A Neurobiologist's Guide

To Team Empowerment

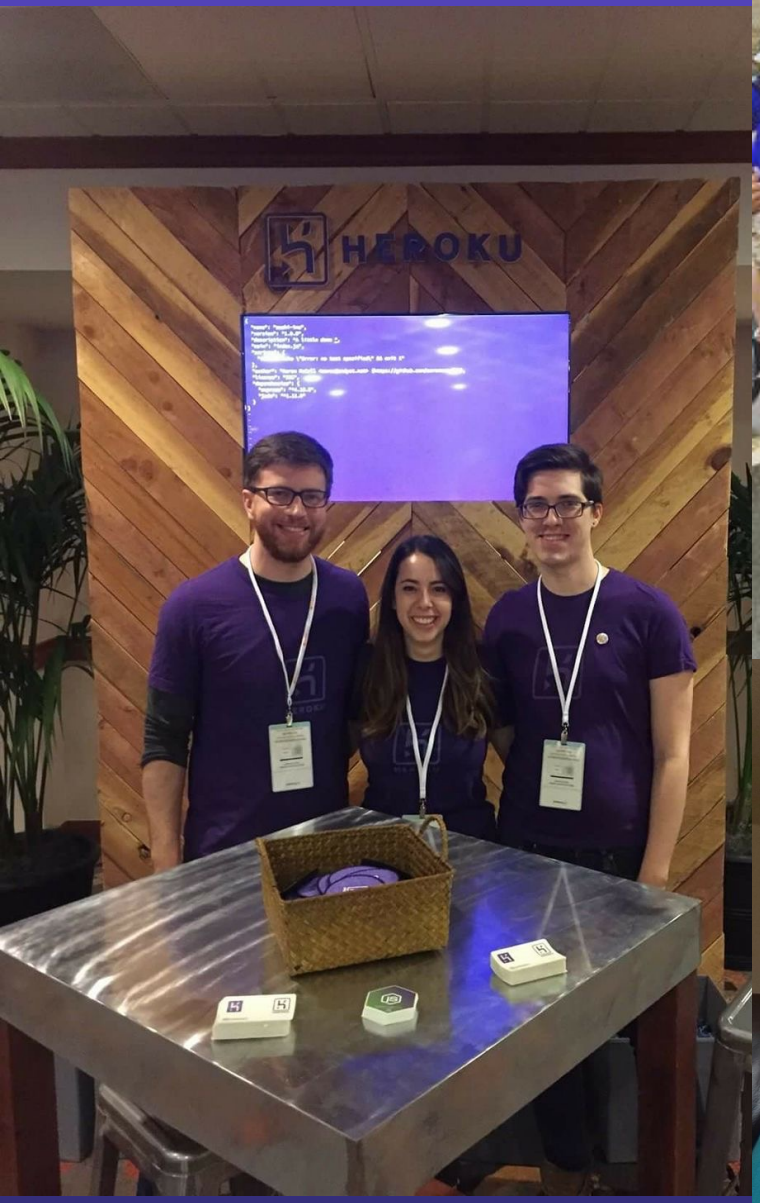
Casey Watts!

@kyloma caseywatts.com

Intro

SHIM

6
7
Week 2 Day 1 - Github & Ruby I
Week 2 Day 1 - Github & Ruby I
Week 2 Day
rdio



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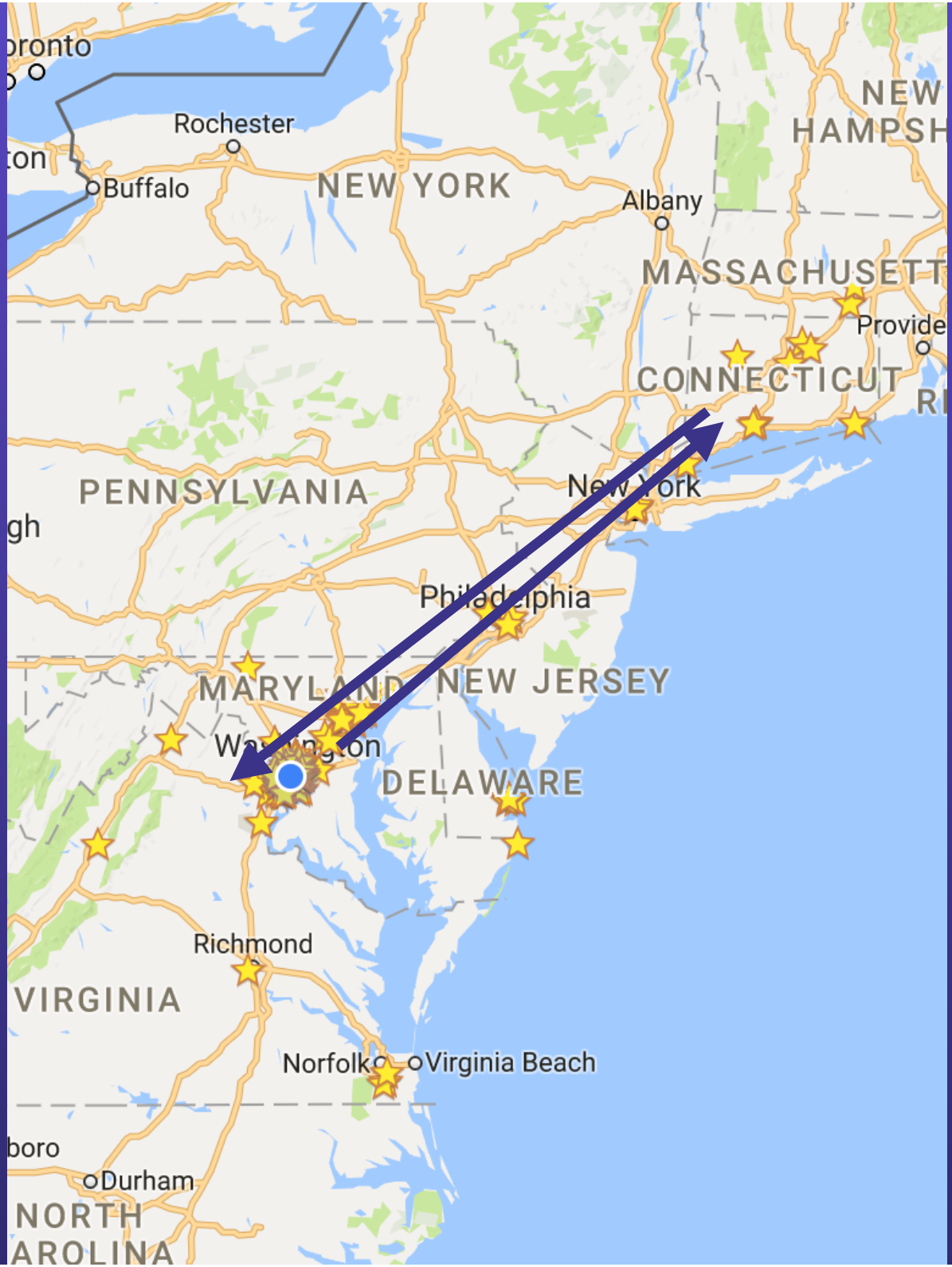
Washington, DC



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Casey's Research

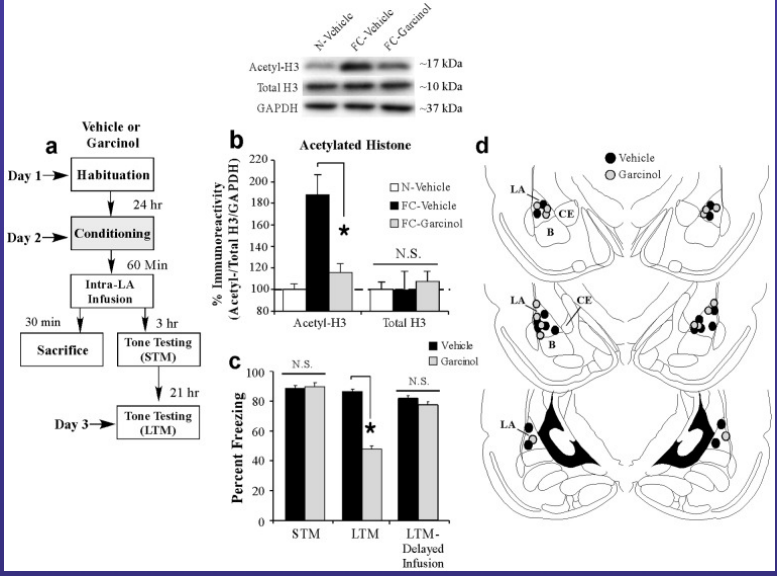
My Papers

1. DNA methyltransferase activity is required for memory-related neural plasticity in the lateral amygdala.
   Maddox SA, **Watts** CS, **Schafe** GE.
   Neurobiol Learn Mem. 2014 Jan;107:93-100. doi: 10.1016/j.nlm.2013.11.008.
   PMID: 24291571 **Free PMC Article**
   Similar articles

