

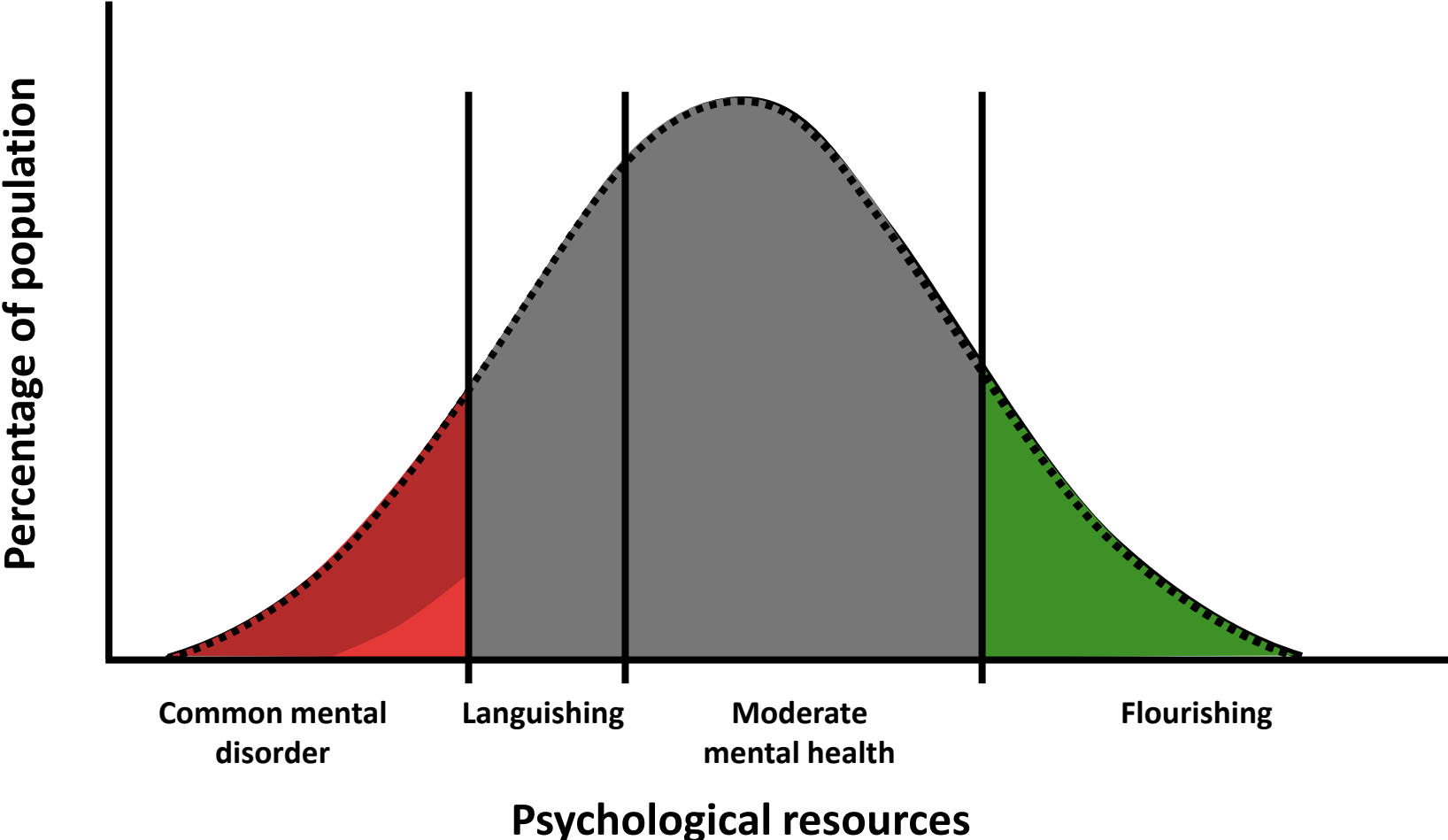
The foundations of well-being and resilience

