



Wallowing in Positivity Overcoming the Negative Bias of the Brain

Bob Reese, PhD, CH

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Theme: "Legacy of Excellence"
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Bob Reese, PhD

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Wallowing in Positivity

Overcoming the Negative Bias of the Brain

- **Neuroscience Primer**
- **Negative Bias of the Brain**
 - Role of Emotions
- **Positive Emotions**
 - Broaden & Build Theory
- **Interventions**
- **Experience “Wallowing in Positivity”**
 - Feelazation

Wallowing in Positivity

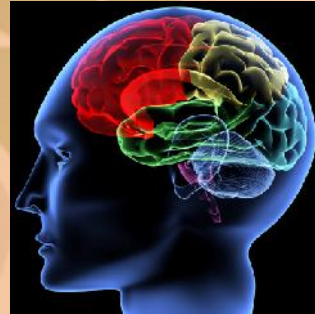
Overcoming the Negative Bias of the Brain

- **Positive Psychology**
 - The Psychology of Well-Being



Neuroscience: The Brain

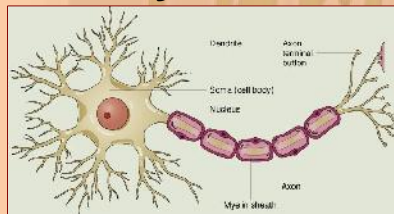
- **Organ housed in cranium**
- **Weighs +/- three (3) pounds**
- **Uses 20-25% of the body's energy**
- **The center of thought, understanding, decision-making, etc.**
- **Runs our 'Systems'**



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Neuroscience

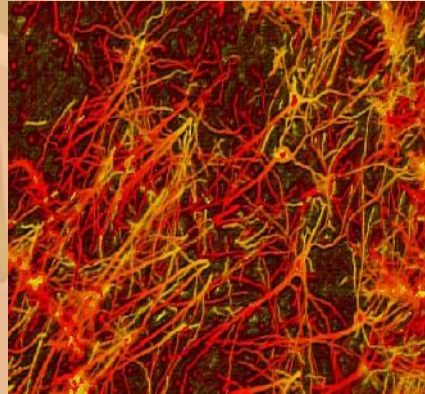
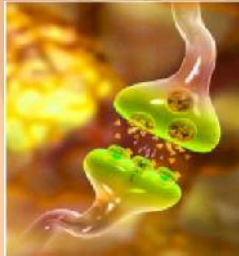
- **The human brain has 100 *billion* neurons**
 - **It grows thousands of new cells daily**



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Neuroscience

- These 100 billion neurons are capable of making **40,000,000,000,000,000** (Forty quadrillion connections)



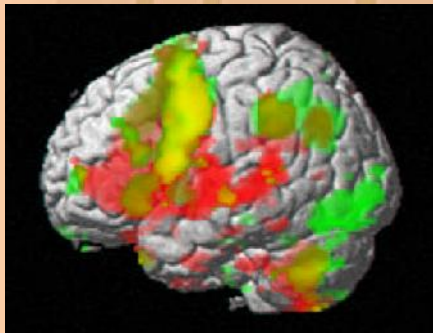
Ratey, J. (2002). *Users Guide to the Brain*

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Neuroscience

fMRI

- Technology now allows us to look at these connections working



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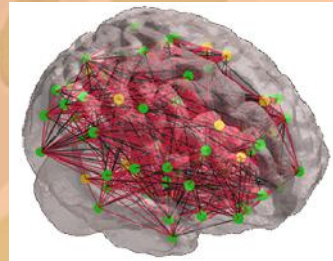
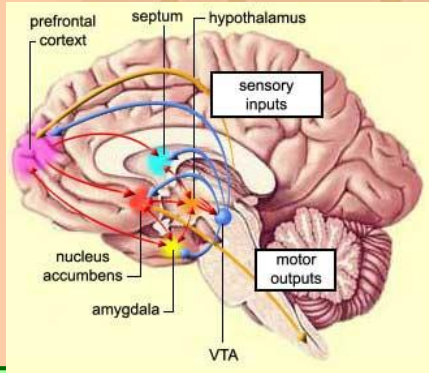
8

