

The Science of Happiness

And How to Be Happier





What is happiness?

What makes you happy?
What makes you flourish?

Definitions

- Sonya Lyombosky: “the experience of joy, contentment, or positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful, and worthwhile.”
- Darrin McMahan: “Happiness is never simply a function of good feeling—of what puts a smile on our face—but rather of living good lives, lives that will almost certainly include a good deal of pain.”
- Lao Tzu: "If you are depressed you are living in the past. If you are anxious you are living in the future. If you are at peace you are living in the present.”

Would you enter the experience machine?



I will be happy
when...

...I get a raise.

...I lose 10 pounds.

...I go on vacation.

...I get a new car.

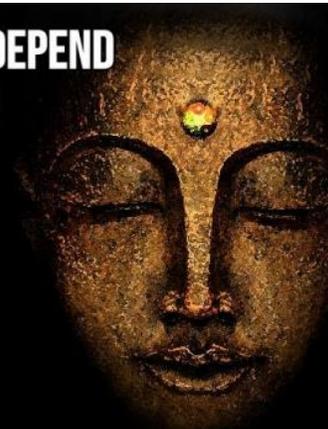
*Men always forget that
human happiness is a
disposition of mind and
not a condition of
circumstances.*

—John Locke

tonibernhard.com

**HAPPINESS DOES NOT DEPEND
ON WHAT YOU HAVE OR
WHO YOU ARE.
IT SOLELY RELIES ON
WHAT YOU THINK.**

~ Buddha

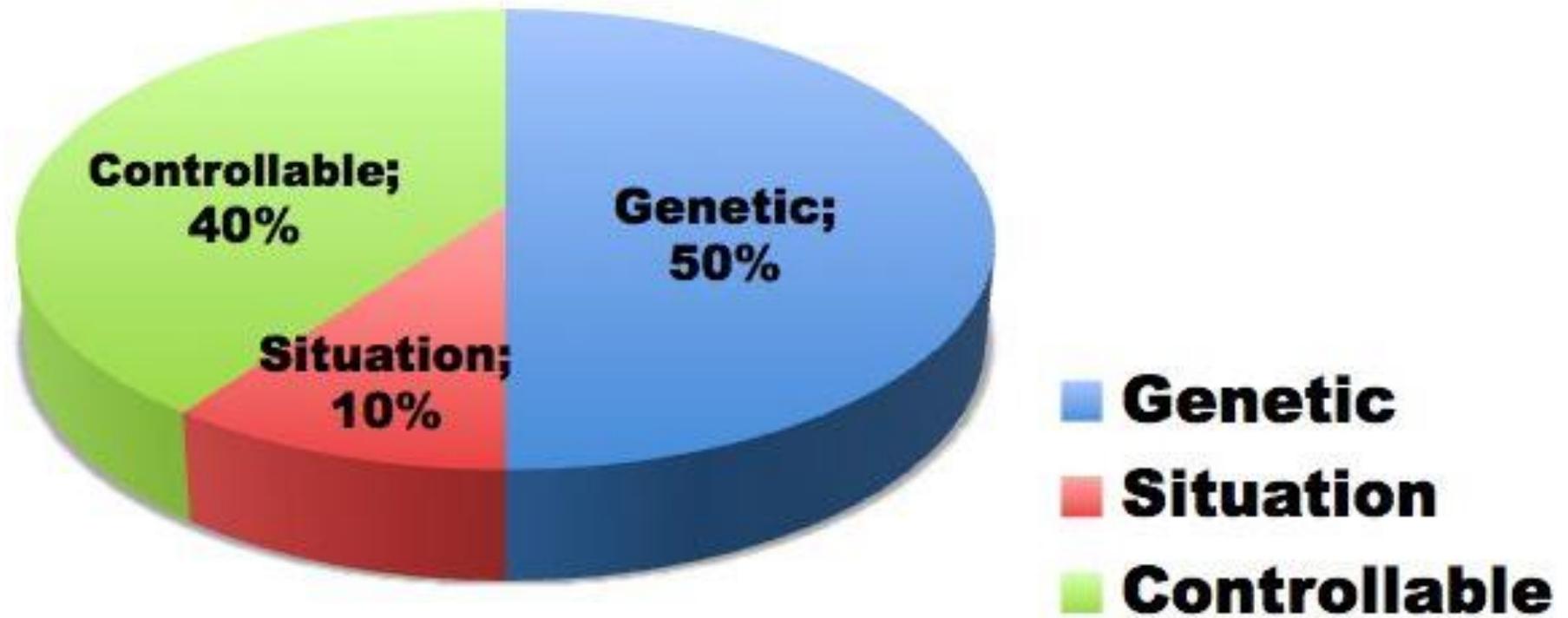


*"If you don't like
something, change it.
If you can't change it,
change your attitude."*