Felicia A Huppert

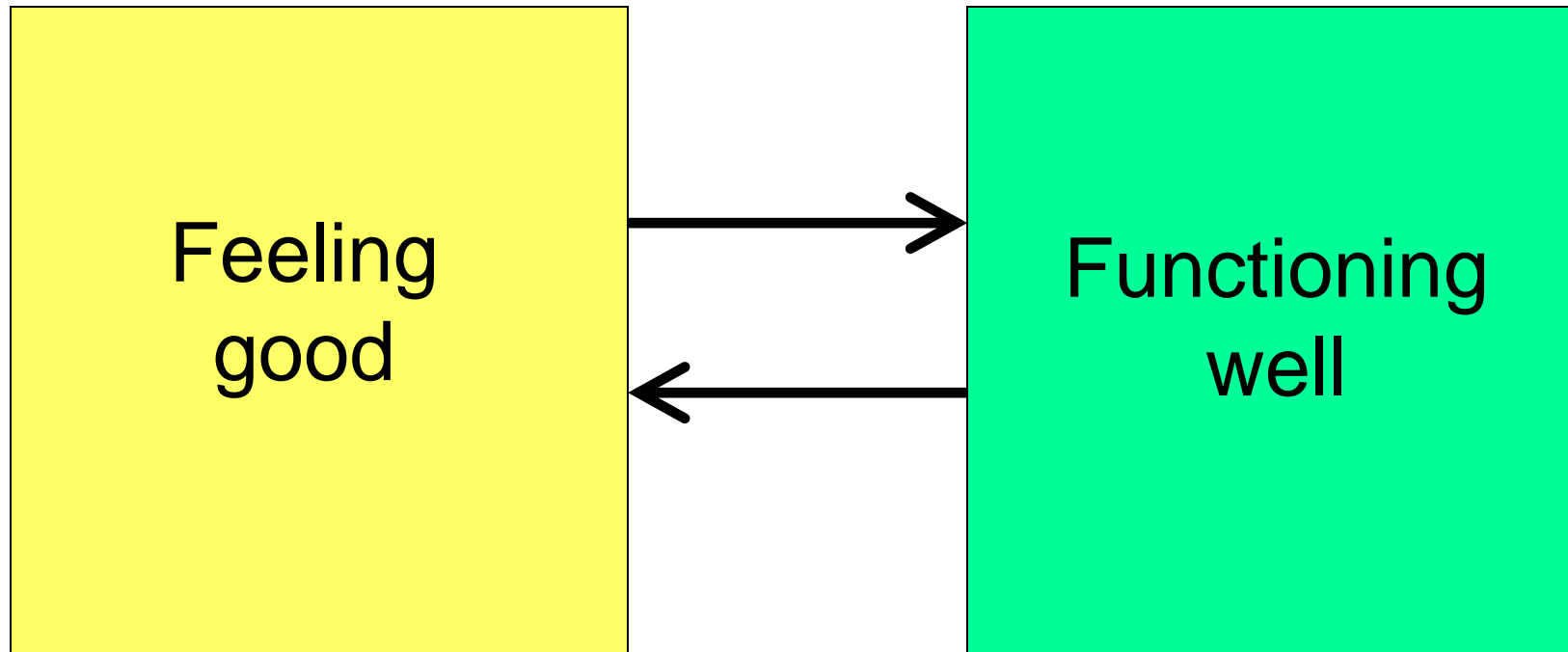
Emeritus Professor and Director of the Well-being Institute, University of Cambridge
and
Honorary Professor, Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, ACU Sydney

