASSION AS A MOTIVATION AND NOT AN EMOTION



SENSITIVITY TO SUFFERING

### 1<sup>st</sup> psychology

- Non judgement
- Sympathy
- Sensitivity
- Care for well being
- Distress tolerance
- Empathy

### 2<sup>nd</sup> psychology

- Attention
- Imagery
- Reasoning
- Feeling
- Sensory
- behaviour

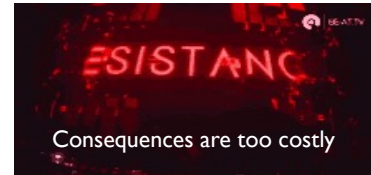
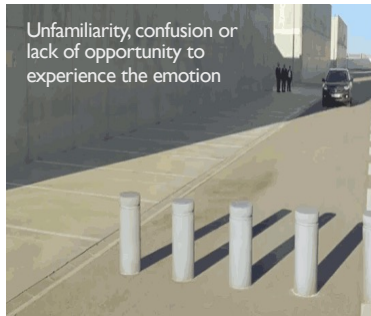
courage

wisdom

commitment

INTENTION TO ALLEVIATE SUFFERING

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## FEARS | BLOCKS | RESISTANCES (FOR SELF-COMPASSION AND FOR GUILT)

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Psychoeducation: Human nature & evolved minds

Compassionate mind training

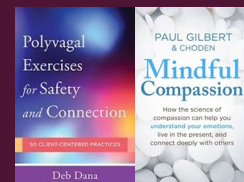
Adversity and trauma as facilitators of criminogenic capacities

Autobiographical formulations

Reconceptualising criminogenic need

Facilitating guilt & cultivating good lives

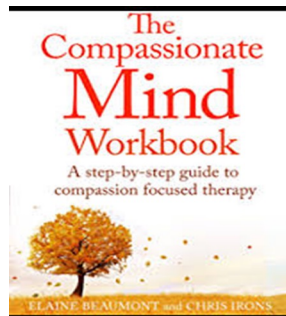
## FORENSIC CFT: COMPASSIONATE MIND TRAINING



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## BUILDING COMPETENCIES FOR A COMPASSIONATE MIND

- Noticing
- Attending
- Mindful awareness
- Soothing Rhythm breathing
- Metacognition
- Acceptance
- Imagery
- Self-compassion



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## FORENSIC CFT: FORMULATION



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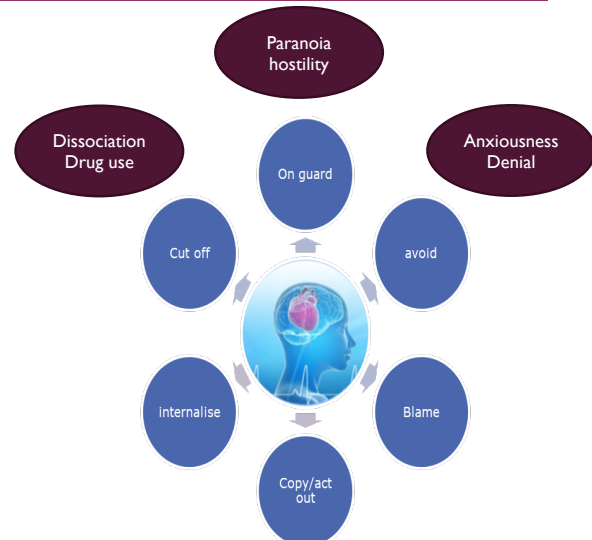
## FORENSIC CFT: UNDERSTANDING OUR PAIN

Psychoeducation | Trauma  
informed understanding |  
Developing sadness (facing  
trauma) | Re-writing scripts  
| Offence trauma

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## HUMAN REACTIONS TO ADVERSITY AND TRAUMA