Maya Angelou

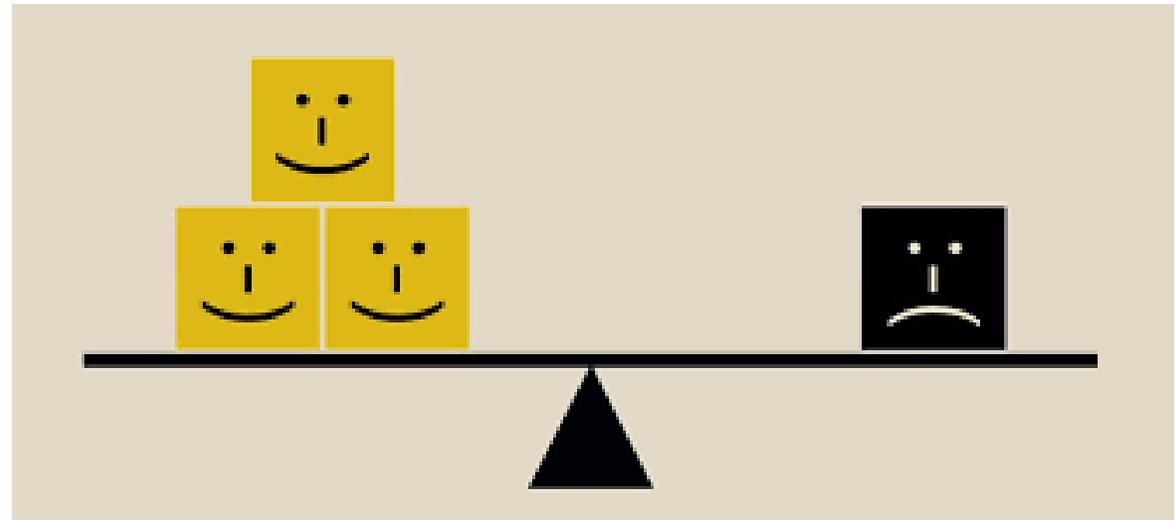
[inspirationalquotestolive&learn](https://www.facebook.com/inspirationalquotestolive&learn) /fb

Your Happiness



Negativity Bias

- Do you ever find that you tend to dwell on the negative events that happen to you?
- People are evolutionarily wired to respond negatively to stimuli.
- This usually happens unconsciously. Recognizing this phenomenon is the first step toward overcoming it.
- Training our brains to think differently is like riding a bike - once we create new ways of thinking, we literally rewire our brains.