Why well-being matters

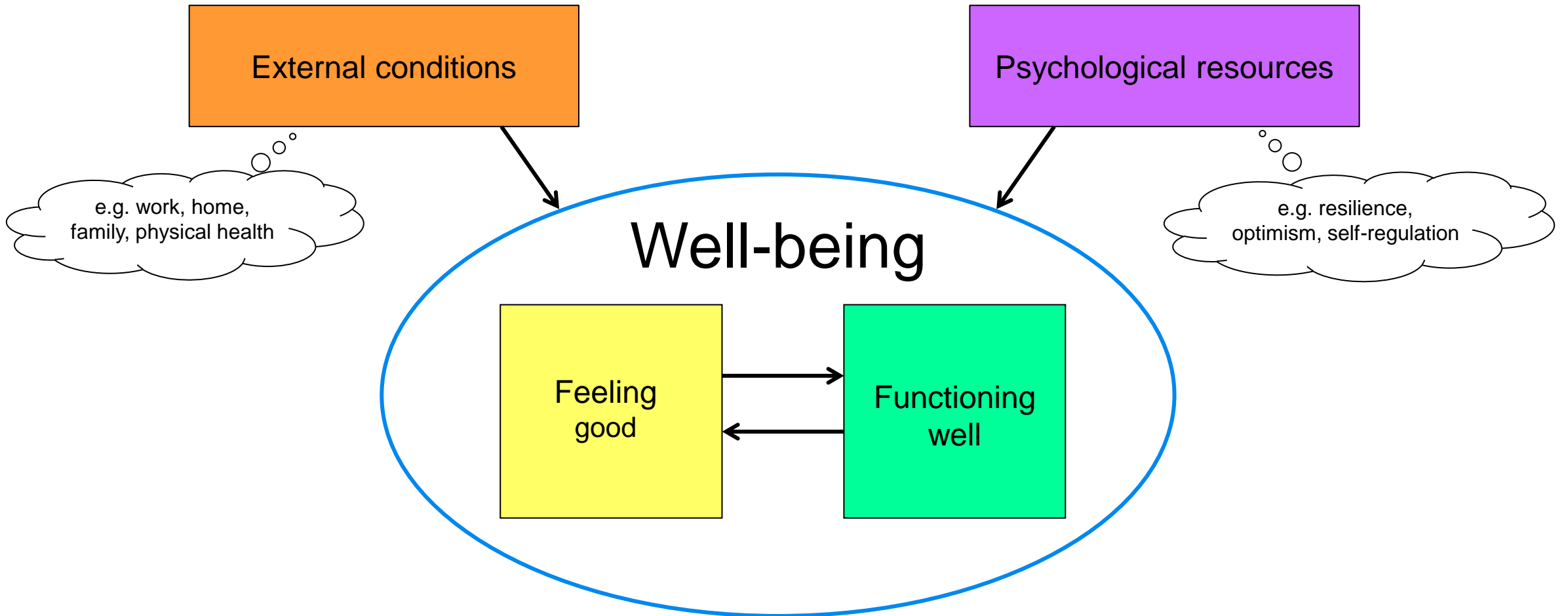
The well-being spectrum

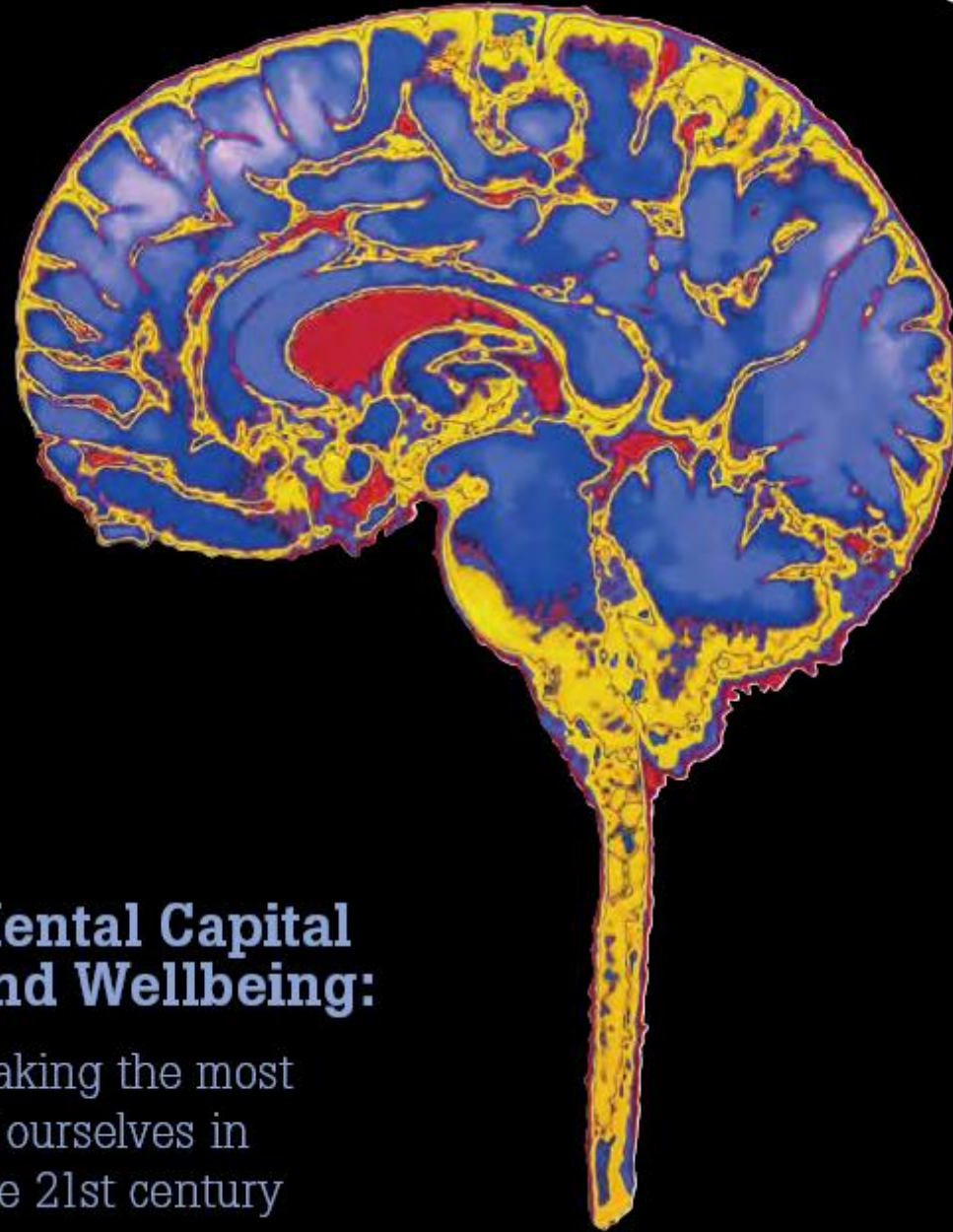


Subjective well-being = the experience that our life is going well



Dynamics of well-being





Mental Capital and Wellbeing:

Making the most
of ourselves in
the 21st century

Five ways to well-being

UK Government Office for Science

Five ways
to wellbeing

Connect

With family, friends,
community

Five ways
to wellbeing

Be active

Exercise, dance, play

Five ways
to wellbeing

Take notice

Be curious, be aware of
your experience

Five ways
to wellbeing

Give

Your time, your
presence, your
appreciation

Keep learning

Try something new,
set new challenges

What is mindfulness?

Put simply, mindfulness is the ability to be aware of our experience as it is happening, while maintaining an attitude of gentle curiosity.

Effects of mindfulness

- **A peaceful space in our busy lives**
- **Deeper listening, seeing more clearly**
- **Greater insight and understanding**
- **Better choices, wiser decisions.**