Neuroscience & Addiction

Primary Areas of Concern

Frontal Cortex ↔ **Limbic System**
Decision Making ↔

- Amygdala
 - Emotion
- Nucleus Accumbens
 - Pleasure



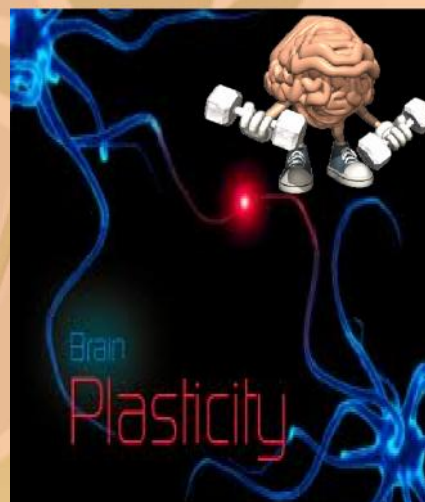
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9

Neuroplasticity

The ability of the brain to rewire and remap itself.

- Your **Brain** can change your **Mind**
 - Caffeine
- Your **Mind** can change your **Brain**
 - Learning



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10

Neuroplasticity

- As your **Mind** changes, your **Brain** changes
 - This produces both temporary & lasting changes in your brain
- **Lasting Changes:**
 - Increased blood/nutrient flow to active regions
 - “Neurons that fire together wire together.”
 - Increasing excitability of active neurons
 - Strengthening existing synapses
 - Building new synapses; thickening cortex
 - Neuronal “pruning” - “use it or lose it”
 - Altered Epigenetics (**gene expression**)

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Jeffery Schwartz, MD

Neuroplasticity

You can use your **Mind**
To change your **Brain**

To change your **Mind** for the better!



This is Self-Directed Neuroplasticity

(Remember this when we get to Interventions)

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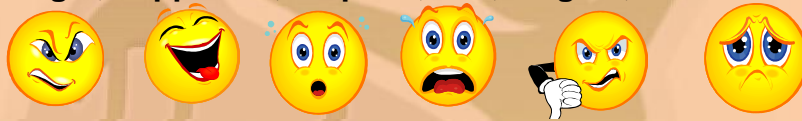
What are Emotions?

- Emotions are complex pattern of changes made in response to a situation *perceived* to be personally significant
- Root word = motion
 - ‘Move’
 - Emotions move through us



Facial Expressions of Emotion

- Six facial expressions are ubiquitous
 - Anger, happiness, surprise, fear, disgust, & sadness.



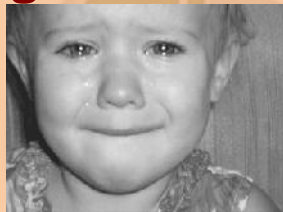
- Other emotions less universal
 - Guilt, shame, embarrassment, & pride



- Occur later in human development
 - Closely tied to social interaction
- } Learned

Reality re: Negative Emotions

- **Everyone Experiences Negative Emotions**



- **Everyone experiences 'Hard Times'**



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EMOTIONS

- **Which of the following statements is TRUE regarding Emotions:**
 - A. Emotions are either good or bad
 - B. Emotions are either right or wrong
 - C. Emotions are not under our control
 - D. It's what you do with emotions that counts



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16

EMOTION

- **Evolution / Darwin**
 - Emotions aid survival
 - Fear → Avoid Danger

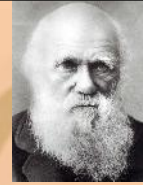


- **Psychology primarily focuses on *negative* emotions**

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EMOTIONS

Rethink Darwin



- In the *Descent of Man* Charles Darwin wrote
 - 2x of "survival of the fittest"
 - 95x about love!
 - 92x about moral sensitivity
 - 200x about brain & mind
- <http://www.thedarwinproject.com/>