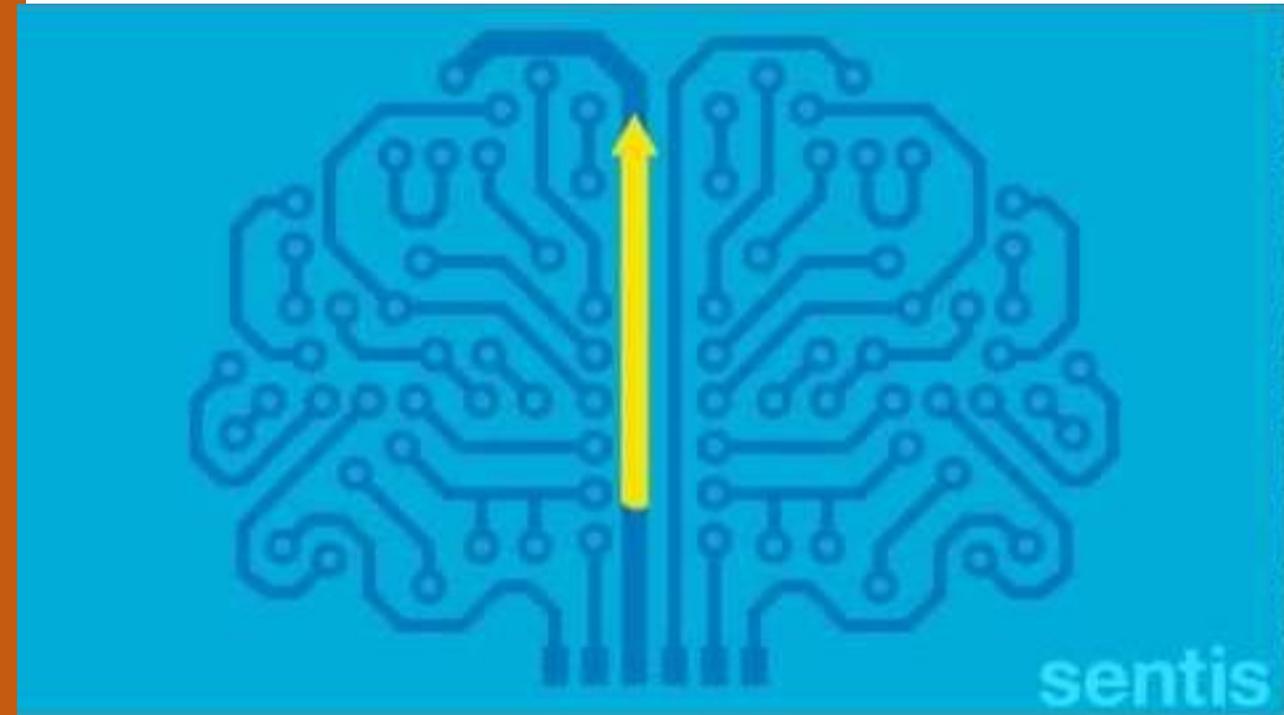




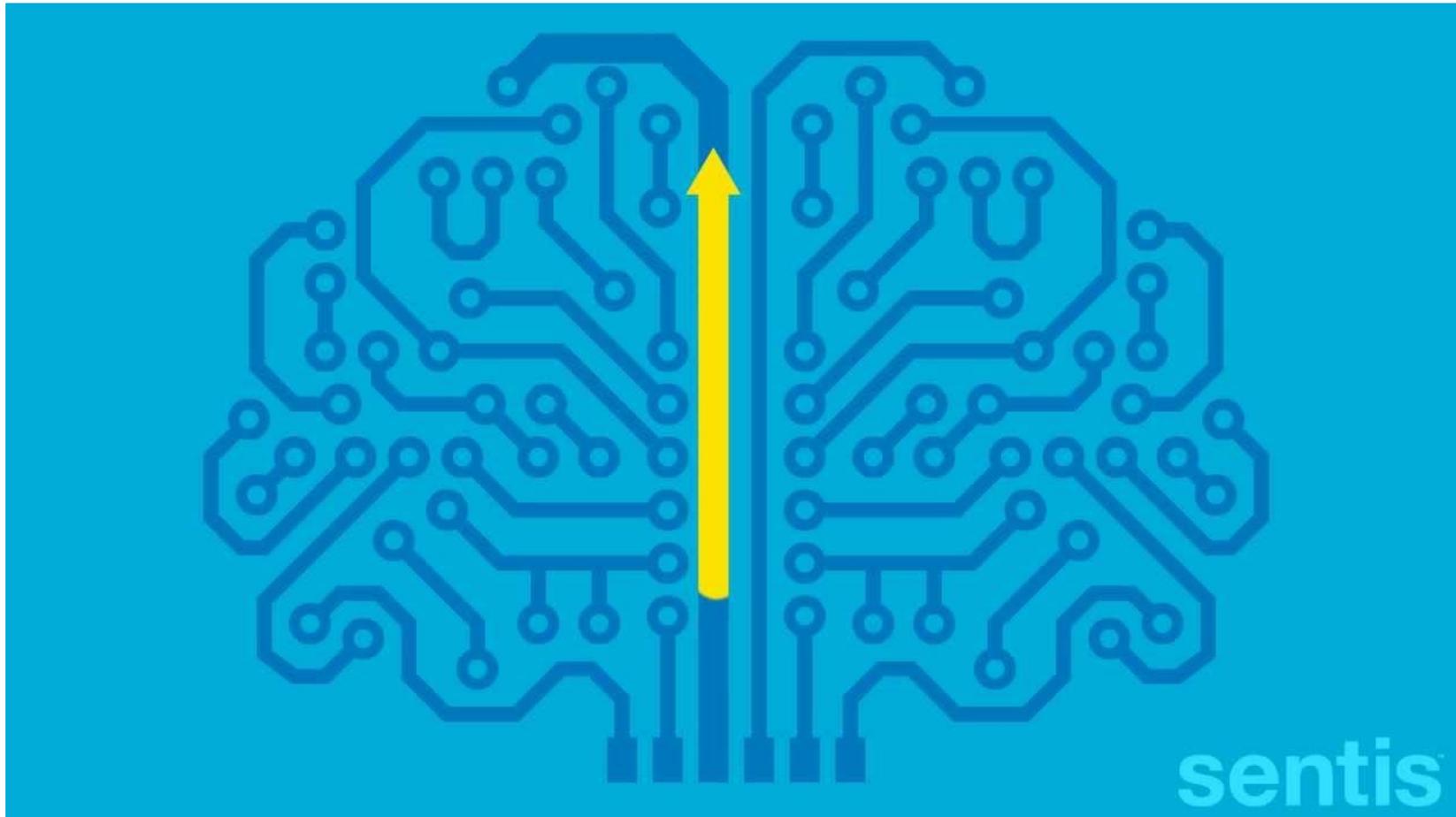
Overcoming Negativity Bias

- Stop negative small-talk
- Reframe
- Emphasize positive moments

Neuroplasticity:

