

# **Compassion Training Initiative**

## **Compassion Focused Therapy**

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**(Webinar Hosted by PAU's MA program)**

# **Background to Development of CFT**

**CFT was created by Professor Paul Gilbert in the UK**

- **Developed over 30 years of working with people suffering from severe and chronic depression, as well as severe personality disorders.**
- **CFT is much broader than psychotherapy! CFT is an in depth journey into the human experience. Based on Its many insights and lessons learned a psychotherapy model is being offered.**
- **CFT could be used in many more ways to understand and address challenges with the human condition.**



# Why do we need Compassion?

## Life is Hard



# **Compassion begins with a reality check**

**We are an emergent species in the ‘flow of life’ so our brains, with their motives, emotions and competencies are products of evolution, designed to function in certain ways**

**Our lives are short (25,000-30,000 days), decay and end, and are subject to various malfunctions and diseases – in a genetic lottery. Everything changes – the nature of impermanence – the nature of tragedy**

**The social circumstances of our lives, over which we have limited control, have major implications for the kinds of minds we have, the kind of person we become, the values we endorse, and the lives we live**



# **So, Basic Philosophy is That:**

**We all *just find ourselves* here with a brain, emotions and sense of (socially made) self we did not choose but have to figure out**

**Life involves dealing with tragedies (threats, losses, diseases, decay, death) and people do the best they can**

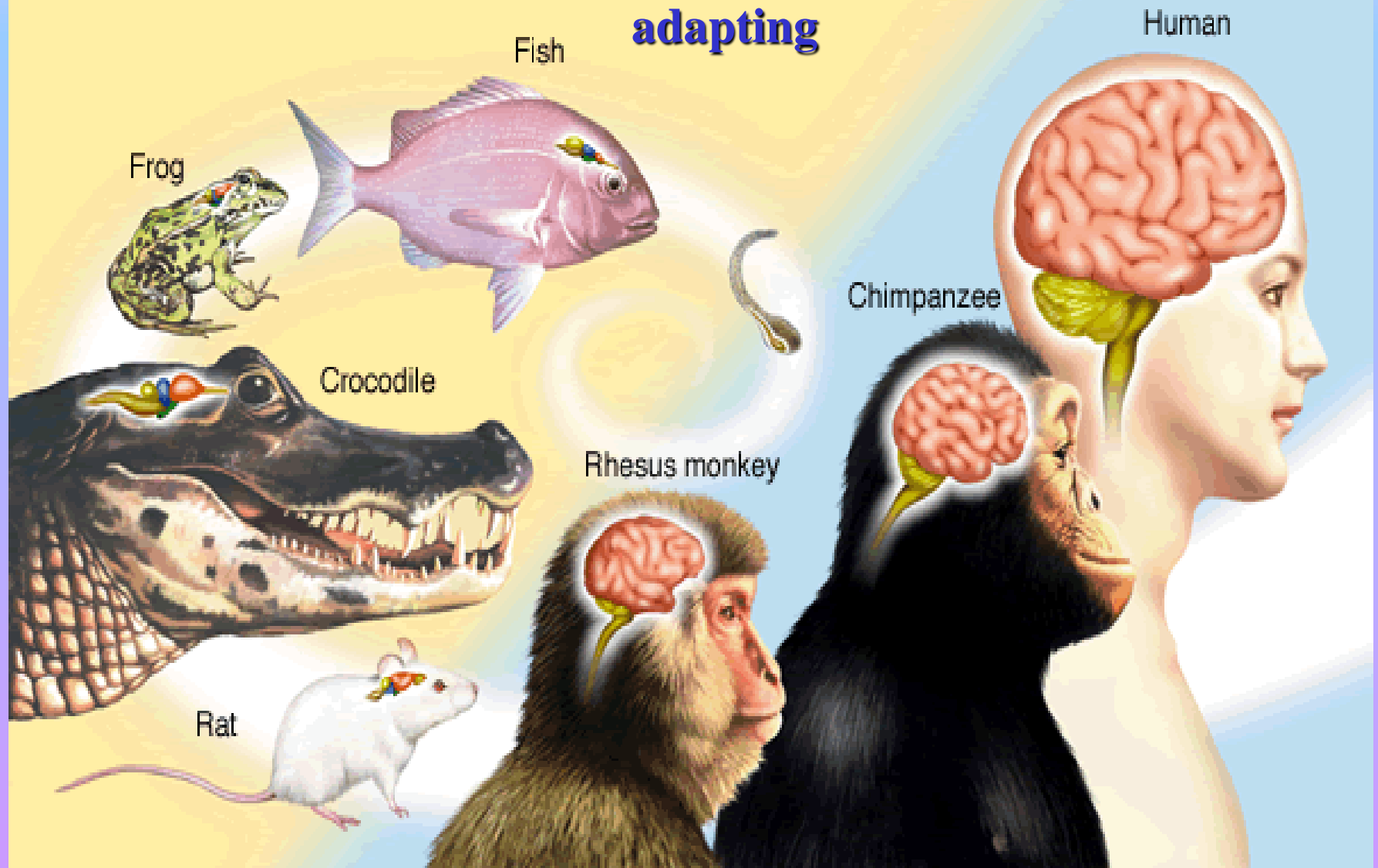
**Much of what goes on in our minds is not of ‘our design’ and not our fault**

**We are all in the same boat (shared humanity)**

**De-pathologising and de-labelling – understanding unique coping processes and how evolution has led to us having “tricky brains”**

***It's not your fault,  
but it is your responsibility!***

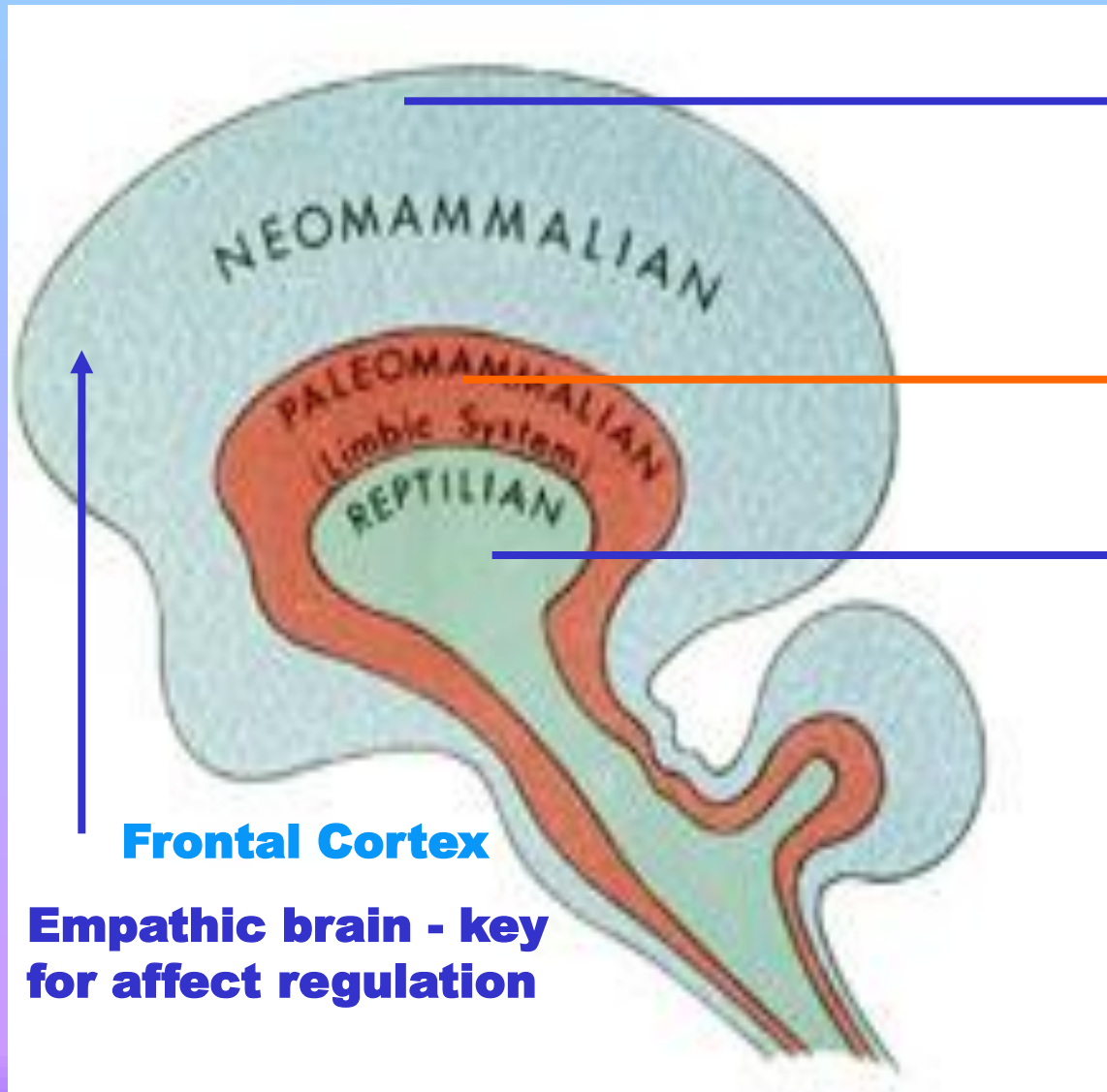
**The human brain is the product of many millions of years of evolution – a process of conserving, modifying and adapting**