Mindfulness as mental training

Training covers some very basic skills

Awareness

ATTENTION

Non-reactivity

Emotion regulation

Mindfulness has two components

What to do

Pay attention
Notice
Observe
Be aware

How to do it

With friendly curiosity,
Openness, acceptance
Non-judgement
Kindness

Benefits of Mindfulness Training

Review of high quality research – Creswell, Annual Reviews of Psychology, 2017

Mental and physical health

- depression, anxiety
- substance abuse
- chronic pain
- stress response

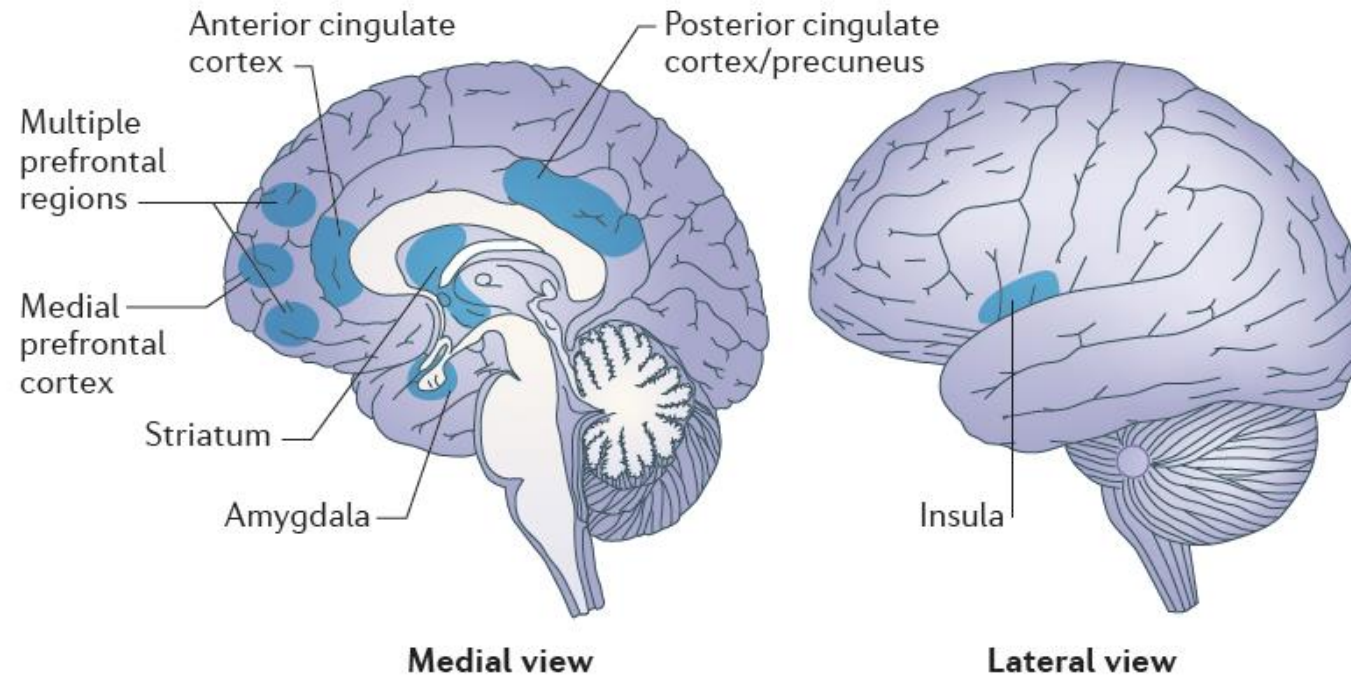
Interpersonal outcomes

- relationship quality
- perspective taking
- pro-social behaviour

Cognitive and affective processes

- Sustained attention, working memory
- problem solving
- positive mood
- emotion regulation

Brain regions that show the greatest activity during mindfulness practice



attention control

emotion regulation

self-awareness

Structural brain changes after mindfulness training



A standard 8 week MBSR course lead to increased grey matter density in brain regions associated with:

- **attention, learning and memory**