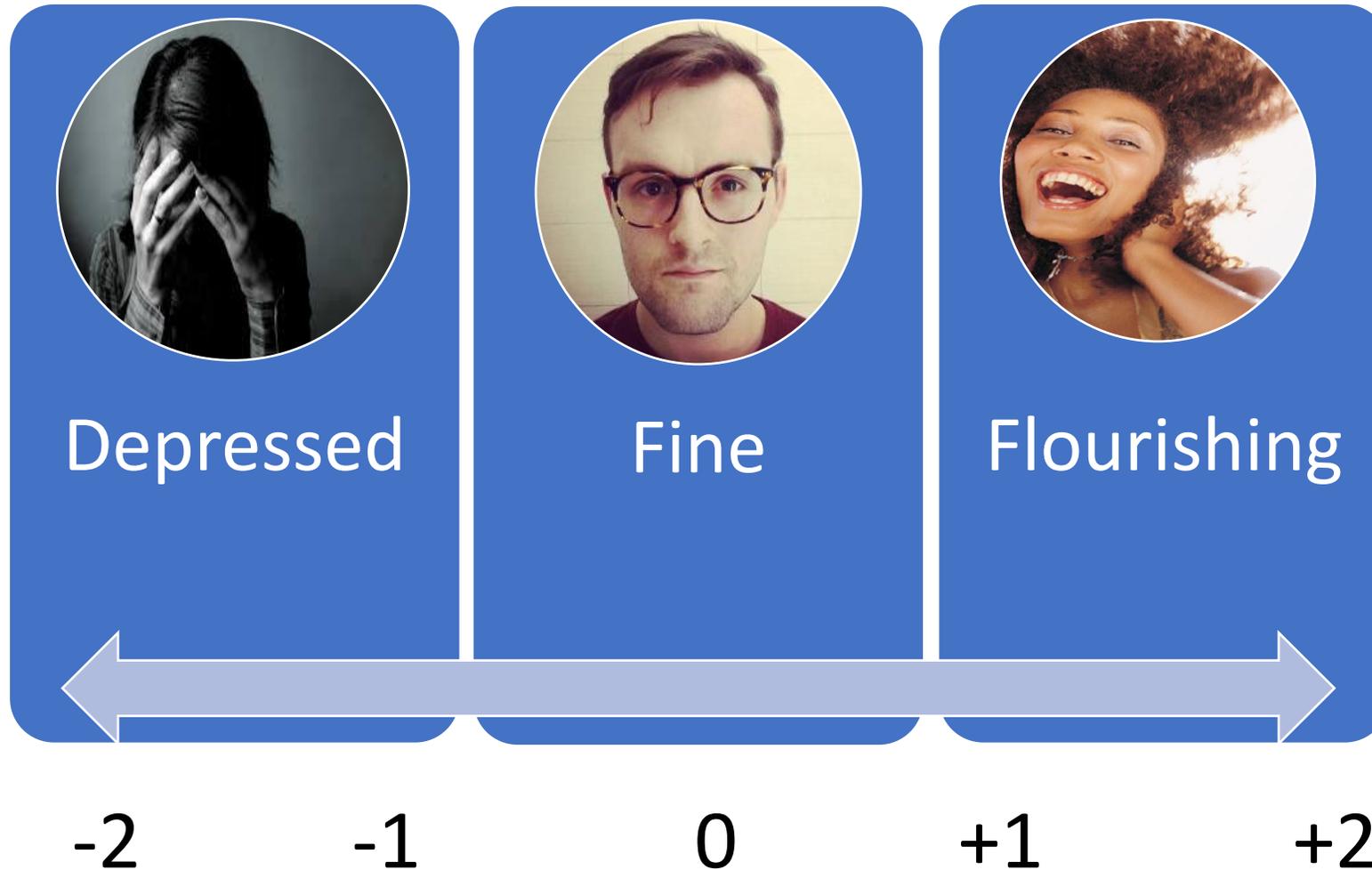


Neuroplasticity



Through time and repetition we can retrain or “rewire” our brains.

Positive Psychology: “The Science of Happiness”



How can we “rewire” our brains?

Principles:

1. Be **authentic**
2. Change your **perspective**
3. Grow **positive** feelings
4. Cultivate **mindfulness**
5. Develop and foster healthy **relationships**
6. Create **meaning**

Principles for rewiring our brains:

1. Be Authentic

- Humanistic psychology: focuses on full sense of self.
- When who you are is aligned with what you do.
- Know yourself, your strengths, values and shadows.



Principles for rewiring our brains:

2. Change your perspective





- How can I change the way I perceive my experiences?
- What can I learn from this?
- How has this made me stronger?