# Evolution of strategies, motives and competencies:

## The emergence of new psychologies in the world



Symbolic thought, self-awareness, metacognition  
mentalizing

Kin caring/affection,  
attachment, alliances, play,  
social communications

Fight, Flight, Sex, Hunt,  
Territorial

# **Evolution has left us with ‘tricky brains’**

**Old brain – share competencies with other animals, and includes:**

**Motives:** Safeness, food, shelter  
**Emotions:** Anger, anxiety, sadness  
**Behaviours:** Fight, flight, withdraw, engage  
**Relationships:** Sex, power, status, attachment/care, tribalism

**New Brain – relatively ‘recent’ in evolutionary development, includes abilities for:**

**Imagination**  
**Planning**  
**Rumination**  
**Mentalisation, Theory of Mind**  
**Self-awareness and Identity**

**Social Brain**

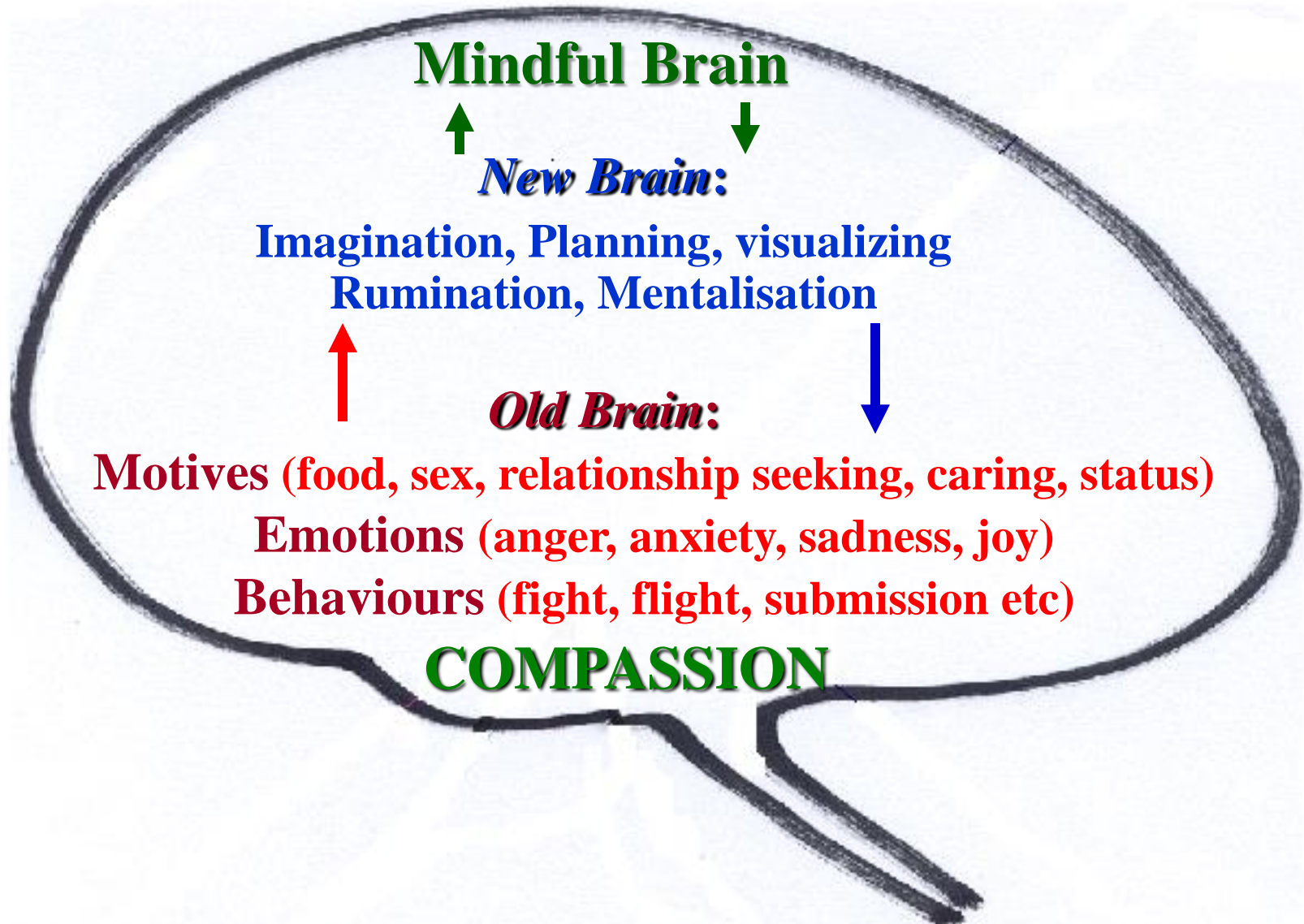
**Need for affection and care**  
**Socially responsive, self-experience and motives**

**Research has shown that our ‘new brain’ plays an important role in regulating our ‘old brain’ emotions and behaviours.**

**However, what happens when new brain is recruited to pursue old brain passions?**



# Interaction of old and new psychologies



# Compassion – definitions

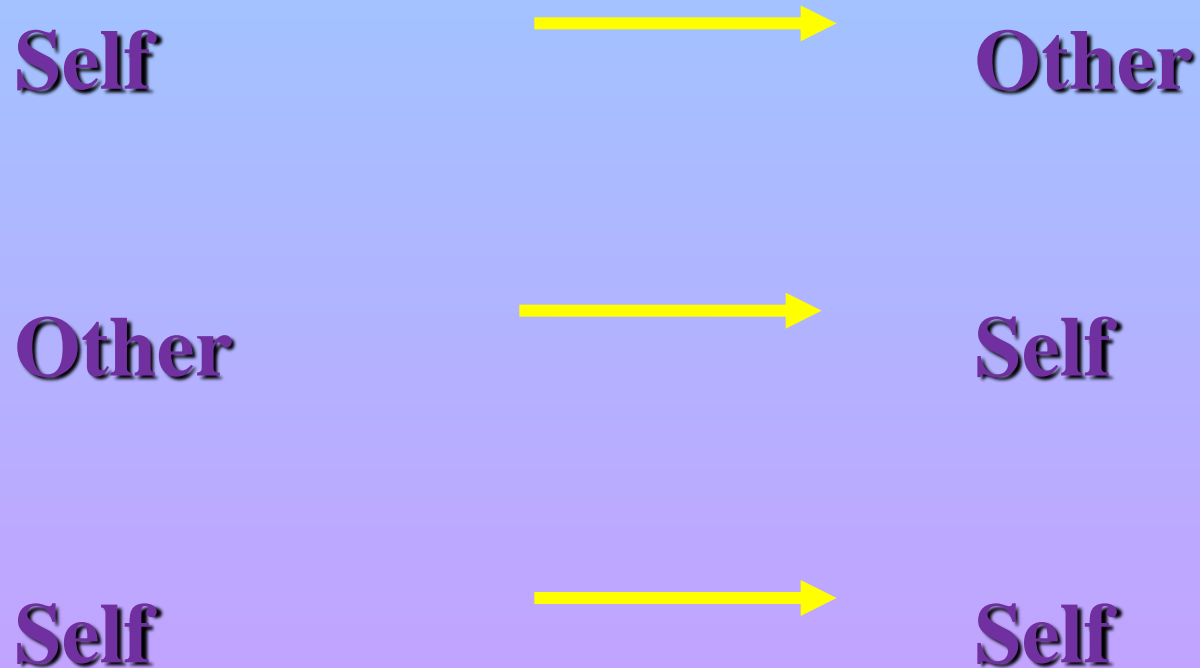
- A sensitivity to the suffering of self and others, with a deep motivation to relieve it (Dalai Lama)