- **emotion regulation**
- **self-awareness**
- **bodily awareness**
- **compassion**

Mindfulness in the law

Judi Cohen, 'Living happily surrounded by conflict', PD Quarterly, 2015

“The trouble is, perpetually managing huge volumes of difficult work in an intensely competitive environment, where you are strongly encouraged to think critically about everything and everyone and have to be right every time, is like ringing a never-ending alarm in the brain.”

“We practice mindfulness so that we can be more present, intentional, fearless, curious, and non-judgmental in everyday life and, for lawyers, in our life in the law.”

What role does compassion play in well-being?

The role of self-compassion

Effects of self-compassion training or induction

- Prevents depression relapse

Kuyken et al., Behaviour Research & Therapy, 2010

- Increased happiness

Shapiro & Mongrain, Journal of Positive Psychology, 2010

- Increased motivation to change for the better

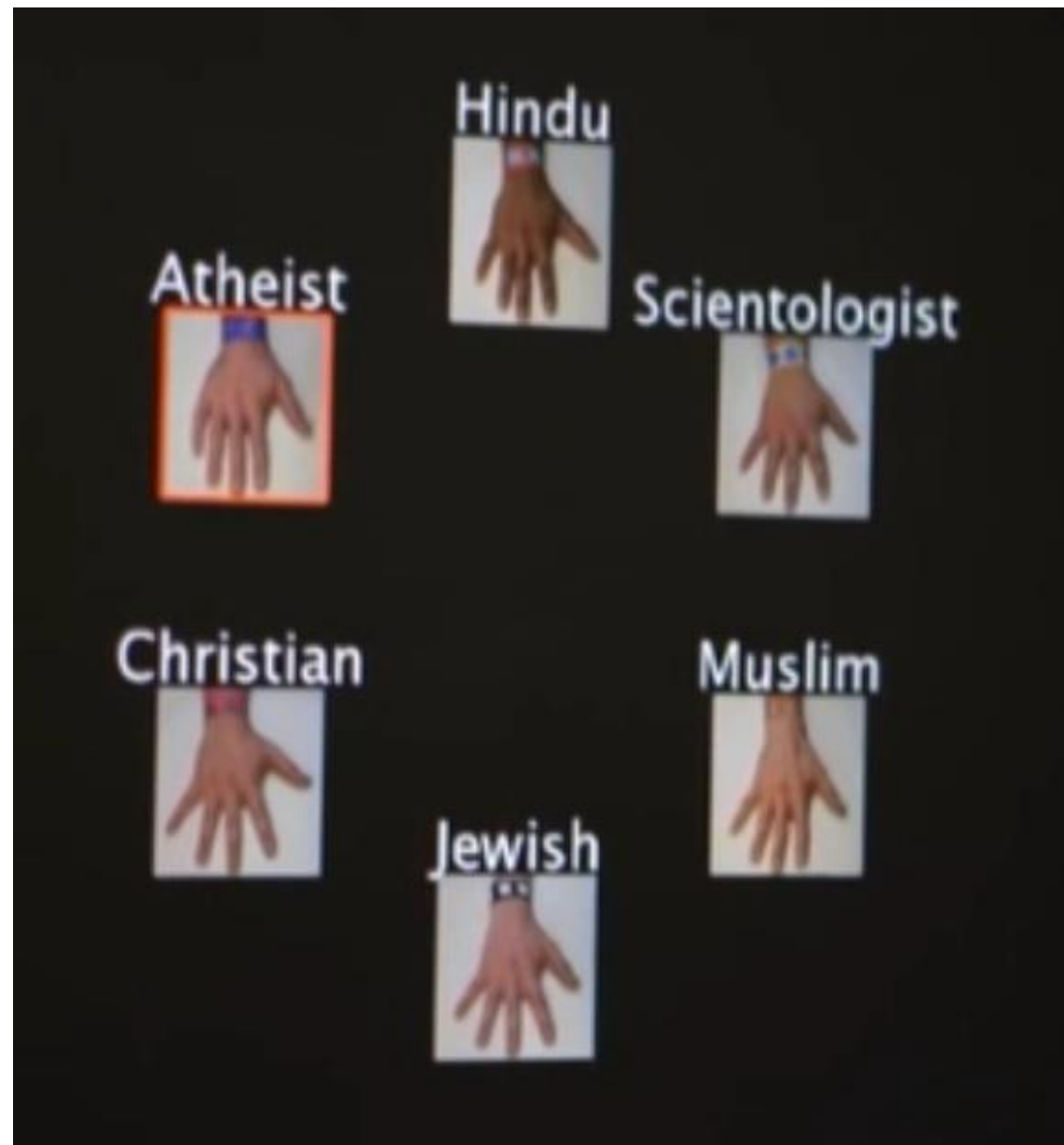
Breins & Chen, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2012