2. A naturally-occurring histone acetyltransferase inhibitor derived from Garcinia indica impairs newly acquired and reactivated fear memories.
   Maddox SA, **Watts** CS, Doyère V, **Schafe** GE.
   PLoS One. 2013;8(1):e54463. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0054463.
   PMID: 23349897 **Free PMC Article**
   Similar articles

3. p300/CBP histone acetyltransferase activity is required for newly acquired and reactivated fear memories in the lateral amygdala.
   Maddox SA, **Watts** CS, **Schafe** GE.
   Learn Mem. 2013 Jan 17;20(2):109-19. doi: 10.1101/lm.029157.112.
   PMID: 23328899 **Free PMC Article**
   Similar articles

"Intra-LA infusions of garcinol impair training-related acetylation of histone H3 and fear memory consolidation."



excited

or

nervous

“physiologically aroused”

what outcome
is expected?

Anxiety

a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an

uncertain outcome.

You might feel:

tired, sitting all day
focused on dinner
hangry

You might focus on:

curious about brains
excited about this talk
just grabbed a coffee

Overview

A. Cognitive Restructuring
B. Psychological Safety
C. Inclusive Culture

Overview

A. Self
B. Team
C. Team

Notes, links, slides, homework at:
caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

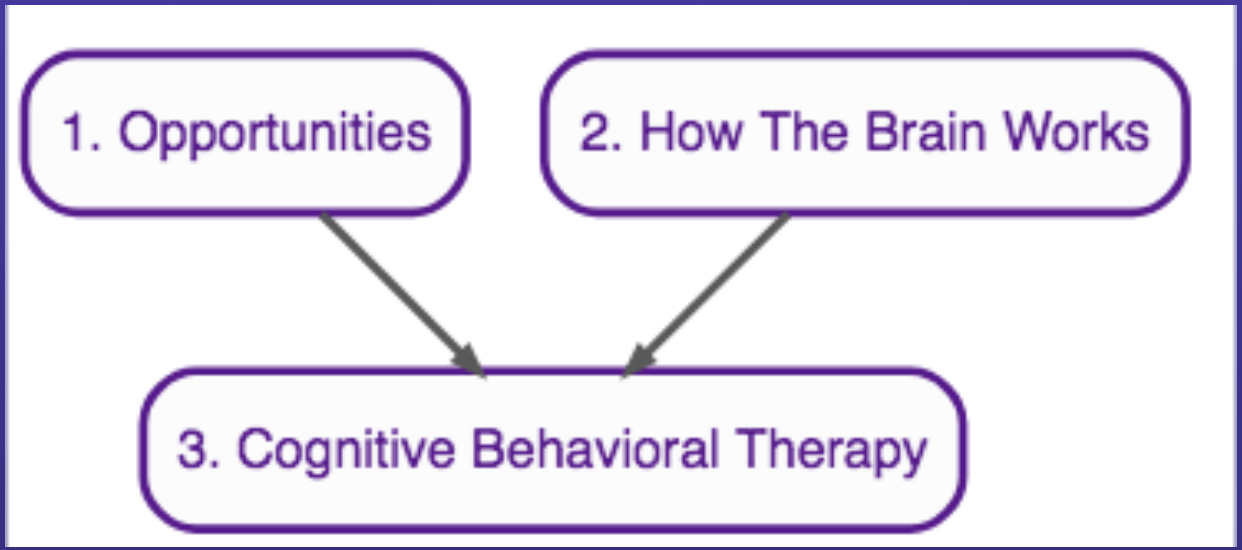
Video at:
caseywatts.com/mindmanipulationvideo

Part A
Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive Restructuring

1. "Opportunities"
2. How The Brain Works
3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive Restructuring



Cognitive Restructuring

1. **"Opportunities"**
2. How The Brain Works
3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

downward
spiral

argument at work

snapping at your kids

Hangry, wet, raining, late
Stepped in a puddle

during
or
after

Rumination

compulsively focused attention on the symptoms of one's distress, and on its possible **causes and consequences**, as opposed to its **solutions**

Cognitive Restructuring

1. "Opportunities"
2. **How The Brain Works**
3. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Inner vs Outer Brain

Brain as as System

Inner vs Outer Brain

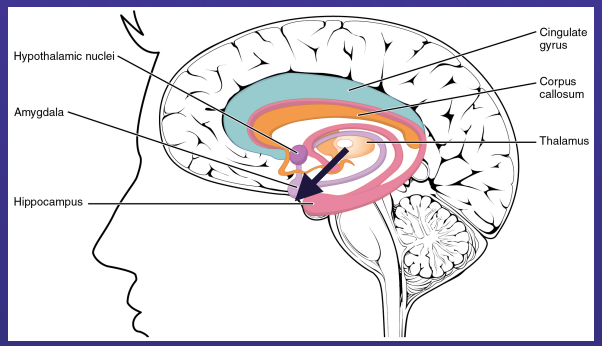
LeDoux's Dual Pathway

Inner vs Outer Brain

Feelings

Limbic System
"inner brain"

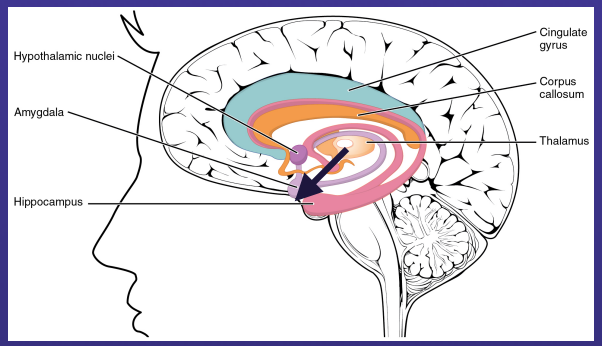
"low road"
FAST ~ms



Feelings

Limbic System
"inner brain"

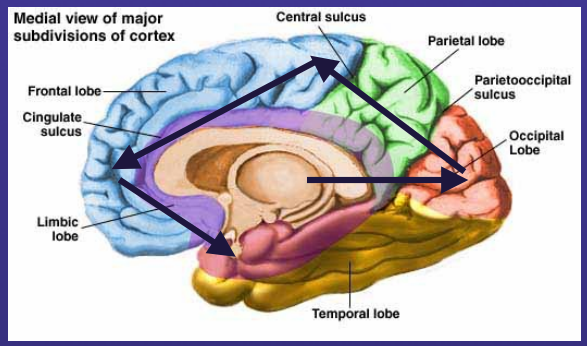
"low road"
FAST ~ms



Thoughts

Cortex
"outer brain"