## CFT's 2 psychologies of compassion

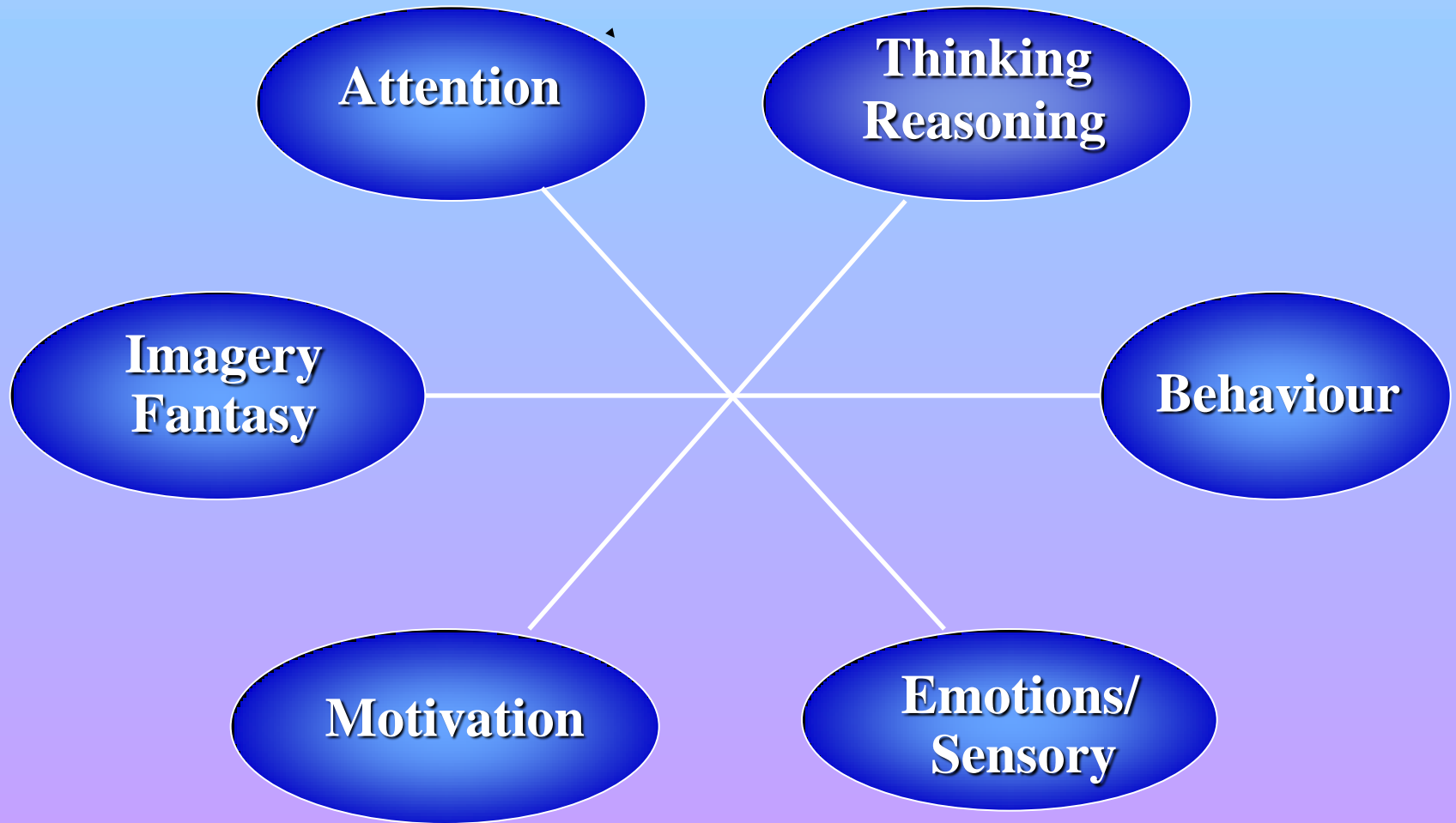
- 1) Engagement; moving towards awareness of suffering, and willingness to make mindful contact with suffering, not trying to avoid it, or dissociate.
- 2) Alleviation through action – willingness to utilize skills and coping mechanisms in order to take action to reduce the suffering of self and others.