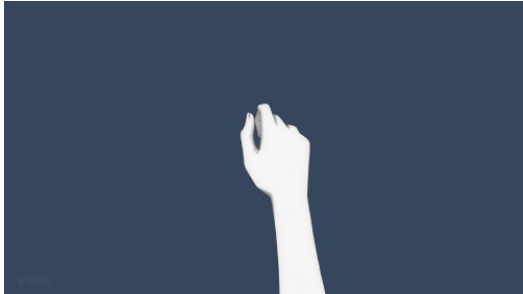
- Our minds seem to have certain ways that they respond to repeated traumas
- If the human mind reacts in certain predictable ways then perhaps those ways are designed to happen.
- We know that safety strategies are highly resilient (better safe than sorry)
- This means they will last over time and outside of the trauma context (resilience not resistance)



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## APPROACHING TRAUMA: COLLABORATIVELY CONFRONTING DISTRESS



- Create a trauma sensitive context for work
- Work with the person to plan the best approach
- Developmental sequence (as things happened)
- Graded hierarchy
- Idiosyncratic order

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FORENSIC CFT:  
CRIMINOGENIC  
NEED

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## INDIVIDUAL VARIATION & CRIMINOGENIC INFLUENCES

- Epigenetics & phenotypic expression
- How responses to adversity mature over time depends on genetic foundation and individual experience
- Some criminogenic factors operate in the short-term while others sustain an influence over a longer time
- Criminogenic factors can have interact with each other to produce the harmful outcome
- Criminogenic influence will therefore vary
- We need to understand what is criminogenic for the individual (people with harmful sexual interests don't all cause harm)



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I'M SO  
FUCKING  
WORTHLESS

(ordered) trauma responses



**RE-CONCEPTUALISING CRIMINOGENIC NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE ORIGINS:**

FUNCTIONAL RESPONDING FROM EVOLVED MINDS

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ORIGINS OF CRIMINOGENIC CAPACITIES:  
FACING OUR DARK SIDE TO MANAGE OUR DARK SIDE



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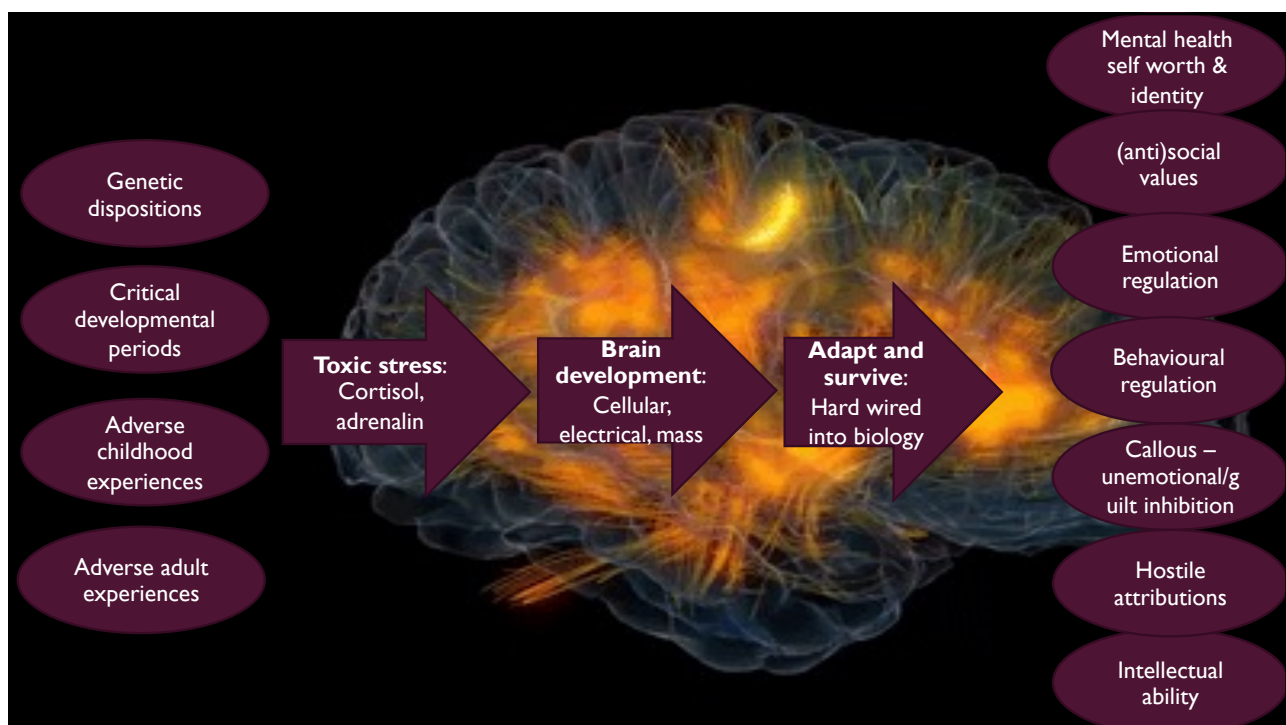
ORIGINS OF CRIMINOGENIC CAPACITIES:  
CULTIVATION OF CRIMINOGENIC CAPACITIES