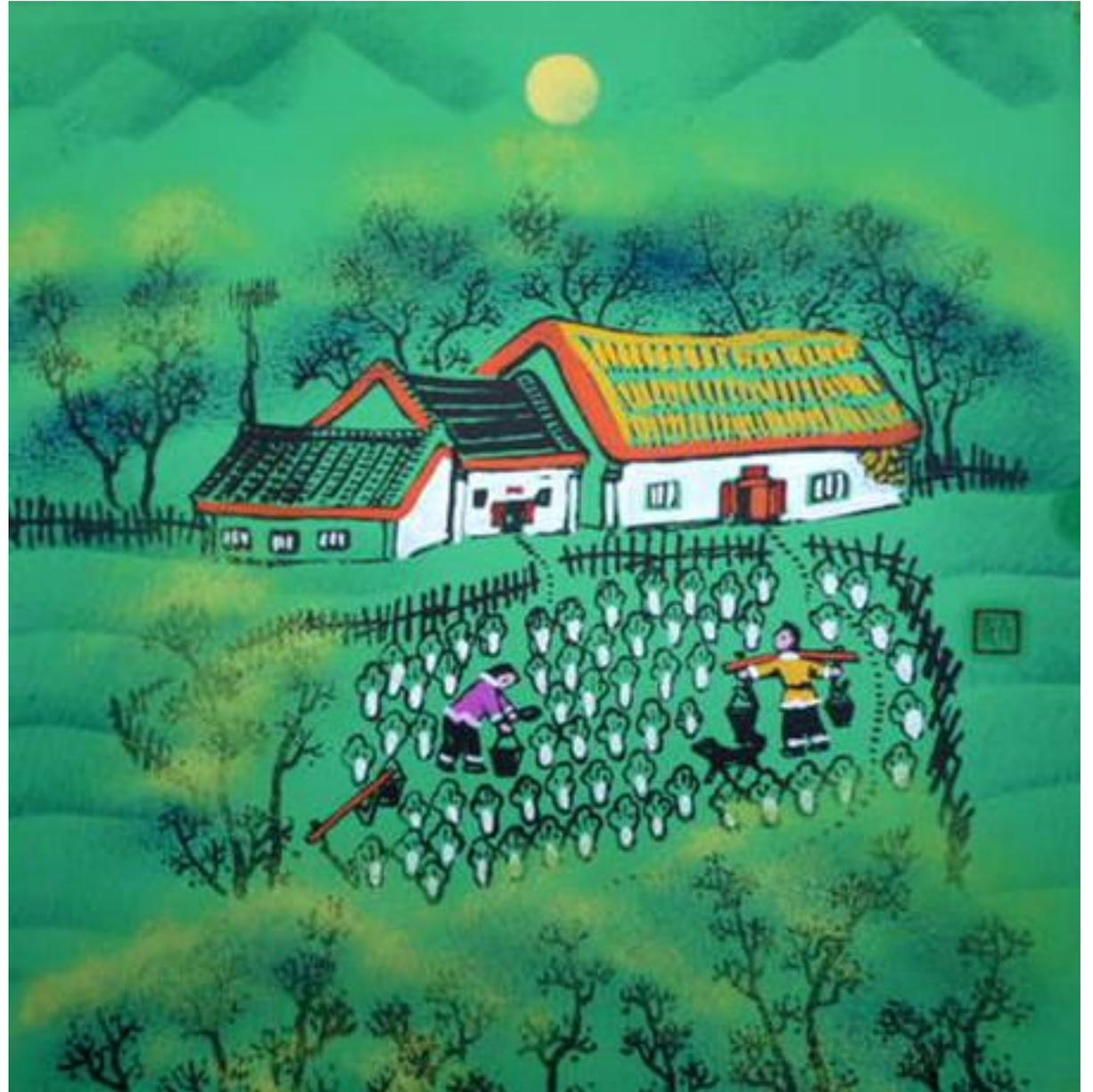
Darrell suspected someone had once again slipped him a spoon with the concave side reversed.