# Compassion as Flow

A comprehensive psychology of engagement

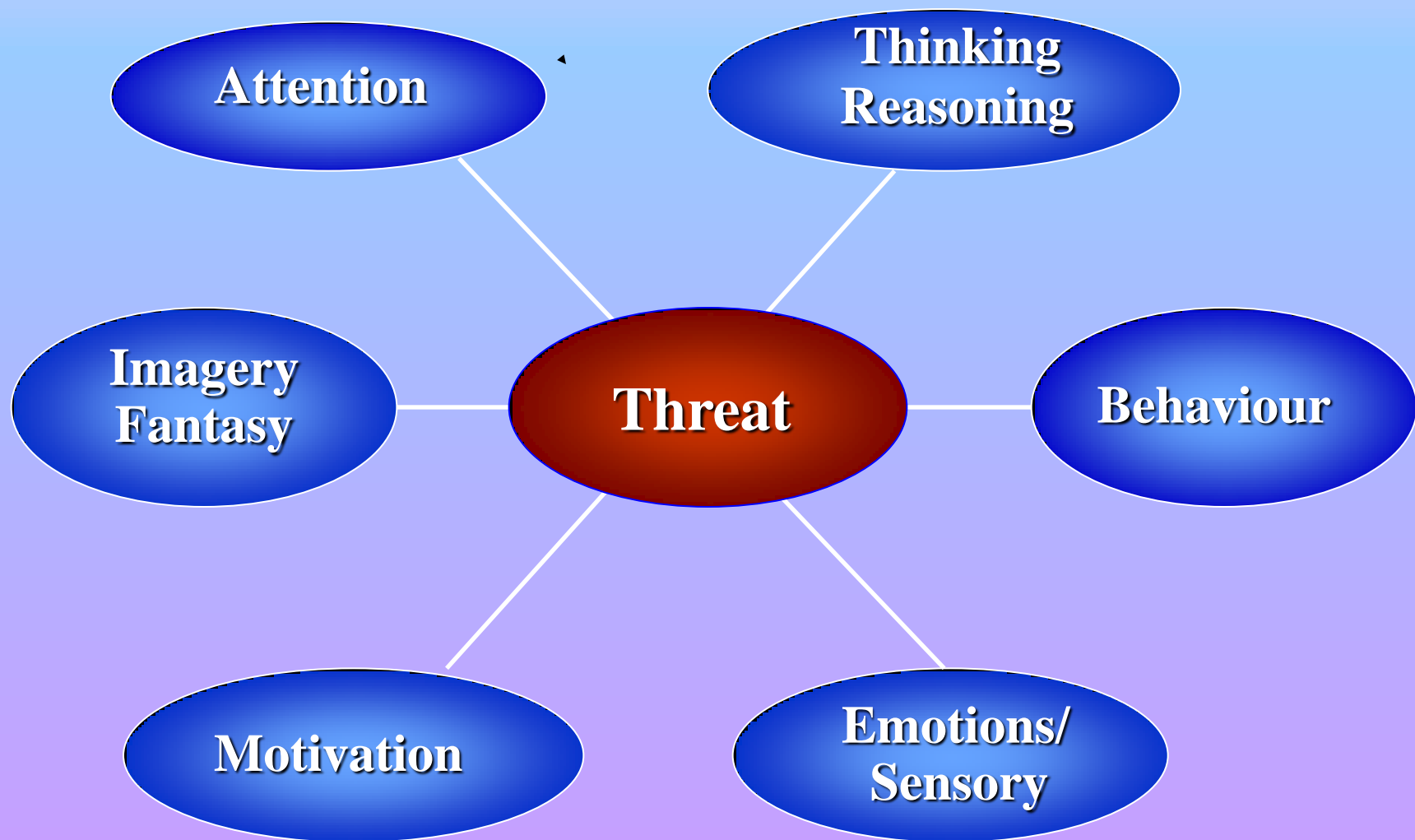


# Key Targets of Therapy

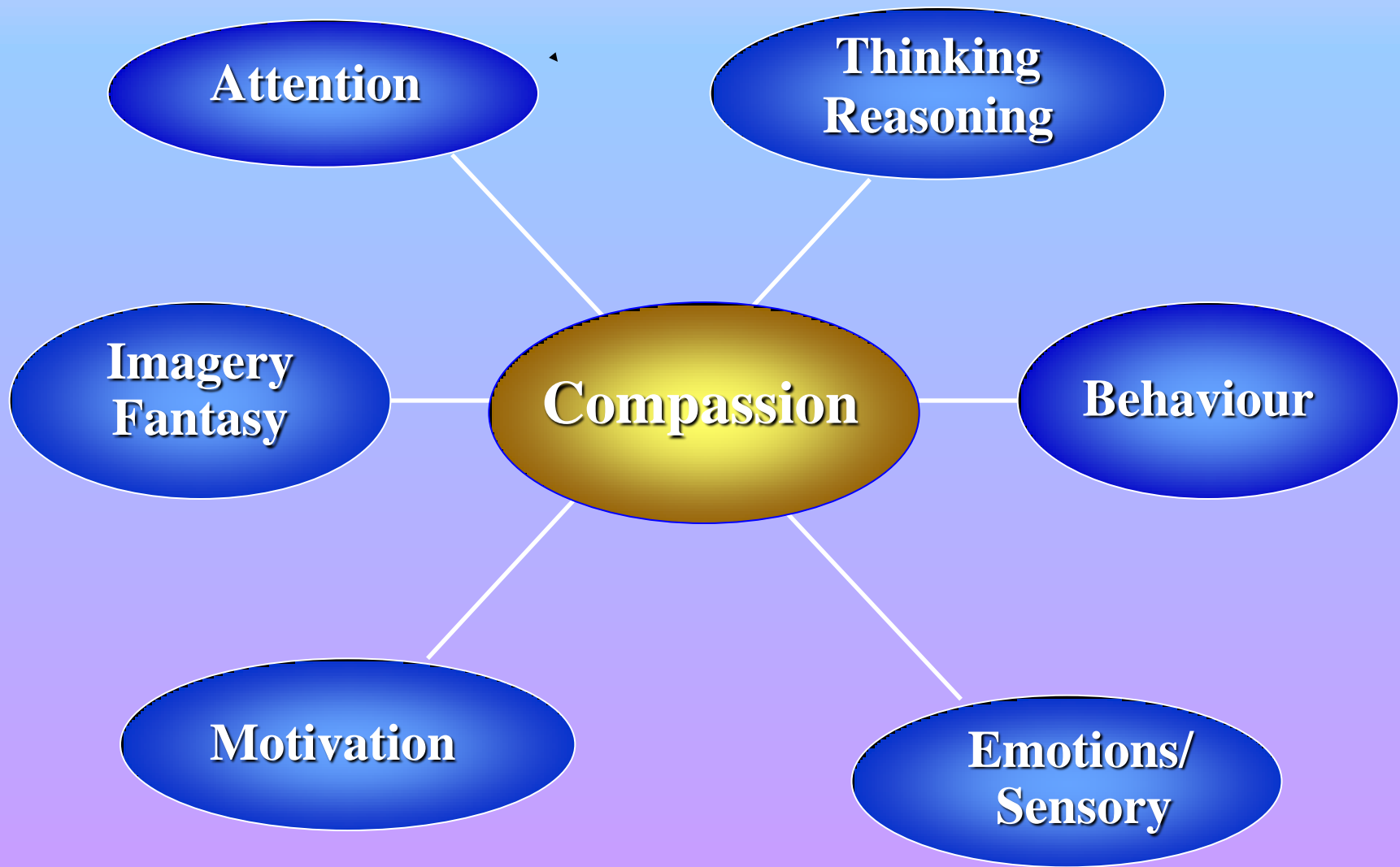


**Specific schemas may impact interpretations**

# Threatened Mind can block Compassion



# Compassionate Mind





# Why compassion?

- Compassion is strongly correlated with improved immune system, and physical wellbeing, as well as improved psychological functioning (Pace et al. 2008; Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, Rivis, 2010)

# Compassion as an organizing motivation can be blocked in 3 ways

## Fears of Compassion scale

- Fear of expressing *compassion for others*
- Fear of receiving *compassion from others*
- Fear of expressing *compassion for yourself*

(Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, Rivis, 2010)

# Fear of Compassion and psychological wellbeing

- The capacity to give and receive compassion, correlates significantly with measures of stress, depression and anxiety.  
(Martin, Heineberg, Berger, Seppala, Doty & Zimbardo, 2013 working paper)

| <i>Fears of compassion</i> | Stress | Anxiety | Depression |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|------------|
| Compassion for Others      | .32**  | .39**   | .35**      |
| Compassion from Others     | .56**  | .57**   | .71**      |
| Compassion for Self        | .54**  | .58**   | .74**      |

# Compassion as Flow

From a data driven perspective, our goal should be to remove blocks to kindness, and facilitate the flow of compassion towards self and other, in order to support better psychological wellbeing

Self



Other

Other



Self

Self



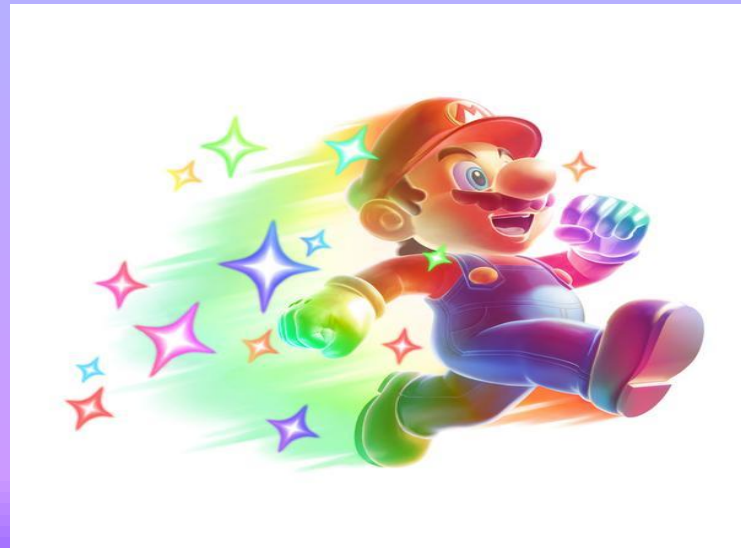
Self

# Caring for Self & Others = better wellbeing

## Good vibe is the product!

Compassionate wellbeing emerges when we Create a field force of BOTH personal resilience & collective good vibe!