"high road"
SLOW ~s



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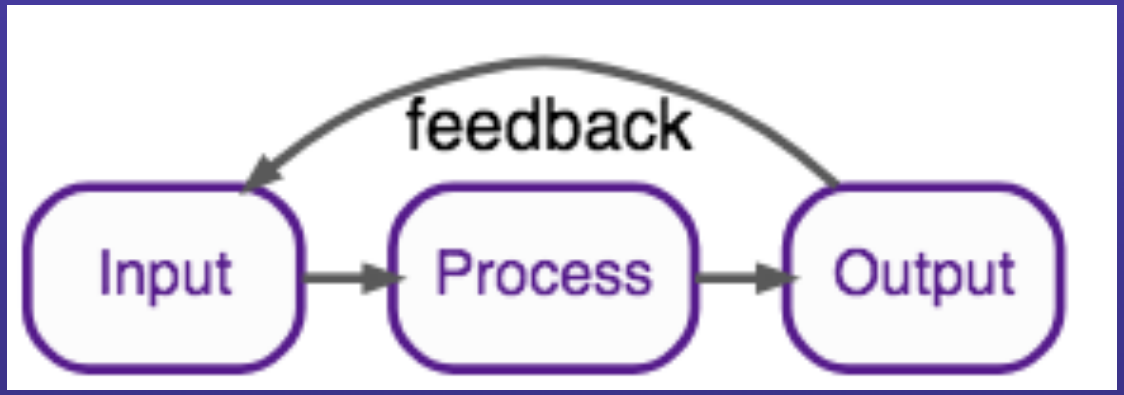
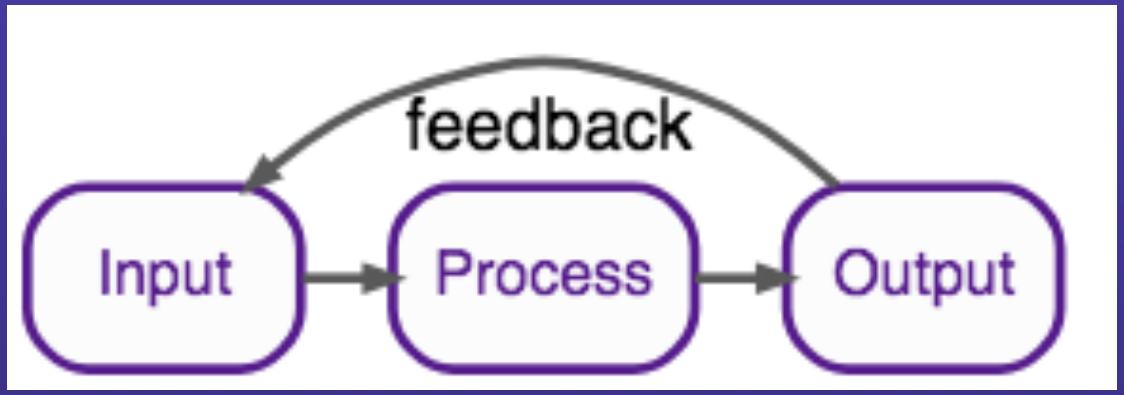
Brain as a System

An Engineer's System

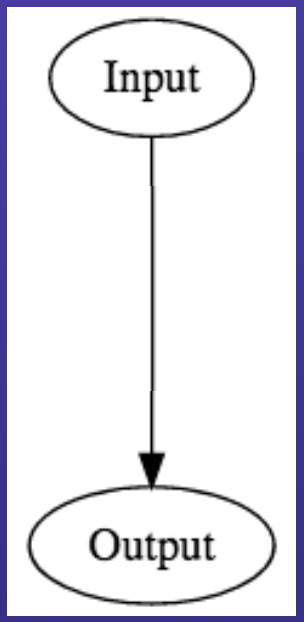


An Engineer's System

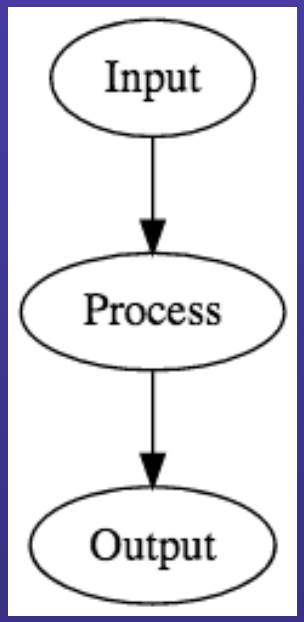


consciousness

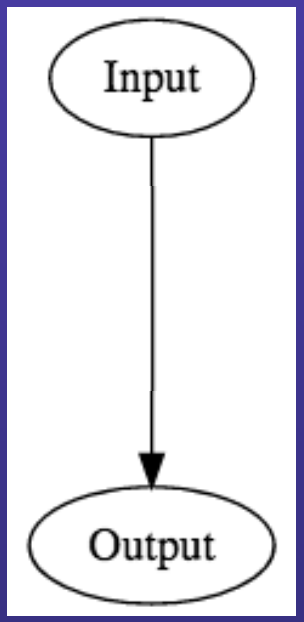
Animal



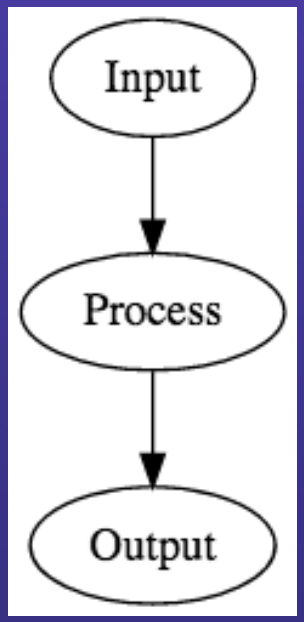
Human



Autopilot



Mindful



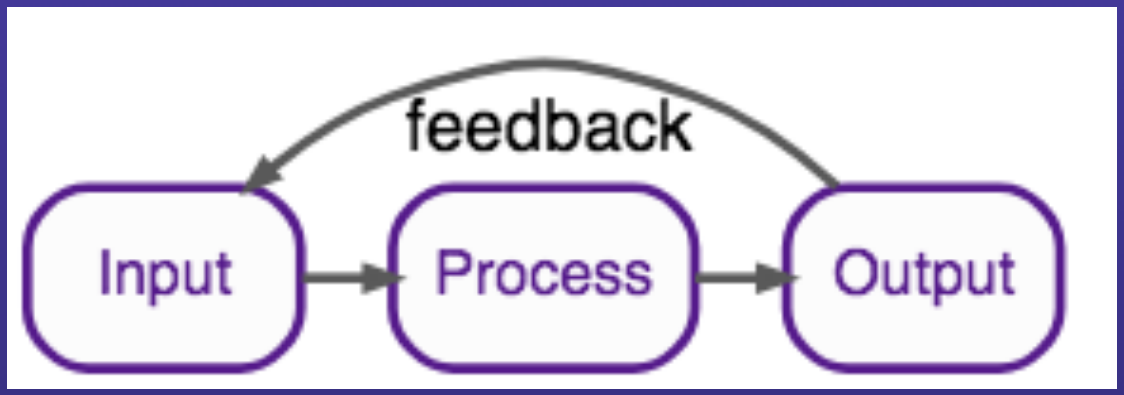
Input
Process
Output
Automatic Thoughts
Automatic Feelings
Deliberate Thoughts
Deliberate Feelings

Negative
Thoughts

Negative
Feelings

How to intervene?

Optimize this system!
(CBT)



Cognitive Restructuring

1. "Opportunities"
2. How The Brain Works
3. **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

Mental Illnesses

Depression
Anxiety
Bipolar disorder
Eating disorders
Schizophrenia
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
+ more