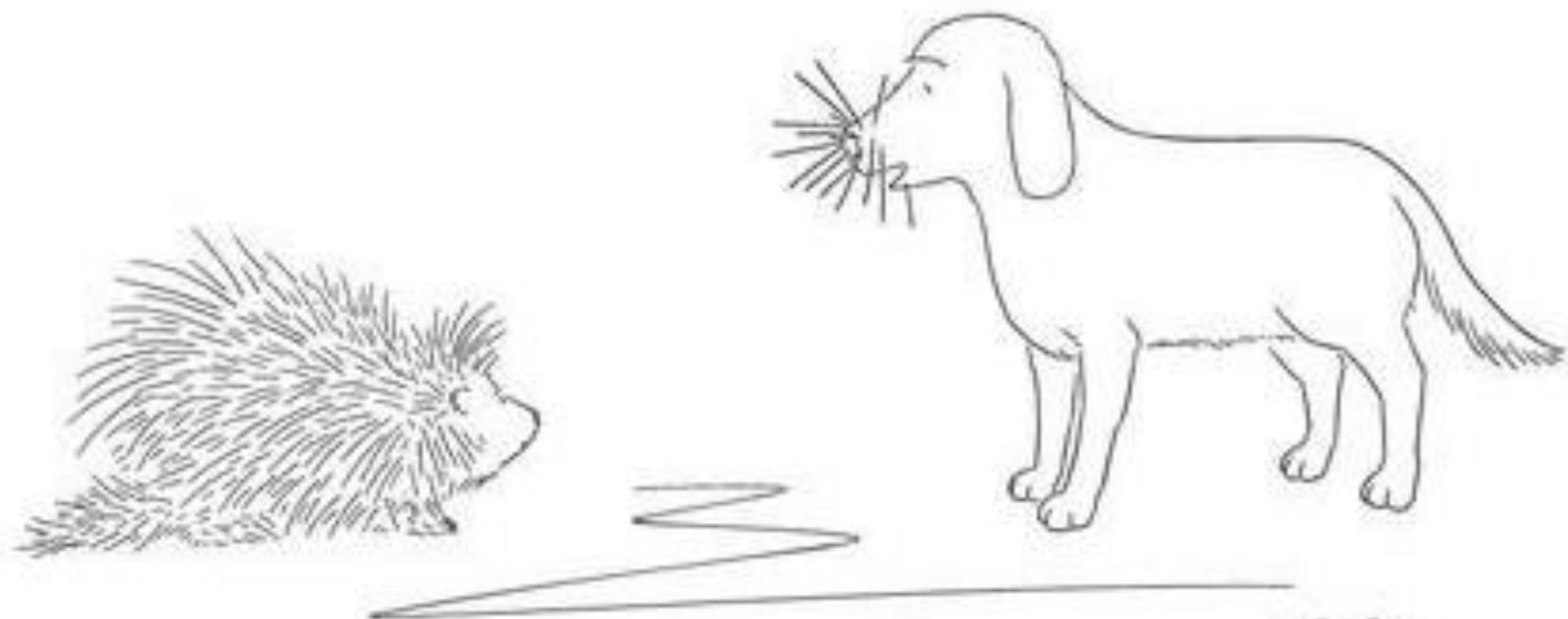
Cognitive Reconstruction

When something bad happens, or we fail, instead of focusing on the consequences of a failure we seek to learn and grow from the experience.

For example: bombing a presentation, ending a relationship, losing a client, arguing with a friend, burning dinner, etc.

Taoist Parable





GREGORY

"On the plus side, you've cured my back pain."