In other words, developing a  
Compassionate self identity  
could prove extremely useful!



# The human experience and the psychology of multiple selves -- Who do you wish to be ???

- When we come into this world we have the potential to manifest our personality and identity in various ways.
- We have the potential to grow various types of selves, we could be predominately sad, anxious, angry, etc.
- We could also strive to further cultivate and develop our core attributes of empathy, warmth, kindness and compassion.
- Ultimately CFT is an invitation to further **develop your compassionate self identity**, try it out, and see if it fits based on your direct experience. It's an opportunity to experiment, and **decide who you wish to be in this world, and why.**



# **How do our motives and emotions organise?**

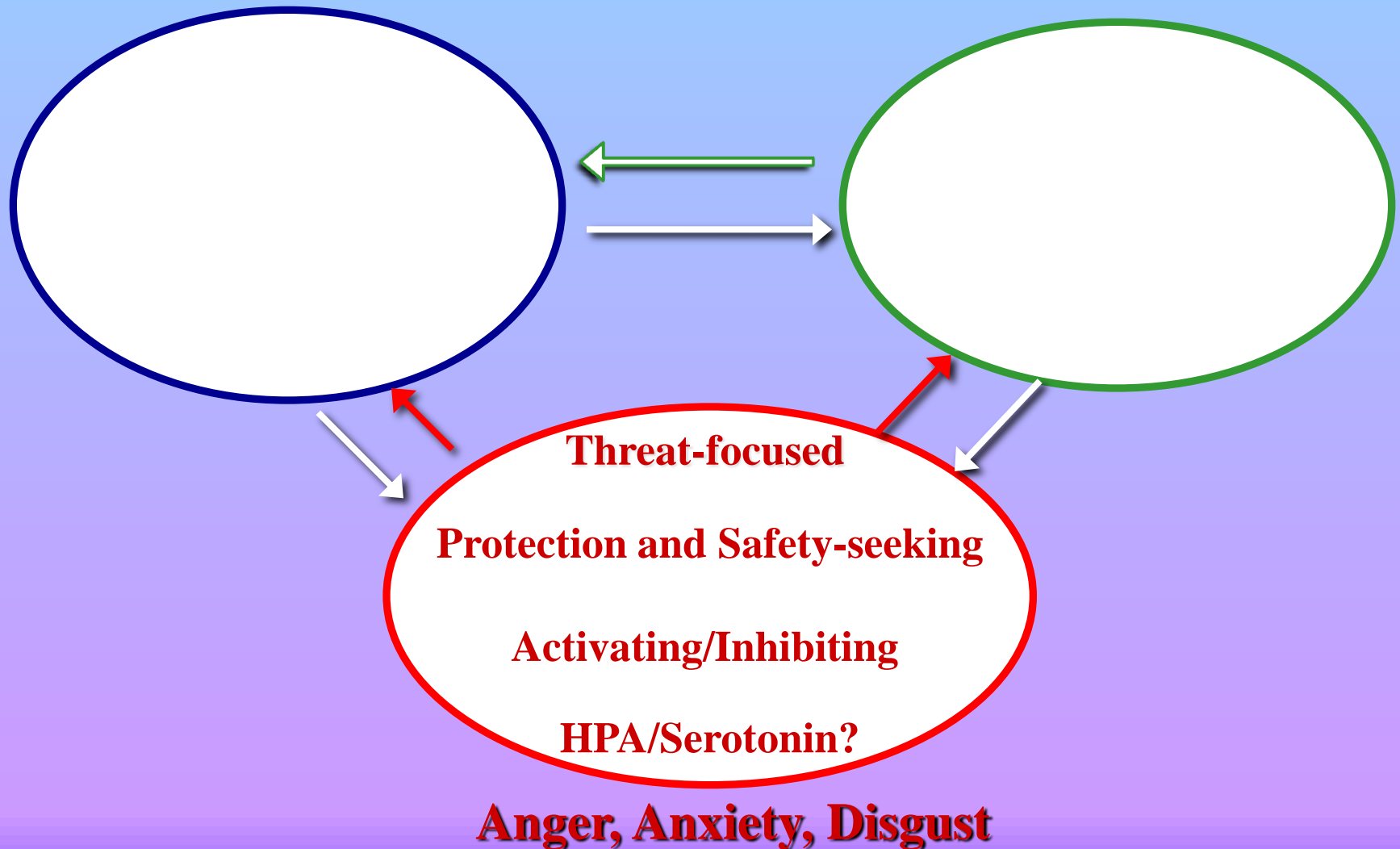
**Motives evolved because they help animals to survive, seek out things that are important (e.g. food, shelter, relationships, status, reproduction etc) and leave genes behind**

**Emotions guide us to our motivations/goals and respond if we are succeeding or threatened**

## **Three primary types of emotion regulation systems**

- 1. Those that focus on threat and self-protection**
- 2. Those that focus on doing and achieving**
- 3. Those that focus on contentment and feeling safe**

# Emotion Regulation Systems: – ‘Three Circle’ Model





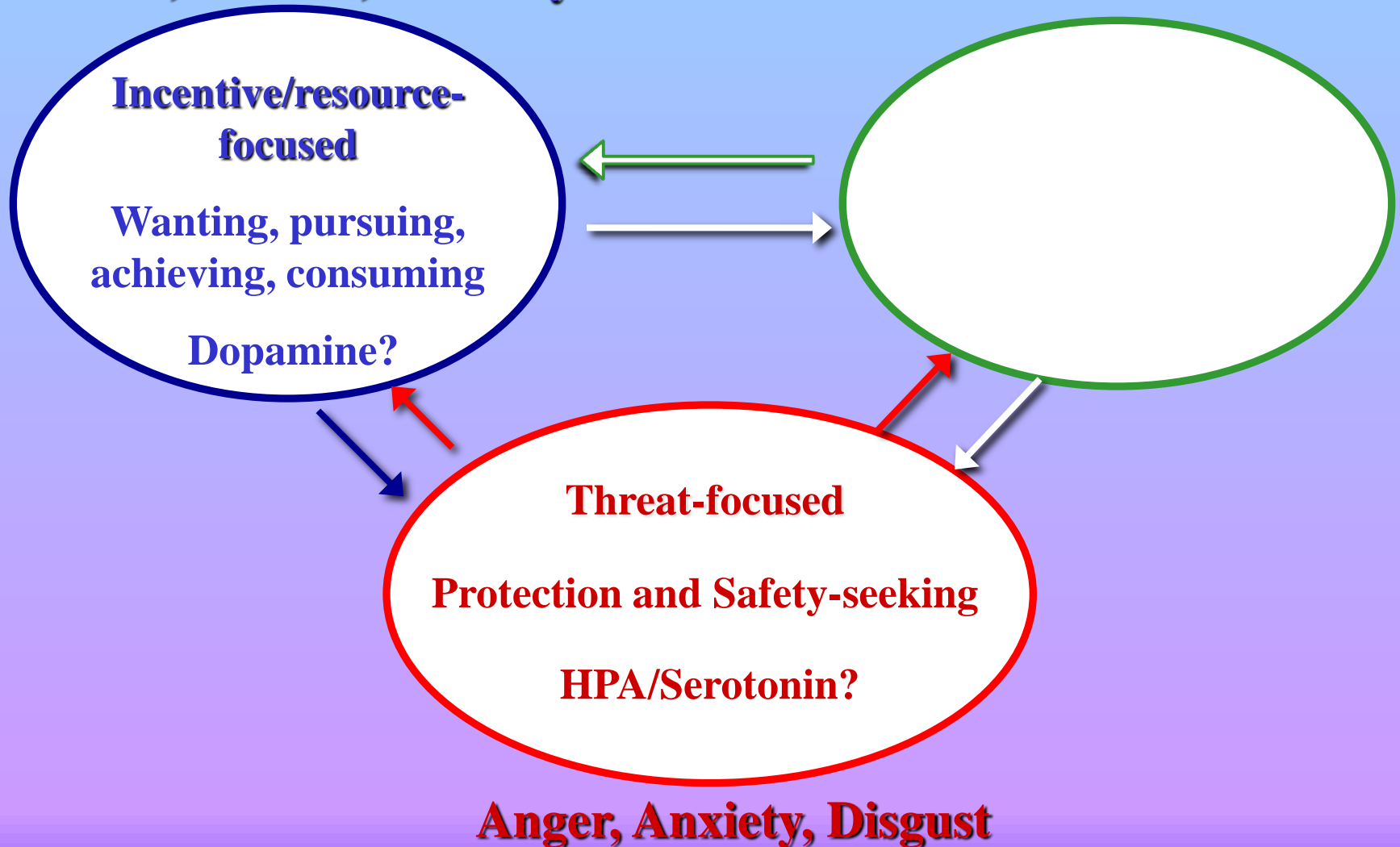


# REJECTION

It starts from an early age. Get used to it!