**Domination
System
&
Love System**
- David Loye

**We can change the world for better by
changing the story we live by. (David Loye)**

EMOTIONS

- Typically emotions are linked to specific behavioral disposition

– Specific Action Tendency (*Evolutionary Psych*)

- Fear → Run
- Anger → Attack
- Disgust → Vomit

- Positive Emotions

– Specific Action

- Joy → ?
- Gratitude → ?

**Same Problem
Physiologically**

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EMOTIONS

- We mistrust our emotions

– Reason vs Emotion

– Win-Loss / Zero Sum Game

Emotion & Imagination

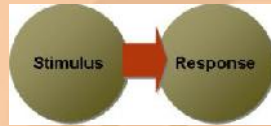
ALWAYS win over

Logic & Reason

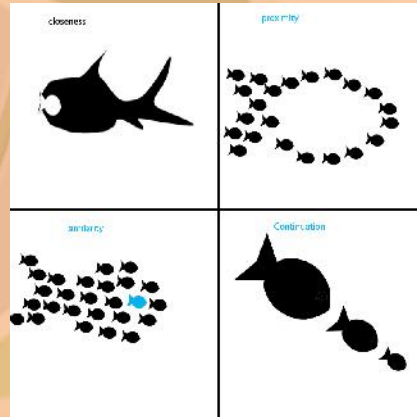


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Patterns, Conditioning & Learning



The brain is a pattern seeking device that relates whole concepts to one another and looks for similarities, differences, or relationships between them.” (Ratey, 2002, pg.5)



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Classical Conditioning Applications

Emotions & Preferences

- I would eat fudge shaped like dog feces?

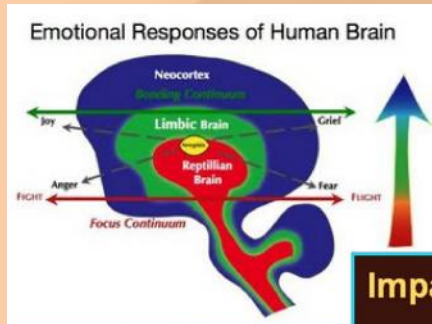
A. True
B. False



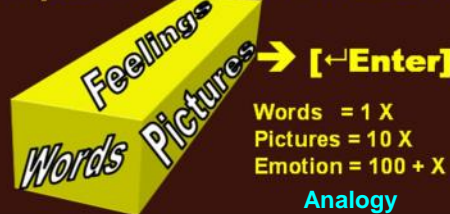
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22

BRAIN: Impact of Emotions on Learning



Impact of Emotion on Learning



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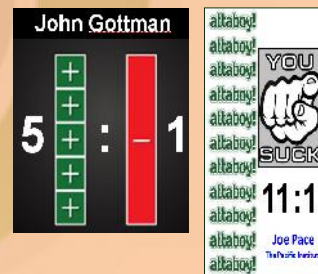
23

Negativity Bias of Brain

- Negative stimuli get more attention and processing.
- We generally learn faster from pain than pleasure.
- People work harder to avoid a loss than attain an equal gain ("endowment effect").
- Easy to create *learned helplessness*, hard to undo
- Negative interactions: more powerful than positive
- Negative experiences sift into implicit memory.



Source: Fredrickson, D. (2005). Positivity. Illustrated by SoStrengths



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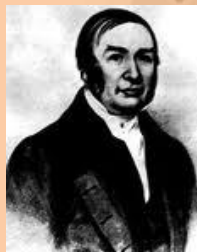
So? EMOTIONS

- Why has evolution endowed us with positive feelings?
- Who has positive emotion in abundance?
- How can you build more & lasting positive emotion into your life?