Grow Positive Feelings



Gratitude



Fulfillment



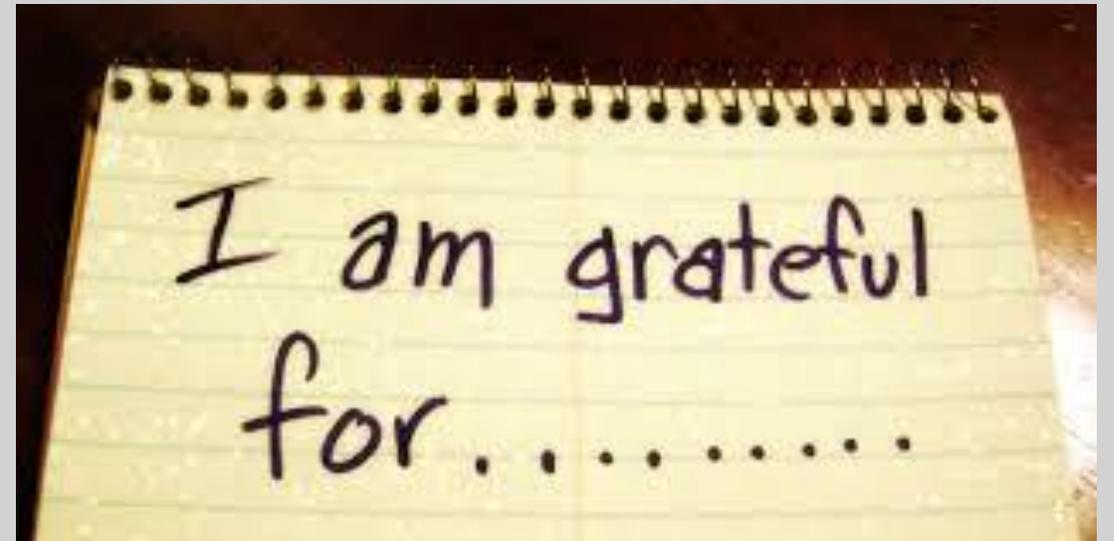
Kindness

Brene Brown



Gratitude

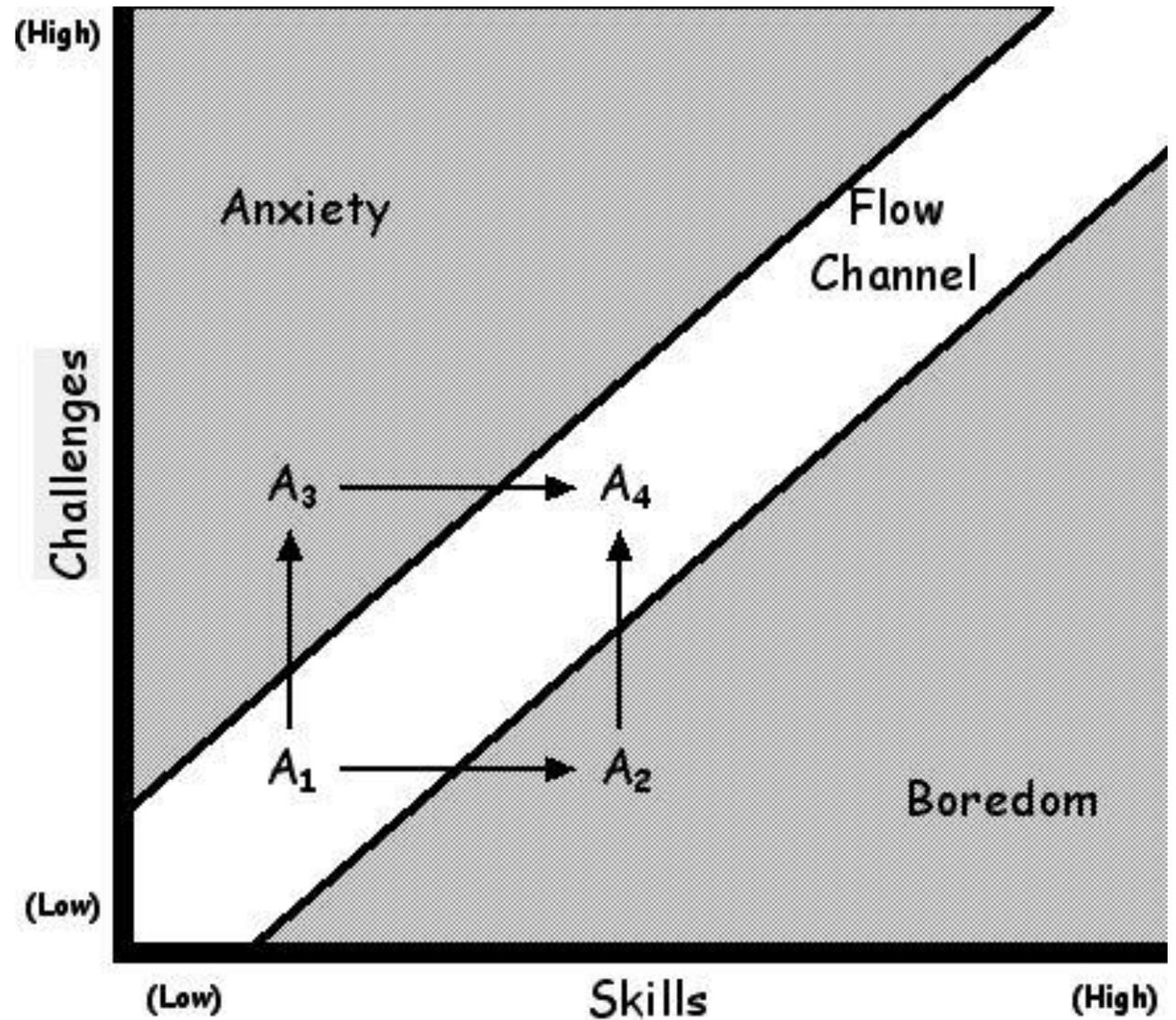
- Gratitude Journals: In an experimental comparison, those who kept gratitude journals on a weekly basis were healthier, felt better about their lives as a whole, and were more optimistic compared to those who recorded hassles or neutral life events.



Gratitude Letter

- Think of someone to whom you are very grateful. Write them a letter, articulating your feelings.

Fulfillment (Being in the Flow)



From Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience
by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (page 74)

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

“Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.”

What would you love
to do?

What would YOU
love to accomplish?

How can you get in
the “flow”?



The Science of Kindness

- We are hard-wired for generosity.
- Being kind releases endorphins which are associated with a sense of well-being and contentment.
- Elevation effect

Principles for rewiring our brains:

4. Cultivate Mindfulness

“...paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgementally....”

Jon Kabat Zinn



History

- The Origins of Mindfulness were from Buddhist philosophy.
- In 1979 Jon Kabat-Zinn adapted it to a secular 8 week program entitled: Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)



Mindfulness/Meditation

- Shrinks the amygdala (part of the brain responsible for anxiety).
- Lowers cortisol (stress hormone)
- Strengthens the area of the brain associated with empathy and compassion



"Can I call you back, Ed? I'm in the moment here."

Mindfulness Methods:

- Recognizing bodily sensations, thoughts, surroundings, emotions
- Body scans
- Focusing on the breath
- Mindful eating, mindful walking



"It keeps me from looking at my phone every two seconds."