# Emotion Regulation Systems: – ‘Three Circle’ Model

**Drive, Excite, Vitality**









# Types of Affect Regulation Systems

**Drive, excite, vitality**

**Content, safe, connected**

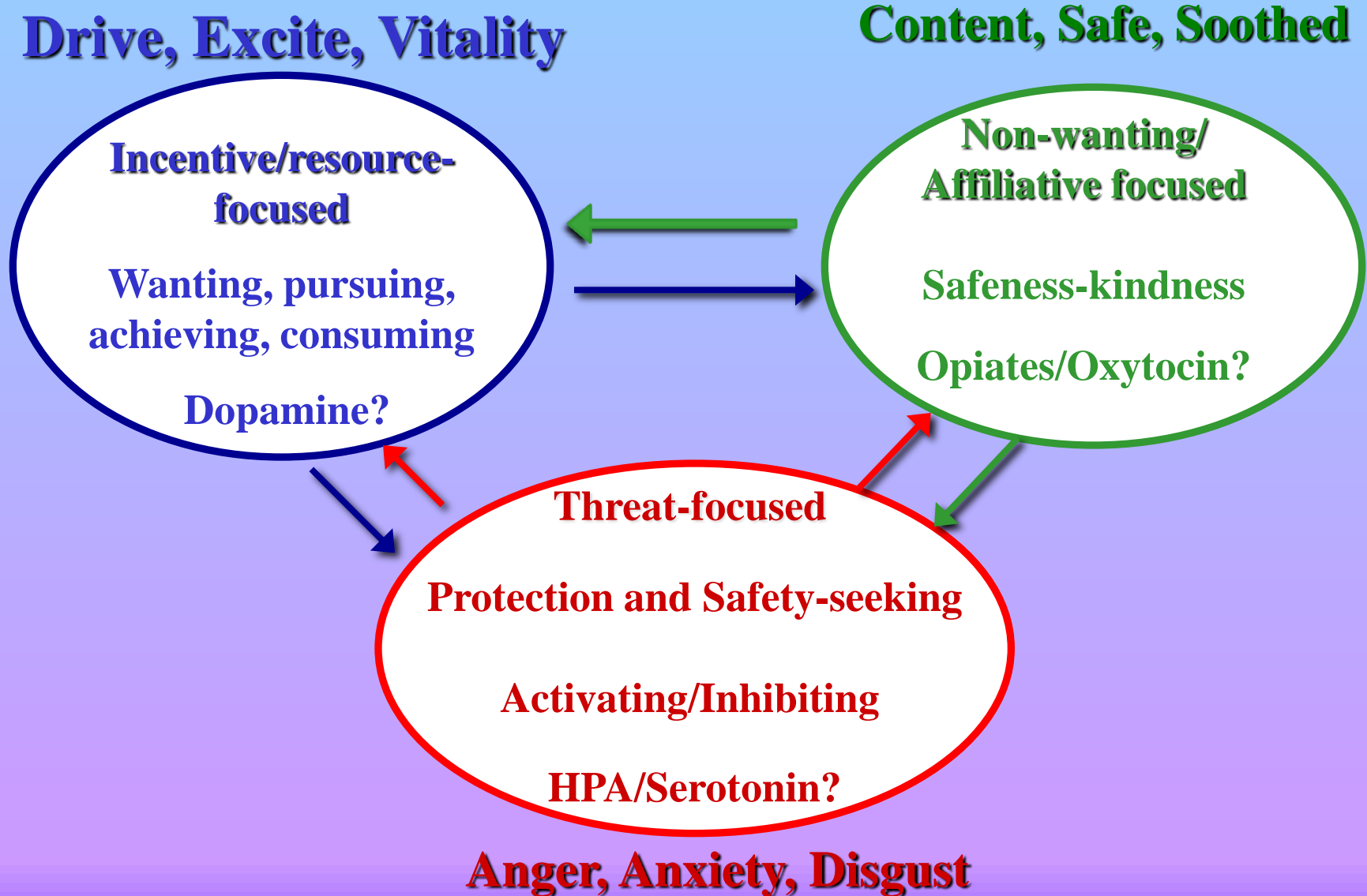




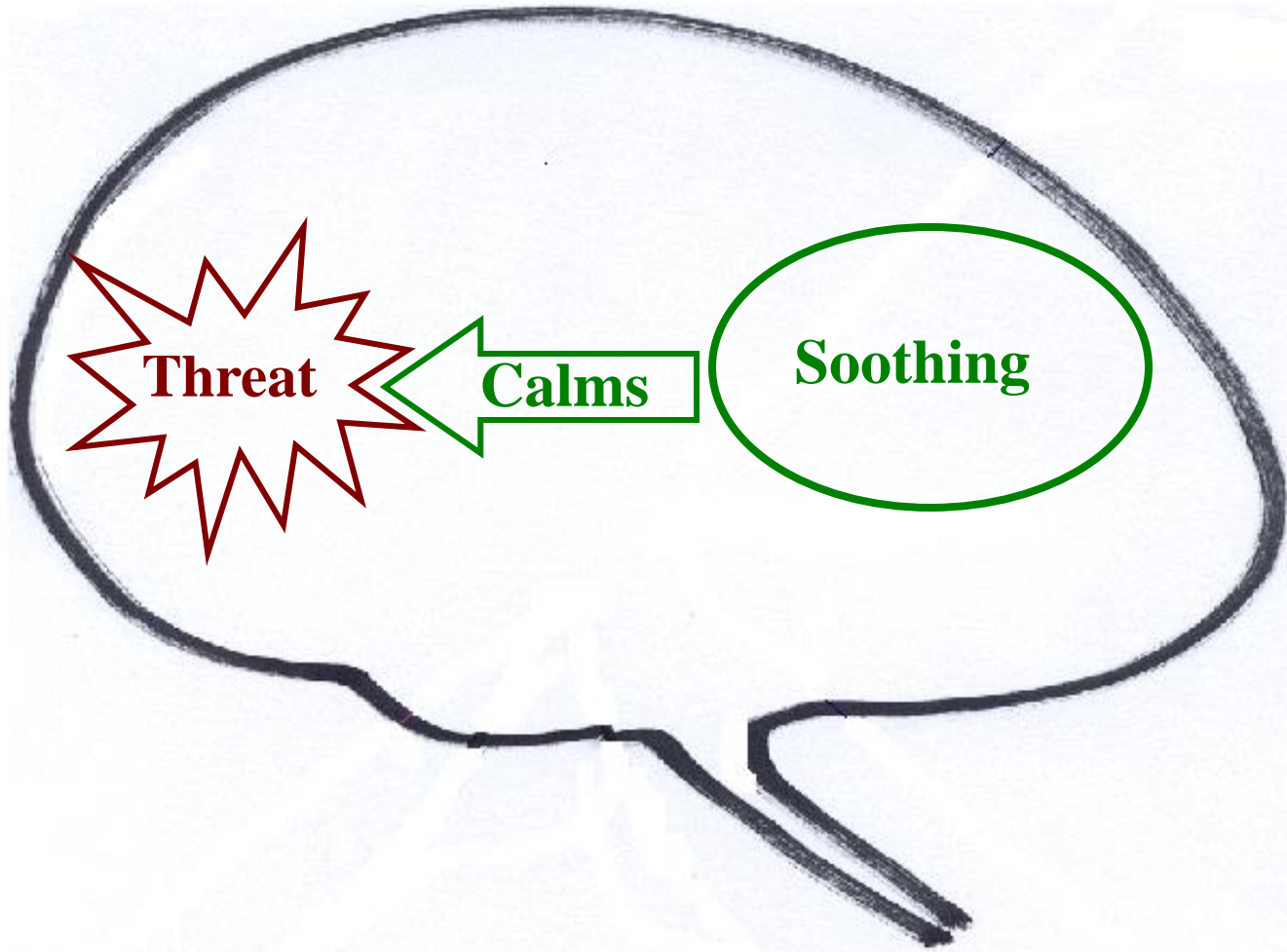




# Emotion Regulation Systems: – ‘Three Circle’ Model



# Relationship between Threat and Soothing



# How are the three systems balanced for many of us?





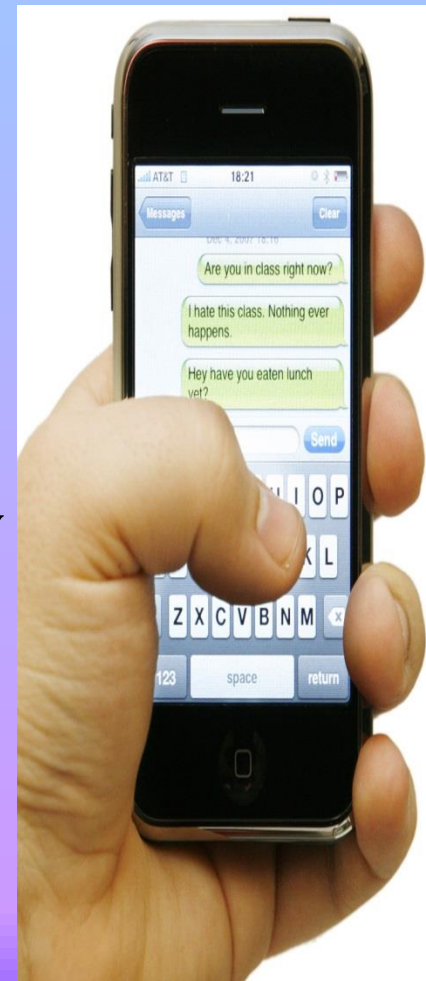
# Applying the 3 Circles to Real Clients!

- T. J. is a 28 year old divorced Caucasian male, college graduate, full-time employed, living with three roommates
- Childhood attachment abundant with disappointments, constant hoping for promised connection with father, and ongoing anxiety about promises being broken.
- He has been in a relationship with his current girlfriend off and on for the past 5 years.
- T.J.'s chief complaint is that he is worried his relationship will not work out because his girlfriend frequently cancels plans (e.g. for dates, to spend the holidays together, live together). T.J. occasionally wonders if she is cheating on him.
- When his girlfriend cancels on him, T.J. reports feelings of deep anxiety and disappointment.