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What Does James Braid Say Re: Emotions

- More specifics in 2 hr workshop on NeuroHypnosis



James Braid
Father of Modern Hypnosis

Joan & Bob Reese
NeuroHypnosis:
21st Century Theories & Practice
Sat @ 2:00-4:00p
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Broaden-and-Build Theory* of Positive Emotions

• Certain discrete Positive Emotions

- Joy
- Interest
- Contentment
- Pride
- Love



- Broaden thought-action repertoires
- Build enduring personal resources
 - Physical & Intellectual
 - Social & Psychological

*Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998

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Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions



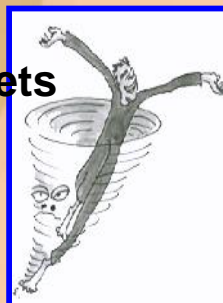
Negative Emotions

- Narrow attention / focus
- Use personal resources
 - e.g., weaken immune system



Positive Emotions

- Broaden attention / mindsets
- Build personal reserves
 - These become durable



REP
ing

Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

- **Undoing Hypothesis**

- **Positive Emotions = Antidote for lingering effect of negative emotions**

- **They UNDO effects of negative emotions**



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Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions

- **Positive Emotions:**

- **Broaden thought-action repertoires**
 - **Undo lingering negative emotions**
 - **Shorten duration of negative emotions**
 - **May slow progression of disease**
 - **Fuel psychological resilience**
 - **Trigger upward spirals to enhanced well-being**
 - **↑ Creativity**
 - **↑ Motivation & Energy**
 - **↑ Physical Health**
 - **It Feels Good to Feel Good!**

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Interventions



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INTERVENTIONS

- **Neuroscience + Subjective Happiness**
 - Positive Psychology interventions enhance the neuroplasticity necessary to thrive in recovery



Interventions

They ALL begin w/ **POSITIVE Self-Talk**

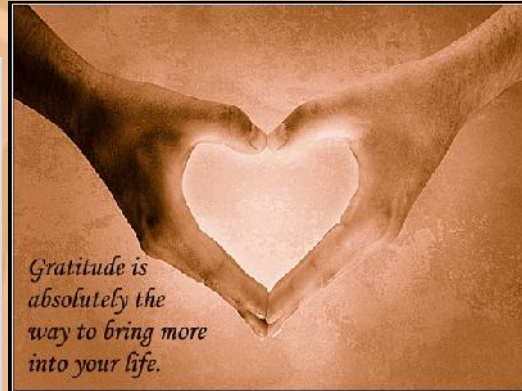
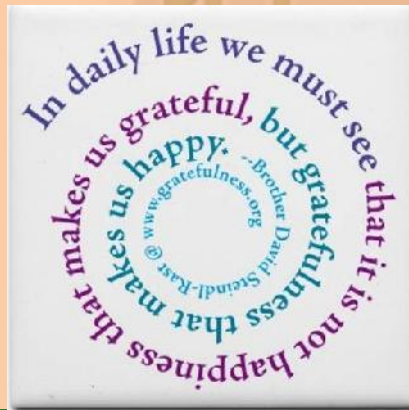
Self-Talk Cycle

Savoring Exercise

GRATITUDE

A Positive Emotion

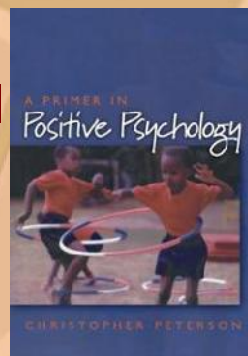
A Personal Strength



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Gratitude Interventions

- **Savoring**
- **Gratitude Letter**
- **Gratitude Journal**
- **3 Blessings**



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Teaching Visualization: “Go to Your Room”



- 1st person view / internal
- 3rd person view / external

The “Go To Your Room” visualization exercise was adapted from *Disidentification for Stress Reduction Handbook*, by Paul & Marsha Haber.