Liam Walsh/The New Yorker

Principles for rewiring our brains:

5. Develop and foster healthy relationships

- Scientific studies prove that people with strong relationships: friends, children, parents, significant others, community, consistently score higher in happiness research.
- Relationships need cultivating

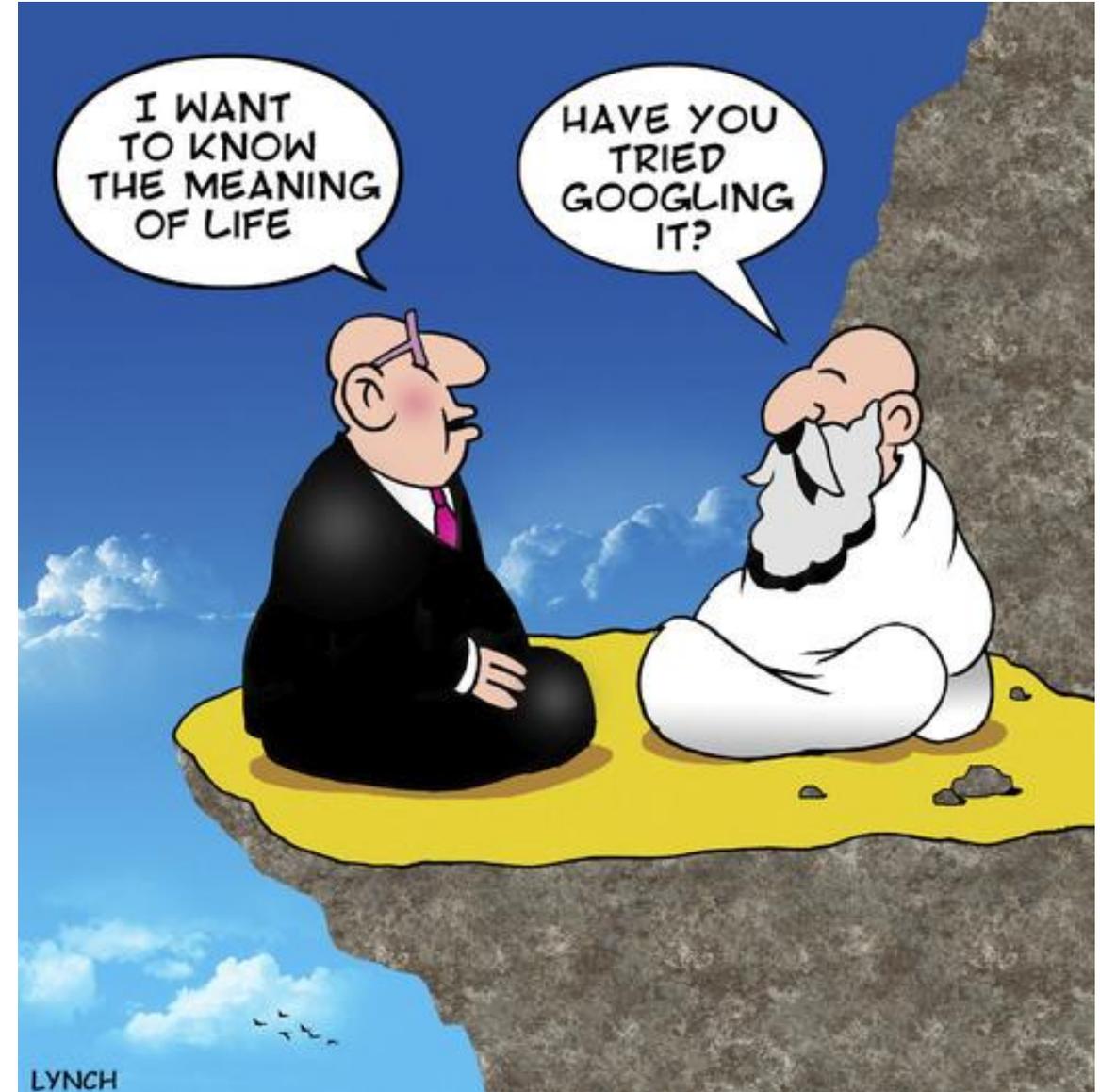
Develop a healthy lifestyle

- Exercise increases endorphins (feel good chemicals in the brain) and it reduces levels of cortisol (stress hormones).
- “Research shows that physical exercise strengthens both the body and the brain!
- 20 minutes of exercise can boost our mood for up to 12 hours.



6. Create Meaning

- Create **meaning**: What does this mean?
- What do you hope to achieve in life?
- What do you hope to contribute to the world?
- How can you use your unique strengths to accomplish that?



Are we
focusing on
the wrong
thing?

- “Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.” — **Helen Keller**
- Seeking meaning and purpose helps us feel useful, connected, engaged.

How can we “rewire” our brains?

Principles:

1. Be **authentic**
2. Change your **perspective**
3. Grow **positive** feelings
4. Cultivate **mindfulness**
5. Develop and foster healthy **relationships**
6. Create **meaning**

**As you go through life, my friend,
whatever be your goal,**



**Keep your eye upon the doughnut,
and not upon the hole.**