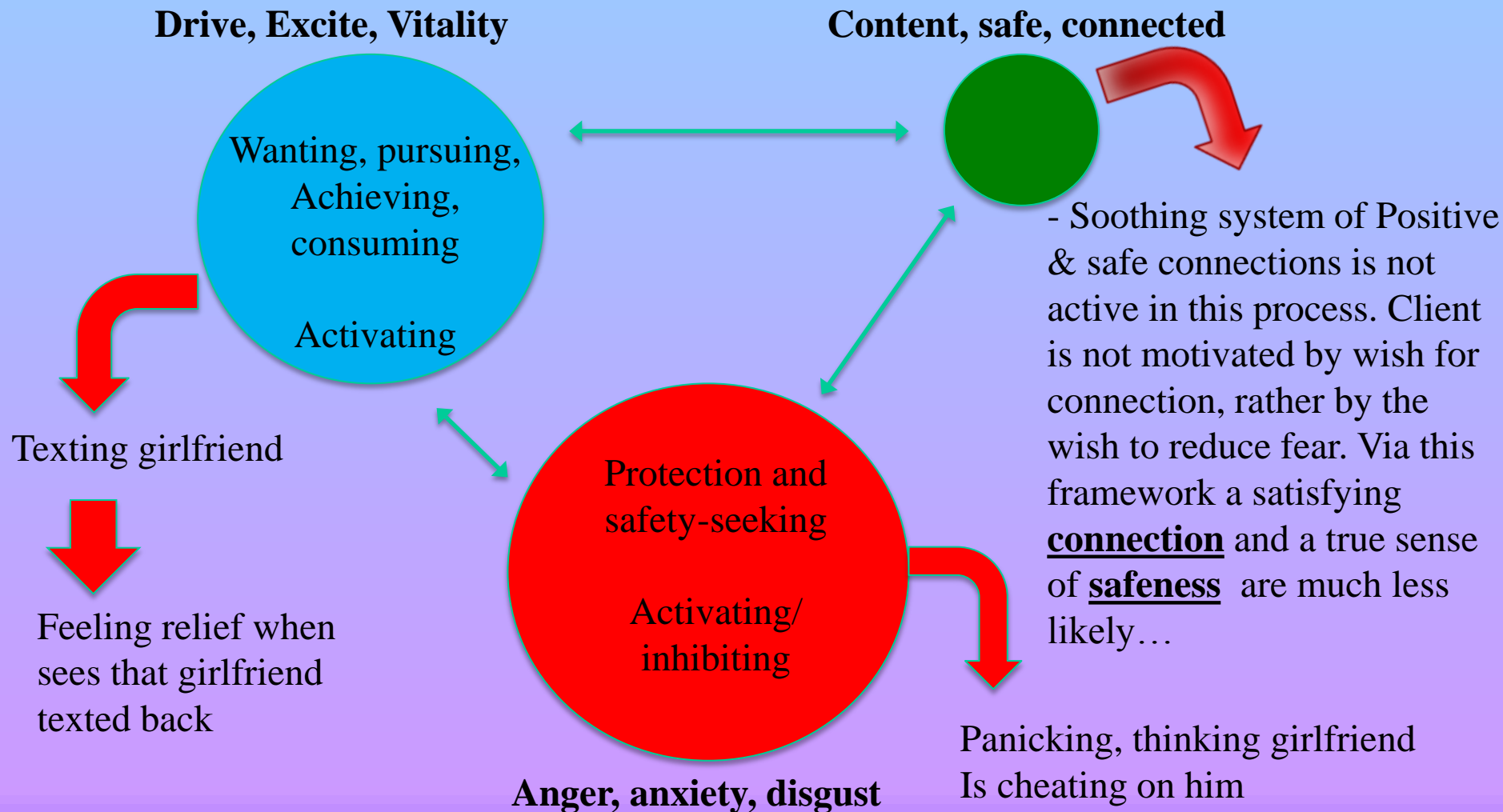


# Triggering Event Example

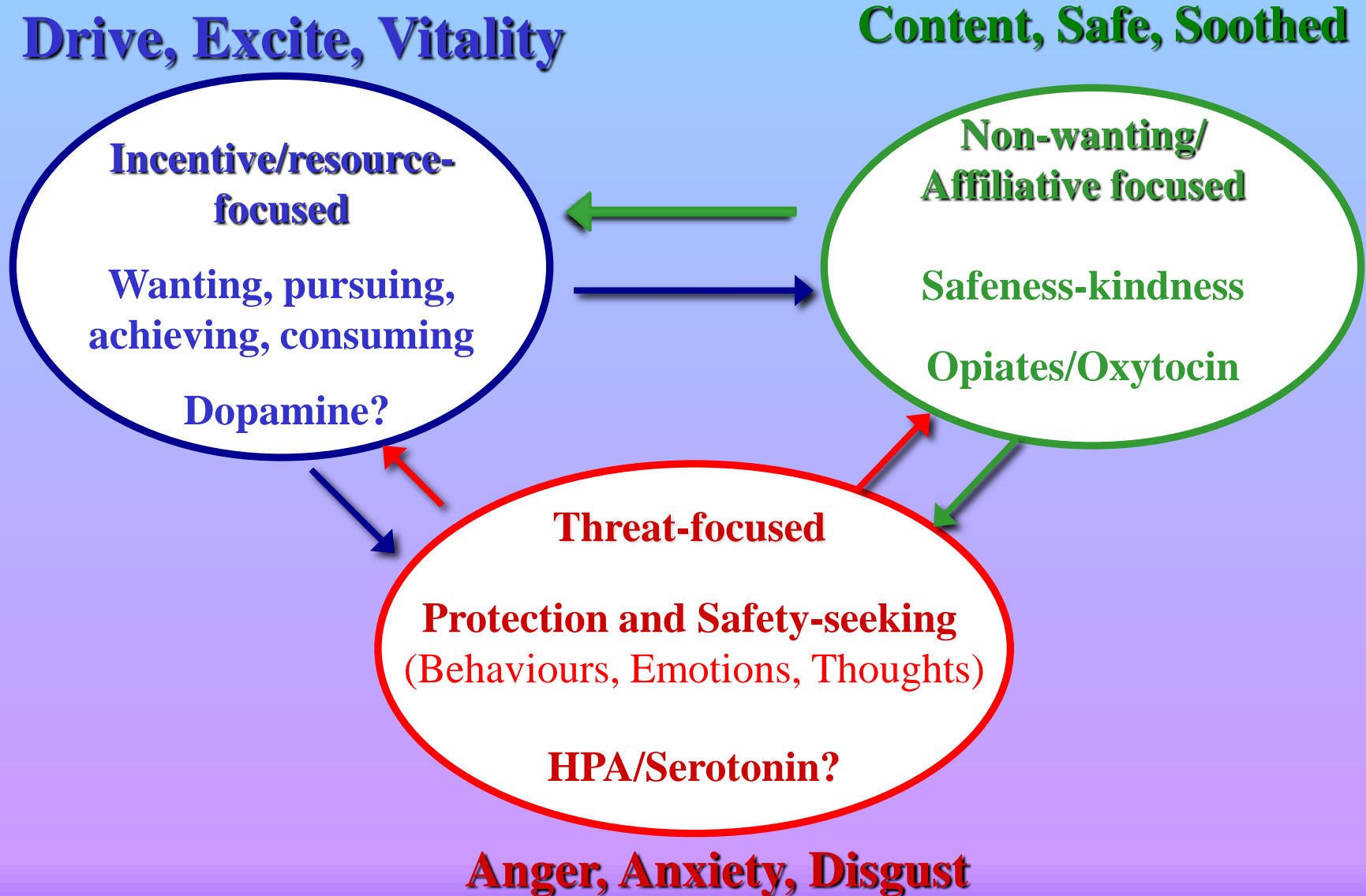
1. T.J. was at home and texted his girlfriend
2. Several minutes went by with no response
3. T.J. wondered what his girlfriend was doing, started feeling anxious
4. Several more minutes went by
5. T.J. started panicking, thinking that his girlfriend was cheating on him or simply did not care about him anymore
6. T.J.'s girlfriend finally replied and T.J. Felt a sense of relief