Compassion towards others

What is the relationship between empathy and compassion?

If empathy is hard wired, can the empathic response be modulated?





The Brain with David Eagleman - What is Empathy?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6kGUdQSa_k

Empathy vs Compassion

Empathy means sharing the feelings of another.

Compassion means feeling warmth and concern for the other, as well as a strong motivation to help.

Compassion is feeling *for* and not feeling *with* the other.

Findings from studies of social emotions

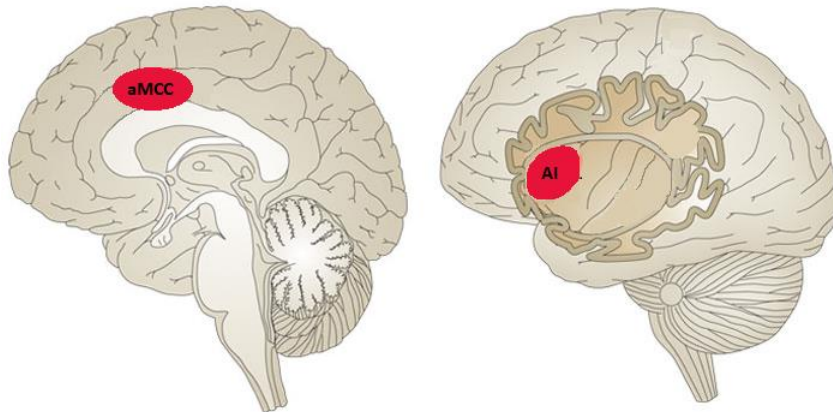
Empathy	Compassion
Negative feelings e.g. stress	Positive feelings e.g. love
Self-oriented responses	Other-orientated responses
Withdrawal	Approach, helping behaviour
Poor health, burnout	Good health

Neuroscience of social emotions

Empathy

Activation of:

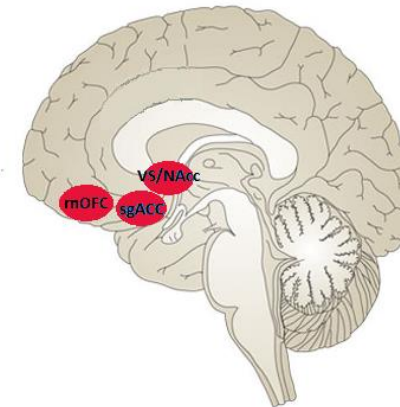
- mirror neurons and networks involved in theory of mind
- Areas associated with negative affect
- Areas associated with the integration of bodily awareness, affect and cognition



Compassion

Activation of regions associated with:

- Affiliation
- positive affect
- reward processing



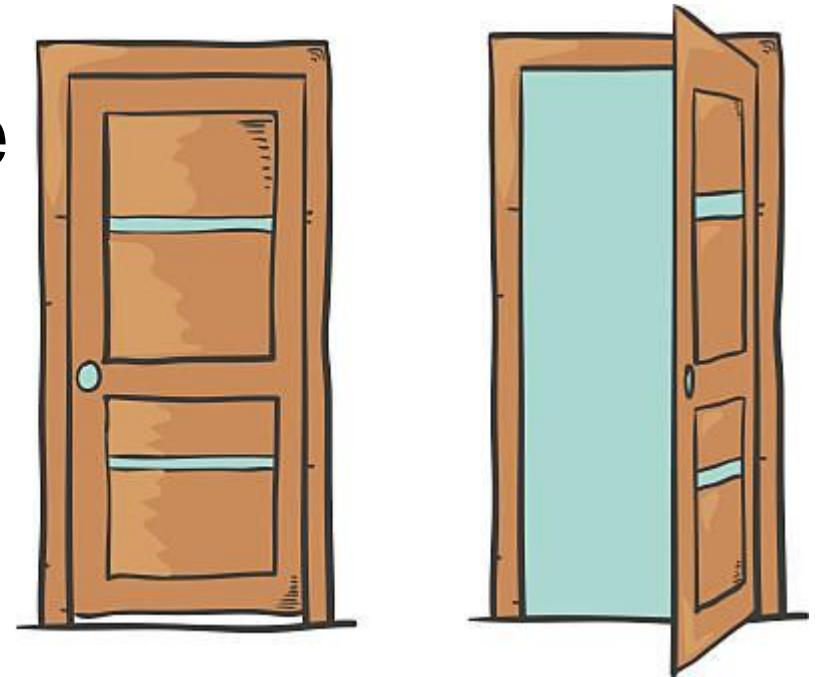
Stages of compassionate responding

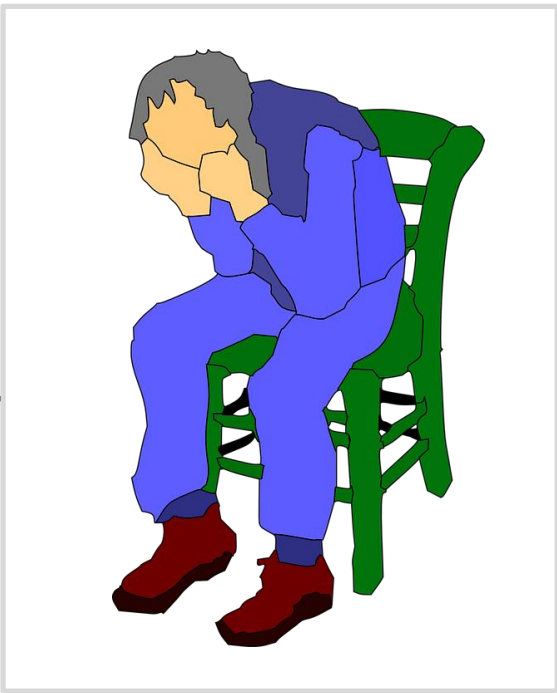
- Noticing
- Appraising
- Feeling
- Acting

Appraisal

Potential barriers or facilitators to compassionate feeling and action

- Self-relevance, goal relevance
- Deservingness
- Coping self-efficacy





Empathic concern

Other-focused feeling (empathy, sympathy, tenderness)

Prompts action to alleviate another's suffering

Personal distress

Self-focused, aversive reaction to vicarious experience of another's emotion

Prompts action to minimise one's own distress

Differentiating between self and other

“Mature empathic responses are based on much more complex representations in which individuals are able to inhibit their own personal distress response and instead experience an emotion of compassion that is targeted at the situation and specific needs of the suffering person”