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## EVOLUTION OF CRIMINOGENIC CAPACITIES OVER TIME (RECRUITING NEW COMPETENCIES TO SUPPORT MOTIVE)

- Physical size
- Testosterone
- Desensitised
- Hostile attributions
- Callous-unemotional

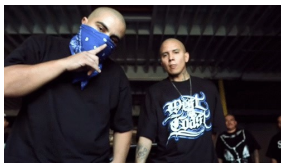


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## ORIGINS OF CRIMINOGENIC CAPACITIES: GROUP BELONGING, SOCIAL ATTACHMENTS AND INTIMACY



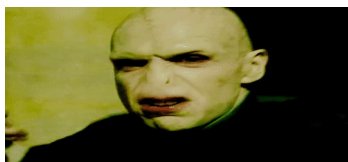
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## PAIRING : JOINING : GROUPING: FUNDAMENTAL TO LIFE

- Connection is a biological necessity : an evolutionary imperative
- The ability to self-regulate is built on ongoing experiences of co-regulation.
- Reliable co-regulation builds resilience in the ANS that allows management of separation and distress.
- Group membership became a survival necessity
- Affiliative relationships with sexual partners facilitate reproductive fitness

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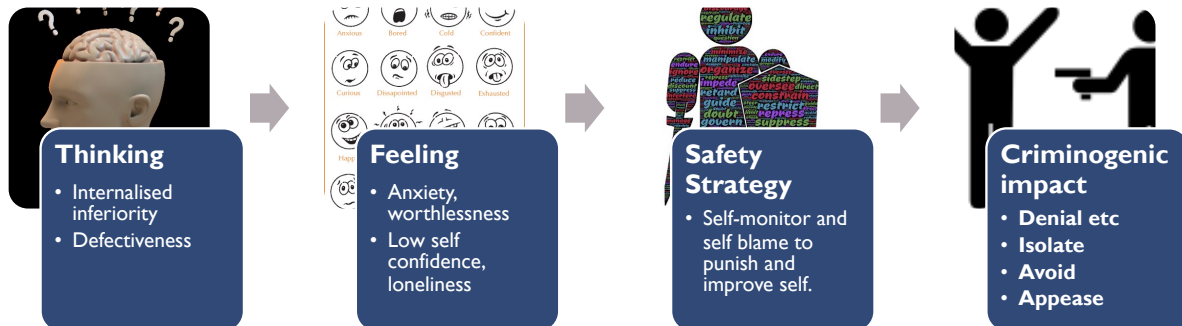
- **Shame:** signals potential social disapproval and rejection | stimulates protection of self
- **Humiliation:** signals the source of disclosure of transgression | stimulates attack on source
- **Guilt:** signals harm to others | stimulates reparation and change

## SOCIAL EMOTIONS TO GUIDE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

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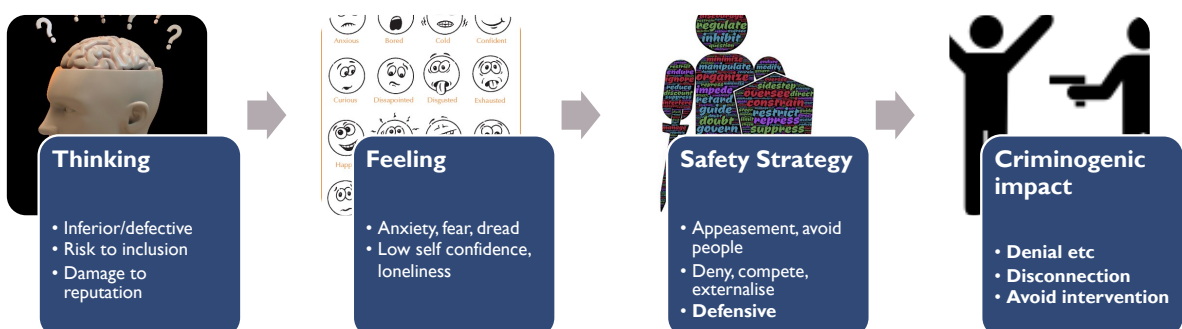