CBT is as effective as

antidepressant drugs

for treating **depression**

Cognitive **B**ehavioral

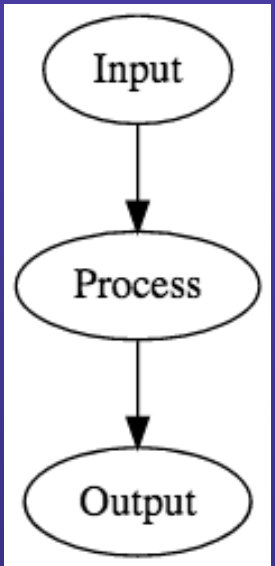
~~**T**herapy~~

Training

debugging tool

npm install constant-introspection

0. Whoop!



1. Input

2. Process Thoughts & Emotions

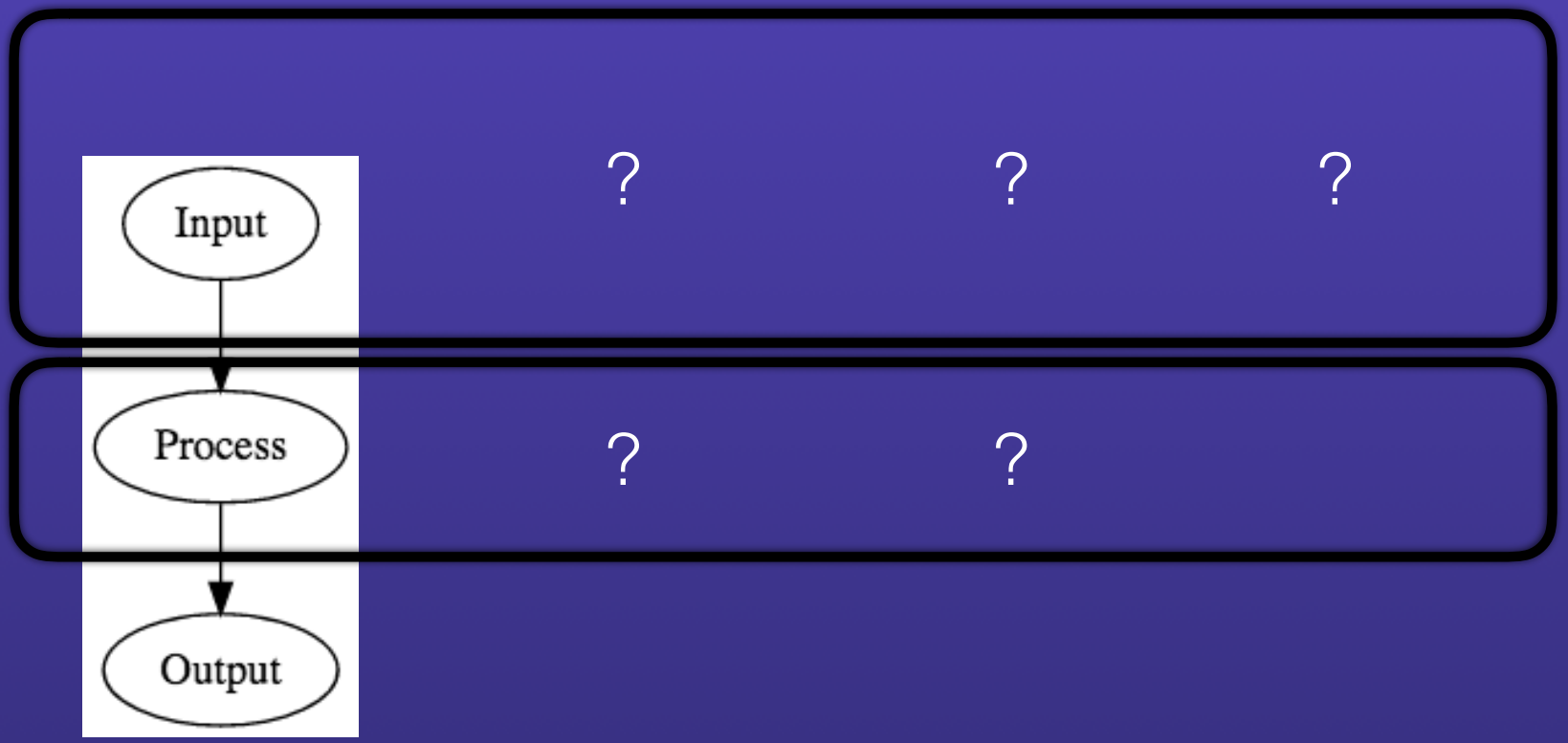
3. Response

0. Whoop!

Whoop!

“The Whoop State”

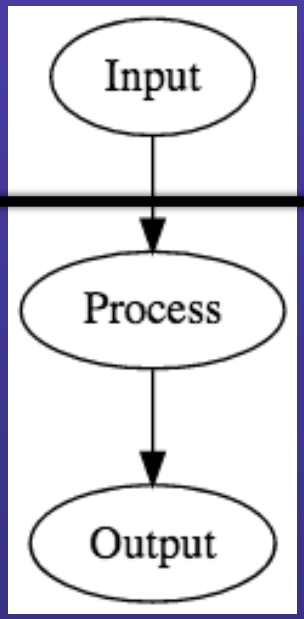
breakpoint successfully hit

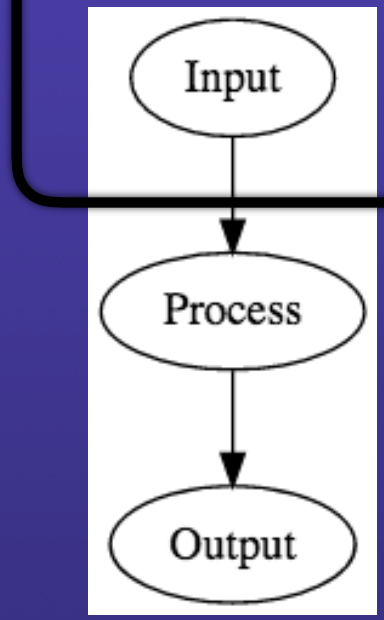

Input
Process
Output
?
?
?
?
?

1. Input

Input
Process
Output
?

Automatic
Thoughts &
Emotions





Automatic Thoughts & Emotions

External Stimuli

events

people's actions & words

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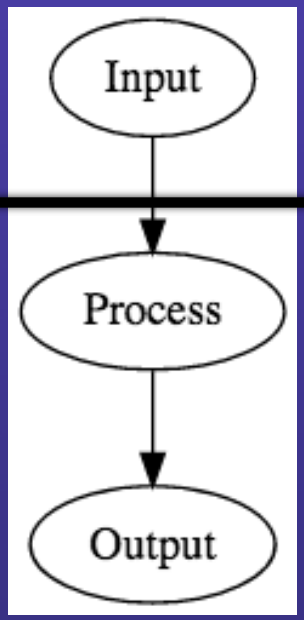
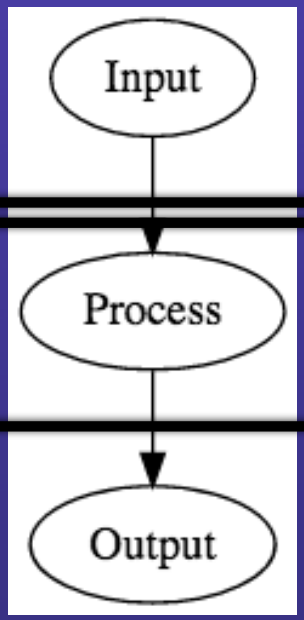


Automatic Thoughts & Emotions

External Stimuli

Bodily State

Hangry



Automatic Thoughts & Emotions

External Stimuli

Bodily State

Process Emotions

Process Thoughts

2a. Emotions

6 Processing Techniques

A List of Emotions

Go beyond the obvious to identify exactly what you're feeling.

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
Grumpy	Disappointed	Afraid	Jealous	Isolated	Thankful
Frustrated	Mournful	Stressed	Betrayed	Self-conscious	Trusting
Annoyed	Regretful	Vulnerable	Isolated	Lonely	Comfortable
Defensive	Depressed	Confused	Shocked	Inferior	Content
Spiteful	Paralyzed	Bewildered	Deprived	Guilty	Excited
Impatient	Pessimistic	Skeptical	Victimized	Ashamed	Relaxed
Disgusted	Tearful	Worried	Aggrieved	Repugnant	Relieved
Offended	Dismayed	Cautious	Tormented	Pathetic	Elated
Irritated	Disillusioned	Nervous	Abandoned	Confused	Confident

SOURCE SUSAN DAVID

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Expand emotional vocabulary

A List of Emotions

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SOURCE SUSAN DAVID

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link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

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Talking

with close friends

Rubber Duck

Journaling

Reading

Fiction

Meditation

View emotions as data:
non-judgmentally

6 Processing Techniques

A List of Emotions

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Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
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SOURCE SUSAN DAVID

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2b. Thoughts

10 Most Common

Maladaptive Thought Patterns

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

All or nothing thinking

Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Over-generalising

*"**everything** is **always** rubbish"*

*"**nothing** good **ever** happens"*

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Mental filter

Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

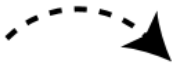
Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