37

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“Self”-Protection

NextStepFacilitations.com

• SHEILDS UP!





Positive Emotions

Letting Go of Negative Emotions

- **Give Emotions Form**

—and you **CONTROL** them



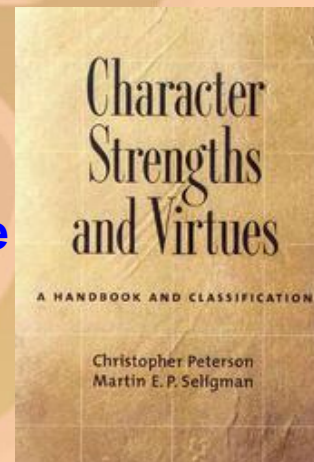
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39

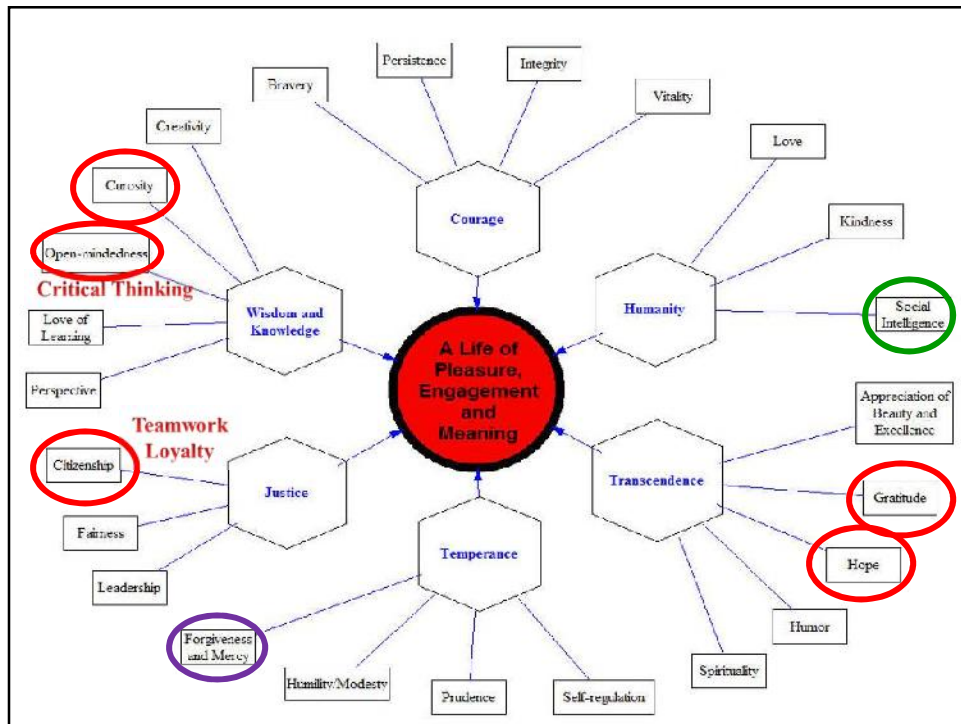
Signature Strengths

- **Knowledge & Application of character strengths:**

- ↑ life satisfaction
- ↑ health
- ↑ optimal performance




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ENNEAGRAM

• Strengths + “Who You AM!”

Joan Reese, PhD
“Introduction to the Enneagram”
Sat. 9:00-10:00a
#21093



The Reformer

DISCOVER YOUR ENNEAGRAM PERSONALITY TYPE

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42



Positive Emotion Self-Directed Neuroplasticity

- ***'Taking in the Good'***

» Rick Hanson, PhD

- Mindfulness
- Controlling Attention



TIG



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Power of Mindfulness

Controlling Attention

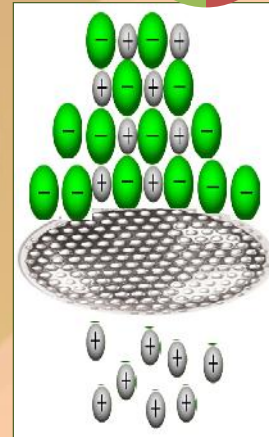
- **Attention is like a spotlight**
 - it illuminates what it rests upon.
- **Neuroplasticity is heightened for what is in the field of focused awareness**
 - Makes attention also like a vacuum cleaner sucking its contents into the brain
- **Directing attention skillfully = a fundamental way to shape the brain - and one's life - over time**