## INTERNAL SHAME (SELF CRITIC)



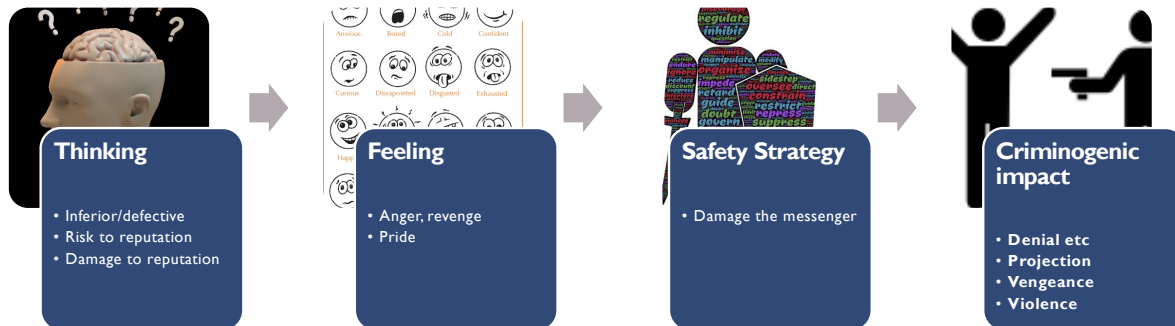
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## EXTERNAL SHAME



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## HUMILIATION



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## SOCIAL SAFENESS BEHAVIOURS



- Smiling and social engagement
- Avoidance
- Hostility
- Denial
- Minimising the impact
- Justifying the act

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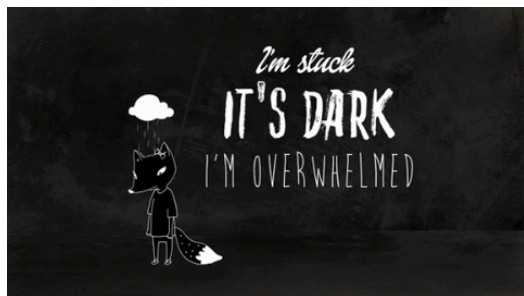
Facilitating guilt & cultivating healthy lives

## FORENSIC CFT: FACILITATING GUILT AND CULTIVATING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Safety check | Restoration  
narratives and healthy lives |  
Guilt, shame and humiliation  
| FBRs | Mentalising | Practicing  
guilt | Noticing consequences |  
Understanding harm |

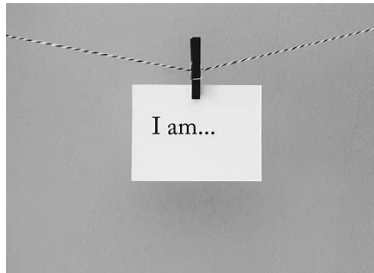
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## CAREFUL



- Highly challenging work
- Stimulating distress as a result of harm caused in a context that is now connected to the experience of abuse/trauma/adversity.
- Now a felt and embodied response to harm.

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DEVELOPING MY HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:  
identity: restorative commitments : healthy lifestyle

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GUILT



Thinking

- Hurt and harm **self** has caused to others
- (outward / mentalising )

Feelings

- Sadness, sorrow, remorse
- Empathy

Safety Strategy

- Reparation
- Apologetic
- Making amends
- Self-correction

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## FACILITATING GUILT

### Practicing Guilt

Mentalising  
Graded exposure (unintended : intended)  
Graded exposure – increasing levels of harm caused