Disqualifying the positive

Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

Jumping to conclusions

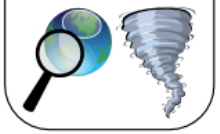


$2 + 2 = 5$

There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning

Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should

must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling

Assigning labels to oursleves or other people

I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

creative commons

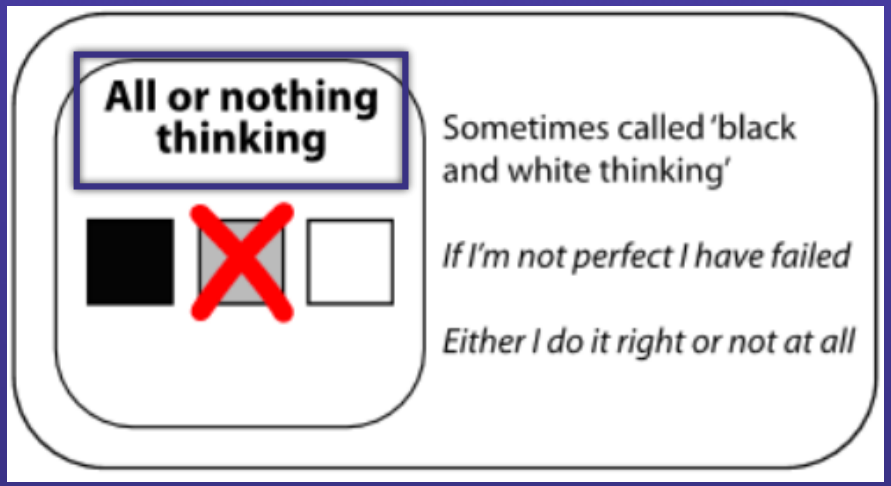
Hangry, wet, raining, late
Stepped in a puddle

Hangry, wet, raining, late
Stepped in a puddle

“Wet shoes are
THE WORST”

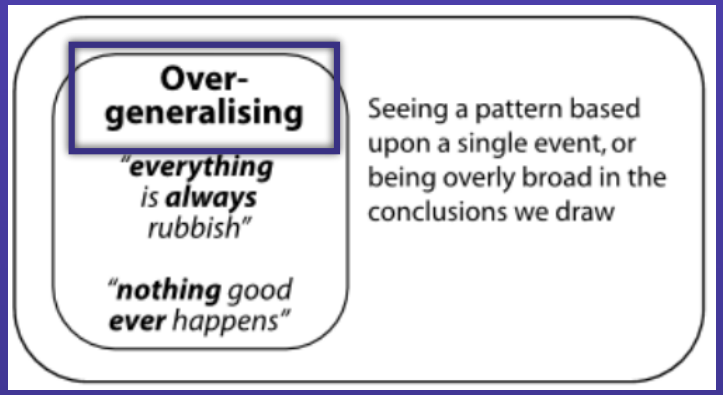
Hangry, wet, raining, late
Stepped in a puddle

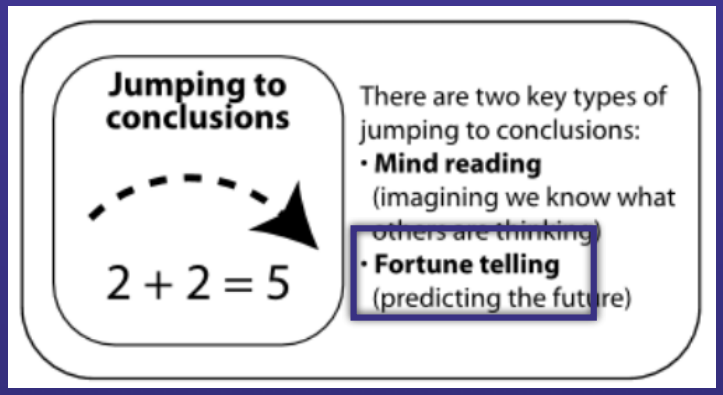
"If I'm late, I should just not go."



Hangry, wet, raining, late
Stepped in a puddle

"Today sucks."





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More Adaptive Thoughts

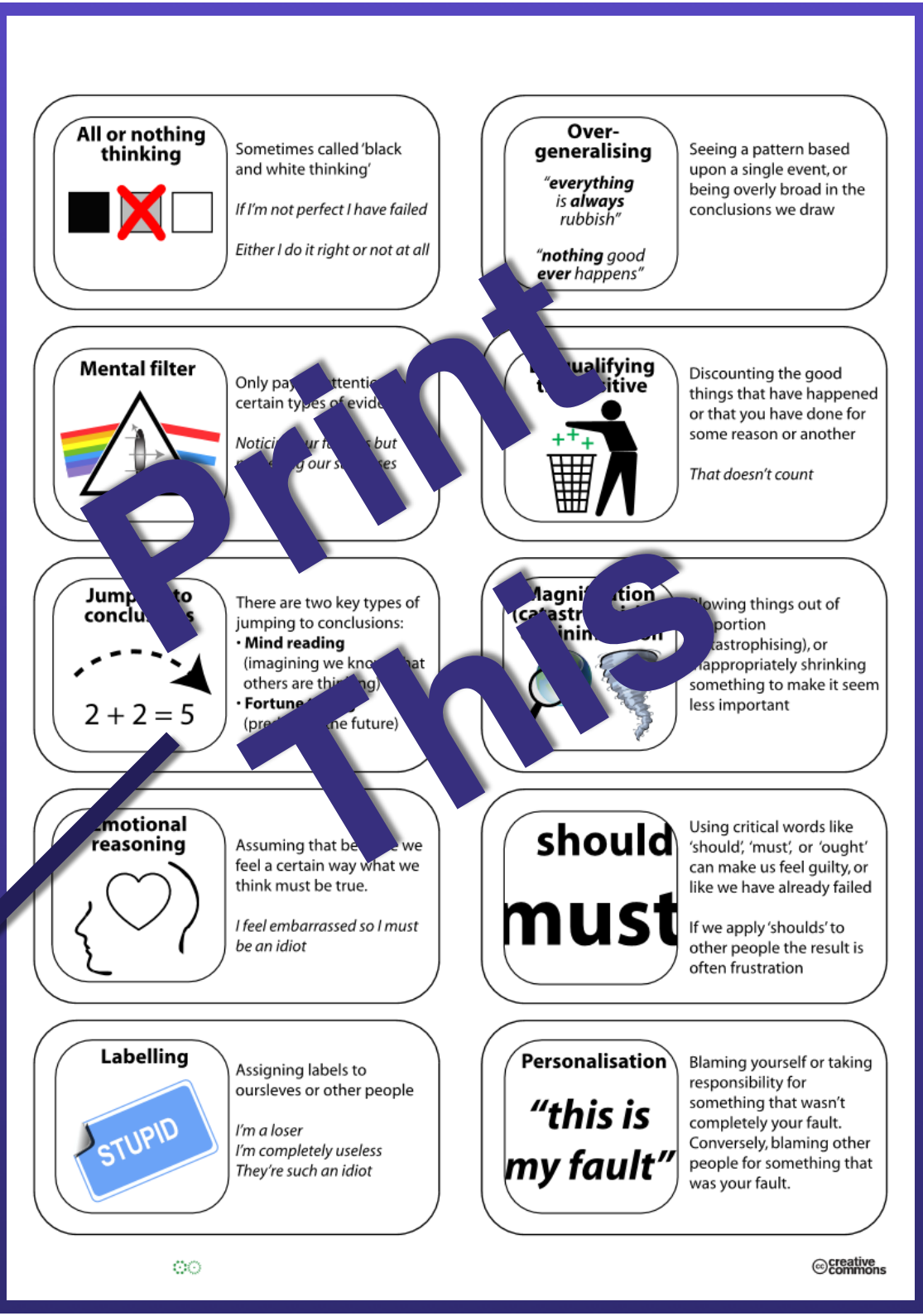
"I am feeling frustrated"

"This hangriness will go away when I eat"

"I'll feel great after I dry off"

10 Most Common

Maladaptive Thought Patterns



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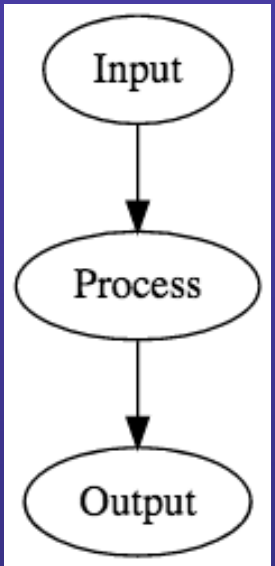
link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

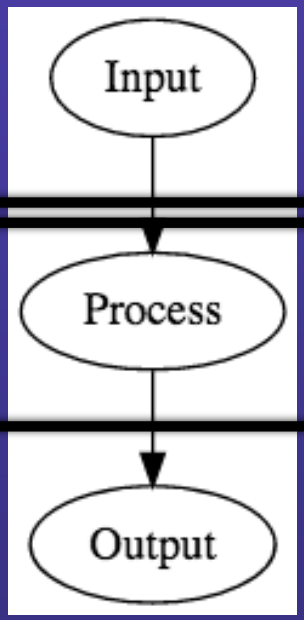
0. Whoop!