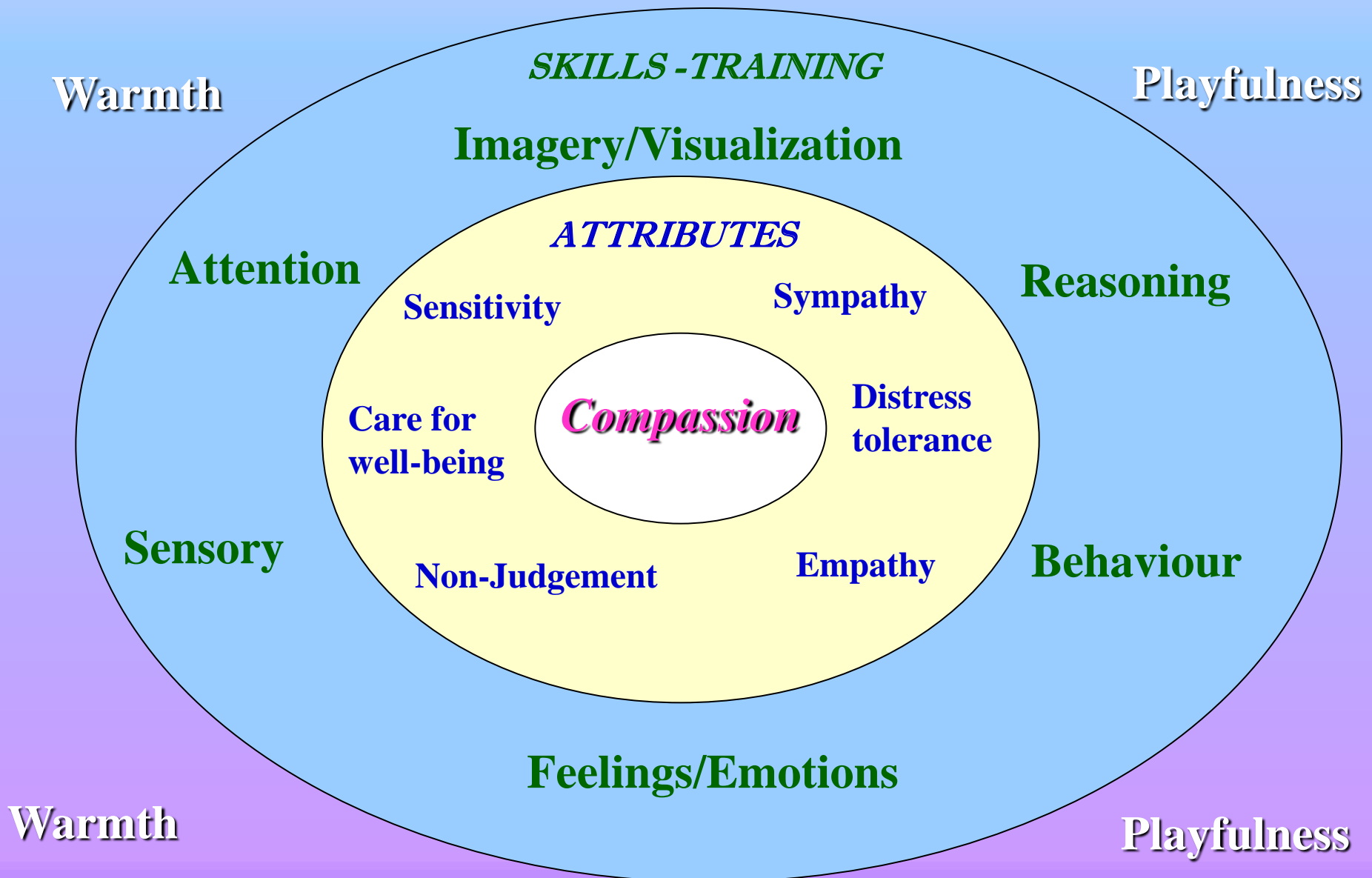
# T.J.'s 3 Circles Model may look like this:



# One aim of CFT?...Balance



# CFT: Compassionate Mind - Alleviation



***Good vibe is good for ya!***

***Let's help bring more good vibe to our  
personal lives & our clinic climate!***

***Let's help bring good vibe to the lives of  
our psychotherapy clients, & watch  
them grow by further supporting their  
capacity to give and receive kindness!***



**Thank you for your time and attention!**

**Space for discussion/questions**