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Negativity Bias of Brain: Some Consequences

- Just *having* positive experiences is not enough.
- They pass through the brain like water through a sieve, while negative experiences are caught.
- We need to engage positive experiences actively to weave them into the brain.



(savor)

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Honoring Experience

- One's experience *matters*.
 - Both for how it feels in the moment and for the lasting residues it leaves behind, woven into the fabric of a person's brain and being.



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How to Take in the Good

1. Look for positive **facts**, and let them become positive **experiences**.
2. Savor the positive experience:
 - Sustain it for 10-20-30 seconds.
 - Feel it in your body and emotions.
 - Intensify it.
3. Sense and intend that the positive experience is soaking into your brain and body - registering deeply in emotional memory.



Injecting
Feelazation

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Why It's Good to Take in the Good

- **Rights an unfair imbalance**
 - given the negativity bias
- **Gives oneself today the caring and support one should have received as a child, but perhaps didn't get in full measure**
 - an inherent, implicit benefit
- **Increases positive resources, such as:**
 - Positive emotions
 - Capacity to manage stress and negative experiences
- **Can help bring in missing "supplies"**
 - e.g., love, strength, worth
- **Can help painful, even traumatic experiences**

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Rick Hanson, PhD

Benefits of Positive Emotions

Taking in the Good (TIG)

- **The benefits of positive emotions are a proxy for many of the benefits of TIG.**
- **Emotions organize the brain as a whole, so positive ones have far-reaching benefits, including:**
 - Promote exploratory, “approach” behaviors
 - Lift mood; increase optimism, resilience
 - Counteract trauma
 - Strengthen immune and protect cardiovascular systems
 - Overall: “broaden and build”
 - Create positive cycles
 - Increase Resilience



Targets of TIG

- **Bodily States:**
 - Healthy Arousal, PNS, Vitality
- **Emotions:**
 - Both Feelings & Moods
- **Views:**
 - Expectations, Object Relations
 - Perspectives on Self, world, past & future
- **Behaviors:**
 - Repertoire, Inclinations



A Goal of TIG

- We want to actively internalize resources in implicit memory
 - Making the brain like **Velcro** for positive experiences
 - but like **Teflon** for negative experiences



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FEELAZATION

The anchoring of a powerful emotional component to vivid visualization

- Emotive Imagery
- Felt Sense
- Anchoring



Murphy, 1986, 1990; Murphy, Woolfolk, & Budney, 1988; Gendlin, 1981; Bandler & Grindlerr, 1979; Horton, 1997; Reese, 2005

52

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Soak it in Wallow in Positivity



Take Home Points


- **Neuroplasticity**
 - Negativity Bias of Brain
- **Brain & Learning**
- **Brain & Emotions**
 - Broaden & Build / + Emotions
 - Gratitude
 - Letting Go
- **Interventions:**
 - Exercise
 - Self-Talk
 - Shield's Up
 - Set Boundaries
 - MAGIS Thinking
 - Feelazation
 - Gratitude
 - Savoring
 - Gratitude Journal
 - Gratitude Letter
 - 3 Blessings
 - Letting Go
 - Throw 'negative emotion' away
 - Flush it!
 - Self-Directed Neuroplasticity
 - TIG – Taking In the Good
 - Signature Strengths
 - Enneagram



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54

Bob Reese, PhD
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 • Slides are on NextStep website



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56

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