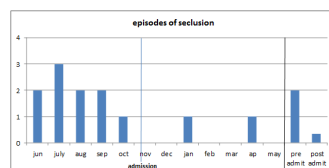
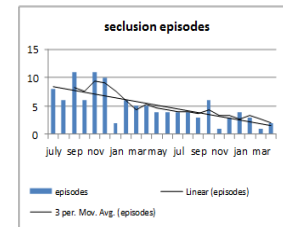
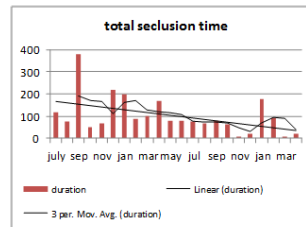
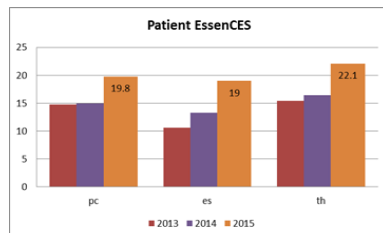
### Noticing the consequences

On my in-group (family, friends)  
On social rank  
On self

### Understanding the harm I caused

Observing the harm  
Mentalising the consequences  
Restoration

77

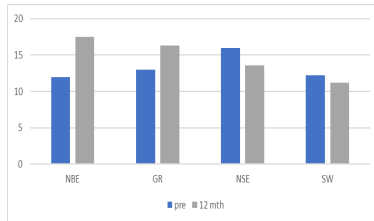


AN EVALUATION OF A  
COMPASSION FOCUSED  
THERAPEUTIC  
COMMUNITY FOR MEN  
WHO USE VIOLENCE TO  
MANAGE THEIR LIVES

(Taylor 2017)

- Medium Secure Service
- Young adult men (av 24) with mild/ borderline Intellectual abilities.
- High levels of trauma histories, chronic adversity and multiple care placements

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Tricky brain provides a de-shaming understanding of problematic behaviours

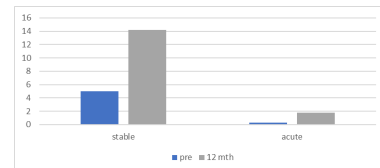
Non risk focused aspects of the group provided a broader understanding (we talk about all of me rather than risky me”).

Opportunities to explore personal adversity facilitated trust

Opportunities to explore personal experiences facilitated risk focused work

Flexibility of the programme content created a more responsive and engaging context.

Willingness to explore the therapeutic relationship created a containing relationship.



## COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY GROUP FOR MEN SERVING LIFE SENTENCES FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES (Taylor (2021); Taylor & Hocken (2021))

- Increased guilt
- Reduced shame
- Prepared to face the dark side (accept the presence of risk)

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## FORENSIC SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP | COMPASSIONATE MIND FOUNDATION



EMAIL DISCUSSION GROUP ZOOM MEETINGS,  
ANNUAL CPD DAY



KERENSA HOCKEN:  
KERENSAHOCKEN@GMAIL.COM



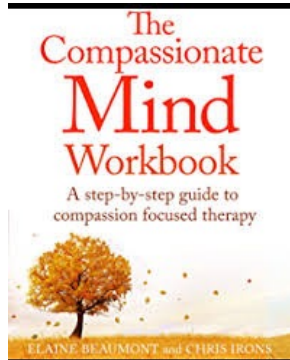
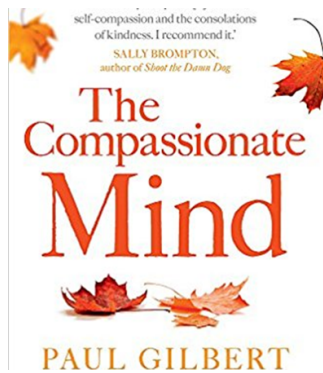
JON TAYLOR:  
PIT0007@GMAIL.COM/J.TAYLOR@NHS.NET



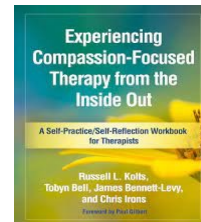
[www.compassionatemind.co.uk](http://www.compassionatemind.co.uk)

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## ESSENTIAL READING AND RESOURCE...



[www.compassionatemind.co.uk](http://www.compassionatemind.co.uk)



Russell Kolts – based in USA  
<http://www.compassionatemind.net/>