Effects of compassion training

Compassion training

Systematic review and meta-analysis by Shonin et al., Mindfulness, 2015

Better mood,
less distress

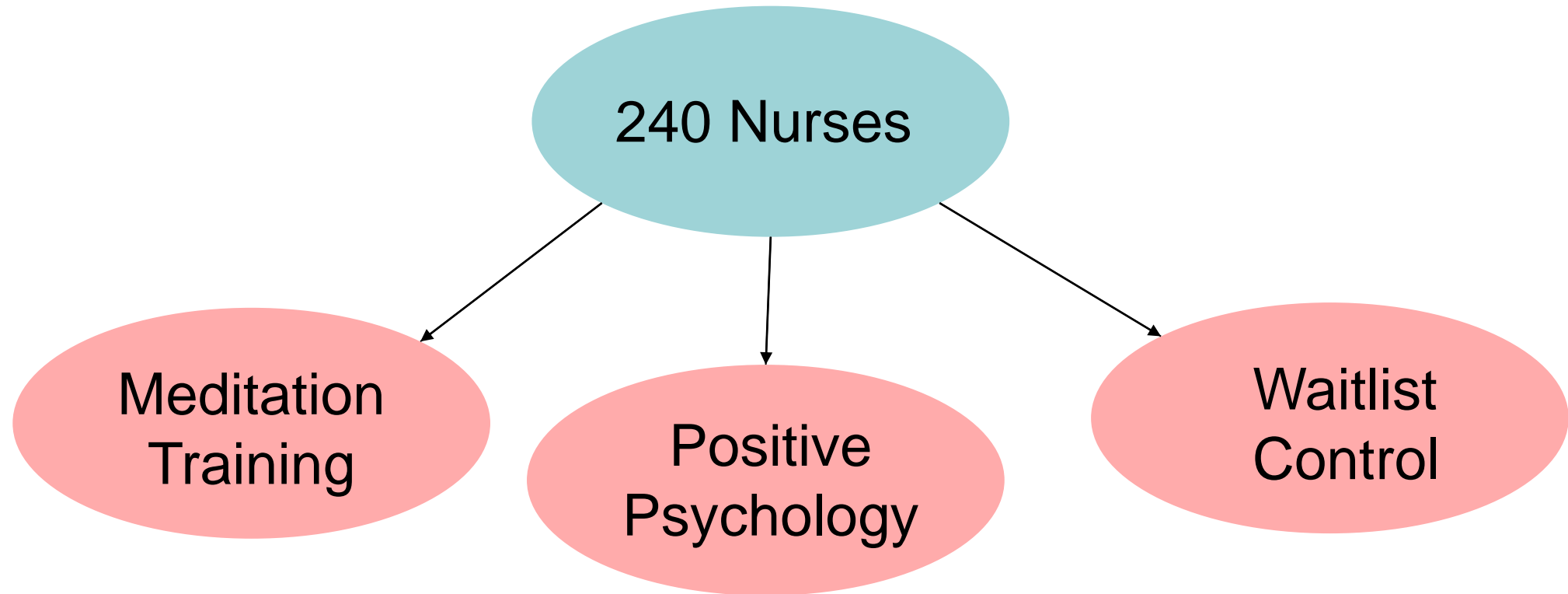
Positive
thinking

Interpersonal
relationships

Empathic
accuracy

Study of mindfulness and compassion training to improve well-being in a healthcare setting

RCT with wards as sampling unit, Sydney Local Health District



Wide diversity of measures

- Self-report
- Performance
- Physiological
- Patient report
- Qualitative interviewing
- Ethnographic observation
- Social Network Analysis



Preliminary findings

Significant improvements on self-report measures pre- to post-intervention - both groups

Self-oriented measures

- Well-being (WEMWBS)
- Mindfulness (non-reactivity)
- Self-compassion
- Goal-directed behaviour

Preliminary findings

Significant improvements on self-report measures pre- to post-intervention – both groups

Other-oriented measures

- Empathy (concern, perspective taking)
 - Compassionate care (patient-centred care)
 - Prosocial behaviours at work
 - Appraisal of patients
-
- **Other outcomes**
 - Decreased burnout

Preliminary findings

Significant difference between groups pre- to post-intervention

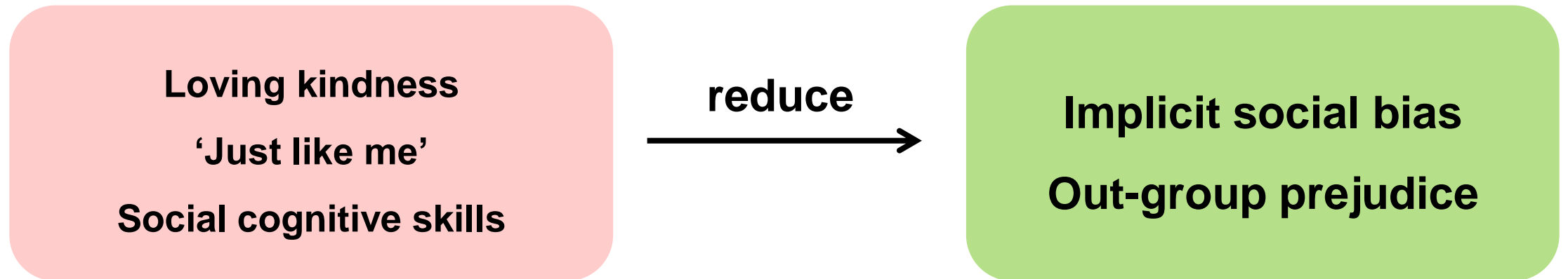
- Meditation group reported increased meaning at work
- Meditation group performed better on test of empathic accuracy

Preliminary findings

Did the benefits last?

Most (13/16) of the improvements seen at the end of training were sustained at follow up approximately 5 months later.

Compassion training reduces discrimination towards out-groups



Berger et al., Mindfulness, 2018.

Kang et al., J. Experimental Psychology: General, 2014.

What are the foundations of sustainable well-being?



The effect of shifting the mean of the well-being spectrum