1. Input

2. Process Thoughts & Feelings

3. Response



Automatic Thoughts & Emotions

External Stimuli

Bodily State

Process Emotions

Process Thoughts

Other Tools

Therapist

CBT Book “Feeling Good”

Headspace (app)

Joyable (webapp)

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

A downward spiral

drains your

“social battery”

Social Battery

Goals:
understand yourself
understand others

Extravert

vs

Introvert

"gains energy from people

vs

loses energy from people"

isolation?

people-ing forever?

Drain

more people around

less familiar people

high-risk interactions

Charge

being alone

Charge

fewer people around

more familiar people

low-risk interactions

“Social Battery”

drain rate

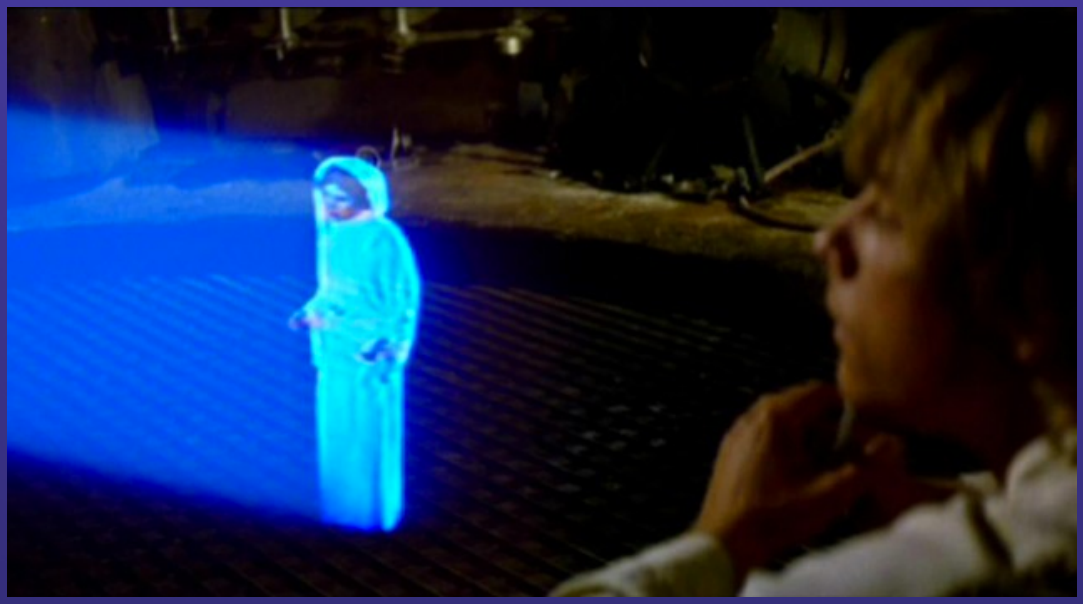
charge rate

size

vs

“Social Satisfaction”

Mental Simulation of Others



Why doesn’t everyone already do CBT?

time

effort / energy

skill (CBT)

How do I get other people to do this?

you can influence others

apply this to yourself
share your experience

share these ideas with others

Part B
Psychological Safety

What makes teams perform better?

(Google)

Failed Correlations

personality types

skills

backgrounds

management style

Successful Correlations

“group norms”

PsycSafety

shared belief held by members of a team that the team is

safe for interpersonal risk-taking

- Amy Edmondson

Safe Space

anyone would feel safe in this group

with respect to their identity etc

Safe Space

anyone would feel safe in this group

with respect to their identity etc

PsycSafe Group

current members feel safe

safe for
interpersonal
risk-taking

~higher collective IQ

6/6 voices heard

smarter than

5/6 voices heard

PsycSafe Traits

1. **communication**

2. **empathy**

Measures

1. **communication**
   "conversational turn-taking"

2. **empathy**
   "average social sensitivity"

Goals:

increase trust
decrease defensiveness

Goal:

Improving PsycSafety

10 Techniques
10 Minutes

Communication

Earned Dogmatism Effect
Declare Unknowns
Frame as Learning
Acknowledge Fallibility
Model Curiosity

Empathy

Propinquity
Task vs Relationship (PEARLS)
Validation
Depersonalize Ideas
Vulnerability

Communication

Earned Dogmatism Effect

Declare Unknowns

Frame as Learning

Acknowledge Fallibility

Model Curiosity

Earned Dogmatism Effect

"I am experienced, therefore my idea is right."

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

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Declare Unknowns

"We don't fully understand X yet."

Framing

"learning opportunity" not "BAD WRONG BAD"

Acknowledge Fallibility

"I make mistakes and I know it - tell me what you notice"

Model Curiosity

ask many questions

Communication

Earned Dogmatism Effect

Declare Unknowns

Frame as Learning

Acknowledge Fallibility

Model Curiosity

Empathy

Propinquity
Task vs Relationship (PEARLS)
Validation
Vulnerability
Depersonalize Ideas

Propinquity

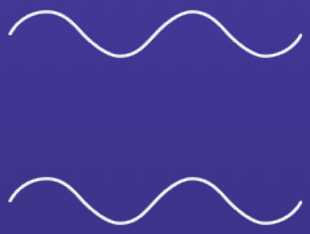
social closeness

Task

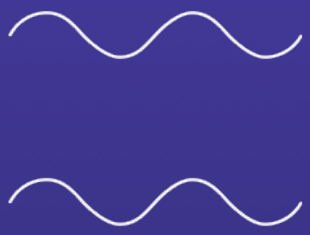
"[potential issues with your idea]"

Relationship

You aren't competent.
(implicit)



	Explicit	Implicit
Task Channel	**content**	
Relationship Channel		**???**



	Explicit	Implicit
Task Channel	content	
Relationship Channel	**PEARLS**	???

PEARLS

- **Partnership:**
  - “I really want to work on this with you.”
  - “I bet we can figure this out together.”
- **Empathy:**
  - “I can feel your enthusiasm as you talk.”
  - “I can hear your concern.”
- **Acknowledgement:**
  - “You clearly put a lot of work into this.”
  - “You invested in this, and it shows.”
- **Respect:**
  - “I’ve always appreciated your creativity.”
  - “There’s no doubt you know a lot about this.”
- **Legitimation:**
  - “This would be hard for anyone.”
  - “Who wouldn’t be worried about something like this?”
- **Support:**
  - “I’d like to help you with this.”
  - “I want to see you succeed.”

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

PEARLS

- **Partnership:**
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- **Support:**
  - "I'd like to help you with this."
  - "I want to see you succeed."

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

Validation

increases trust
often diffuses defensiveness

Validation

recognition and acceptance of another person's [thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviors] as **understandable**

(whether or not you agree)

Validation Levels

1. Be Present
2. Accurate Reflection
3. Mind Reading
4. Context: their background
5. “anyone would”
6. Radical Genuineness

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

Vulnerability

increases trust
shows you're not defensive

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

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Depersonalize Ideas

“Idea A”

not
“Casey’s Idea”

Empathy

Propinquity
Task vs Relationship (PEARLS)
Validation
Vulnerability
Depersonalize Ideas

Communication

Earned Dogmatism Effect
Declare Unknowns
Frame as Learning
Acknowledge Fallibility
Model Curiosity

Empathy

Propinquity
Task vs Relationship (PEARLS)
Validation
Depersonalize Ideas
Vulnerability

Part C
Inclusive Culture

Goal:
PsycSafe for everyone

~~political~~ ~~legal~~

Background

D&I and who should drive it?

Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Culture vs Ethnicity

Cultural Relativism

Norms & Norm Regulation

Specific Tips

Political-view minorities

Cultural differences, now what?

Visibility

Norm regulating speech

Bonus?

Background

D&I and who should drive it?

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Culture vs Ethnicity

Cultural Relativism

Norms & Norm Regulation

Diversity & Inclusion

1. PsycSafe
2. Fair (macro sense)

Diversity & Inclusion

Recruitment
Development
Retention

Who should drive D&I?

HR?

HR trainings only
go so far

Minorities?

not fair to put it all
on the minorities

Management?

Employees?

Who can affect cultural change?

Implicit Association Test

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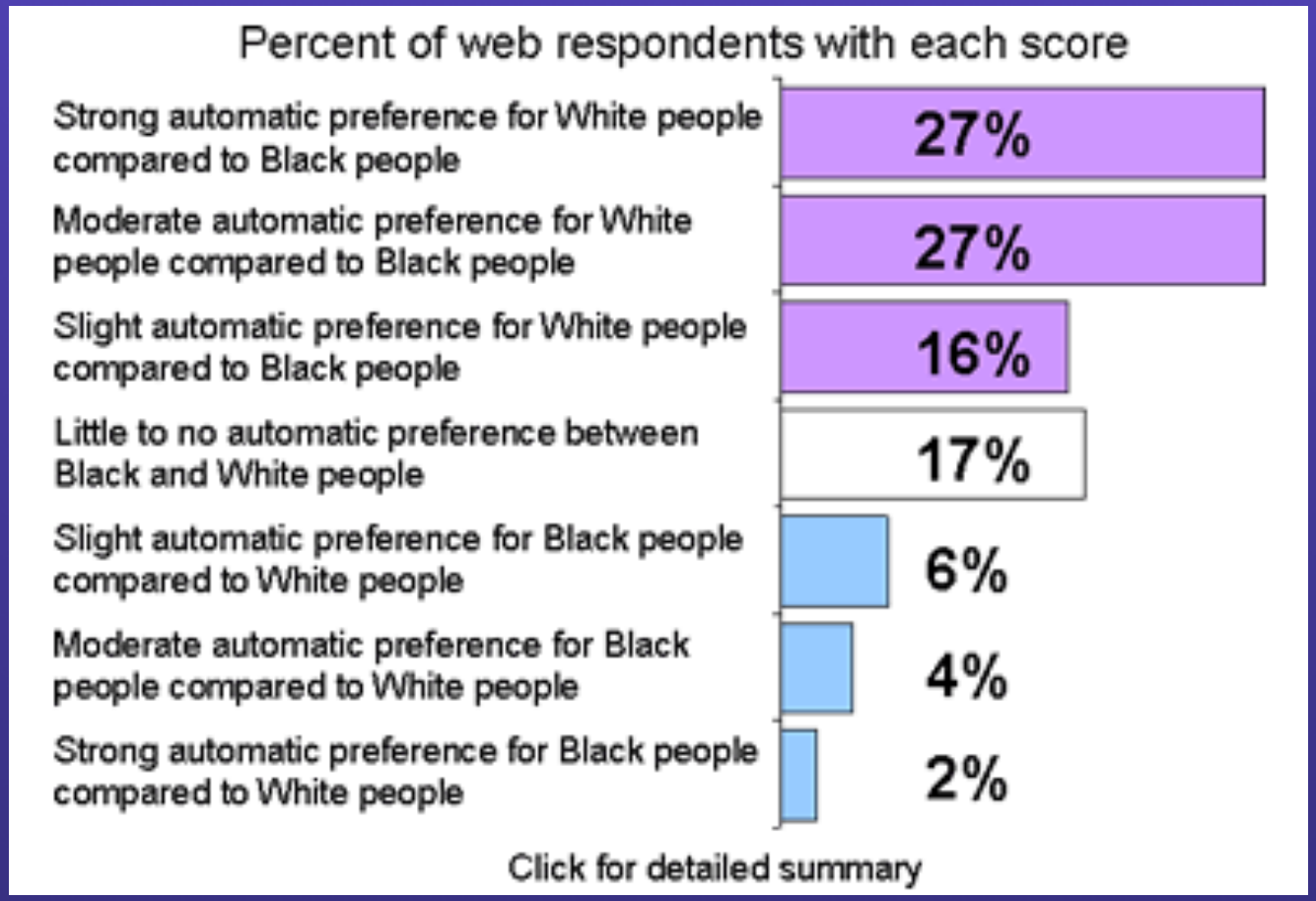
Percent of web respondents with each score
Strong automatic preference for White people compared to Black people
27%
Moderate automatic preference for White people compared to Black people
27%
Slight automatic preference for White people compared to Black people
16%
Little to no automatic preference between Black and White people
17%
Slight automatic preference for Black people compared to White people
6%
Moderate automatic preference for Black people compared to White people
4%
Strong automatic preference for Black people compared to White people
2%
Click for detailed summary

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implicit.harvard.edu

accept your biases

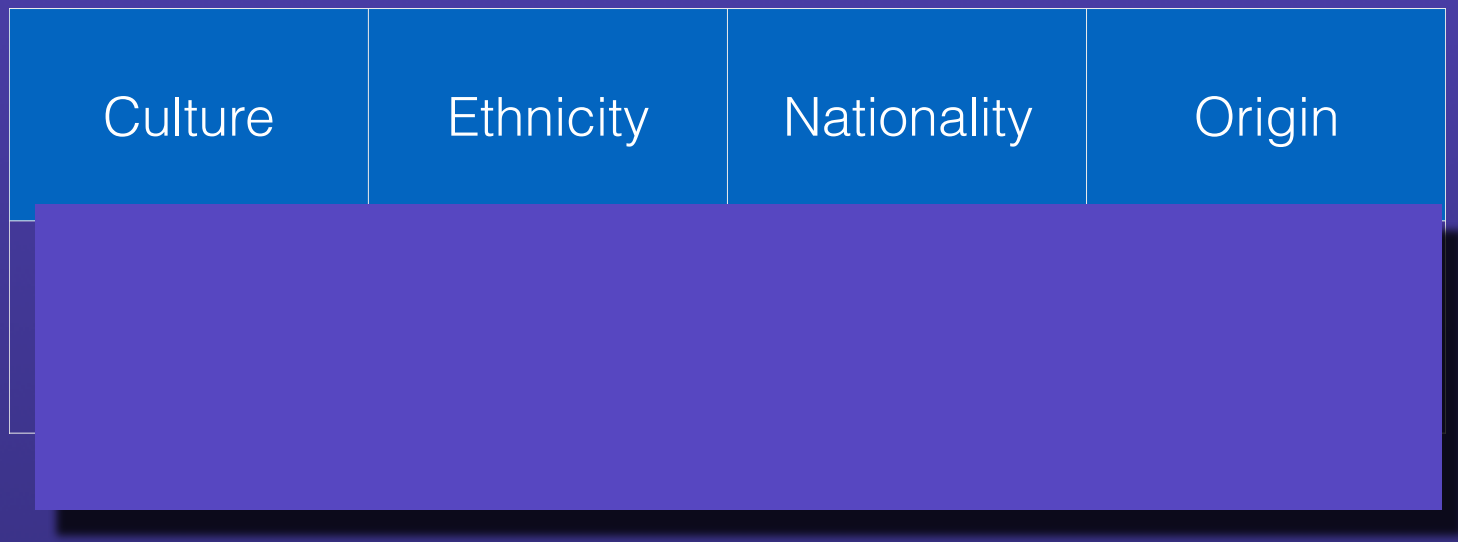
identify/counter your biases

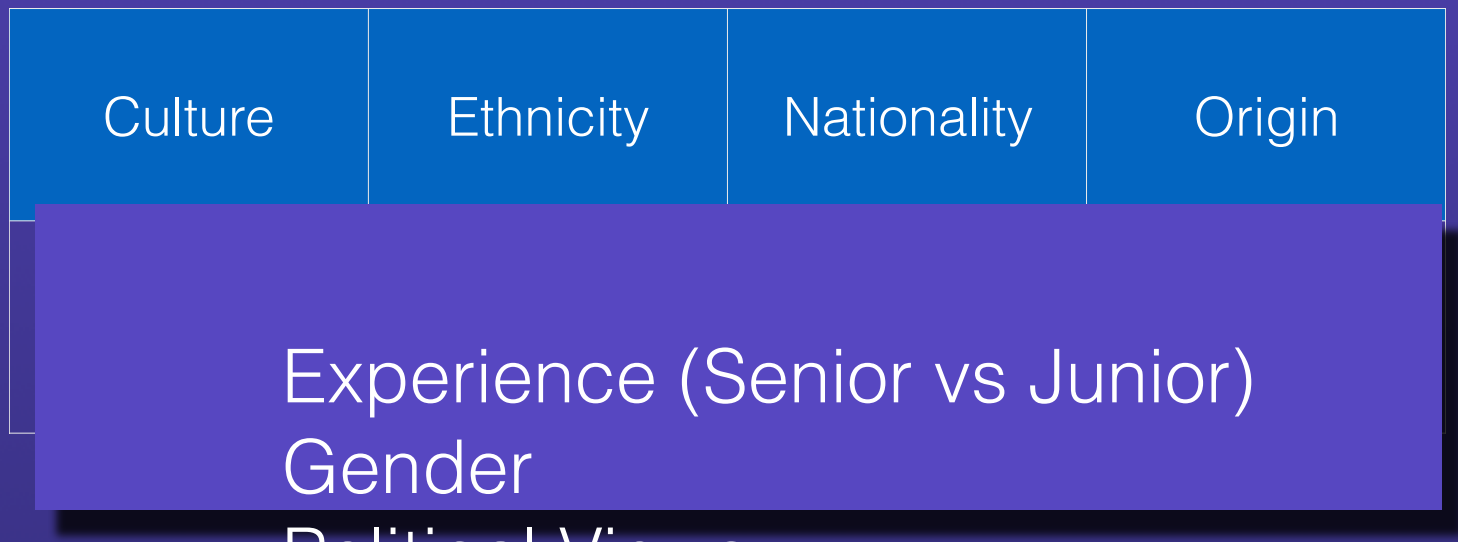
Culture vs Ethnicity

Culturally Heterogeneous Society

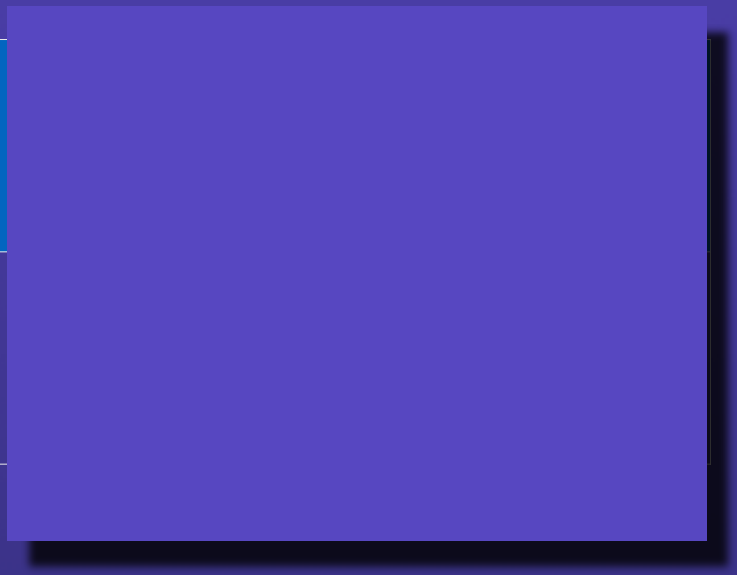
vs

Culturally Homogeneous Society

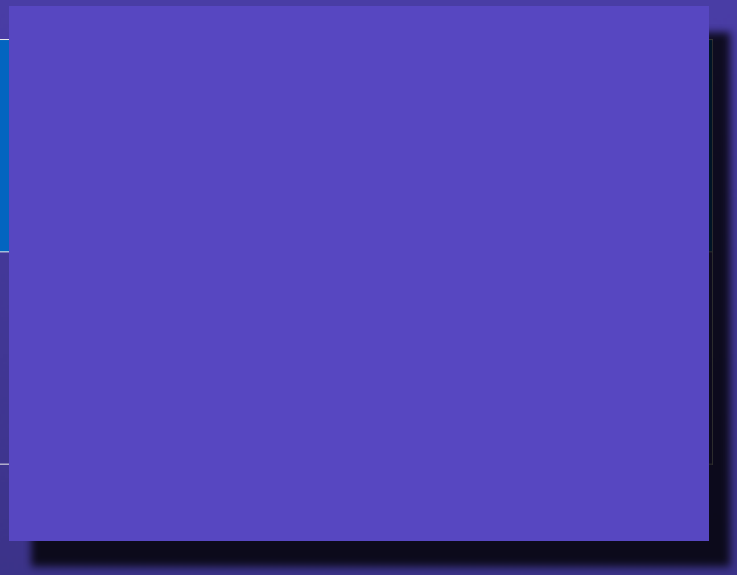

Culture
Ethnicity
Nationality
Origin


Culture
Ethnicity
Nationality
Origin
Experience (Senior vs Junior)
Gender
Political Views
Hearing / Deaf
Physical Ability
Way more…

Culture	Ethnicity
in-brain	on-skin



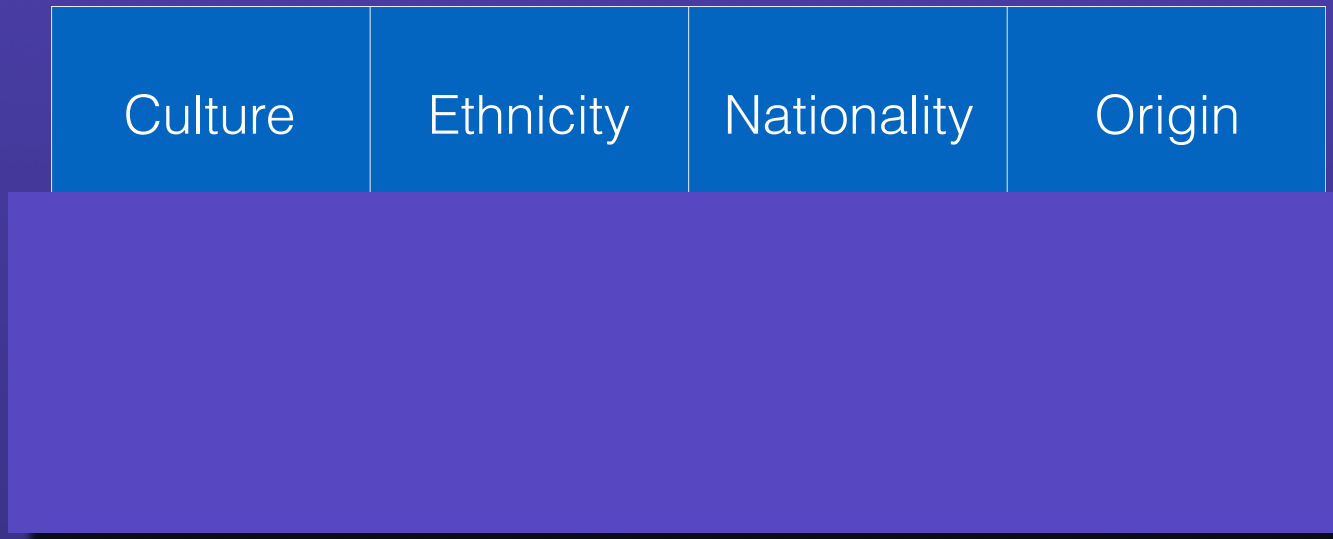
Culture	Ethnicity
in-brain	on-skin



"German American"

Culture	Ethnicity	Nationality	Origin
in-brain	on-skin	where-citizen	where-born

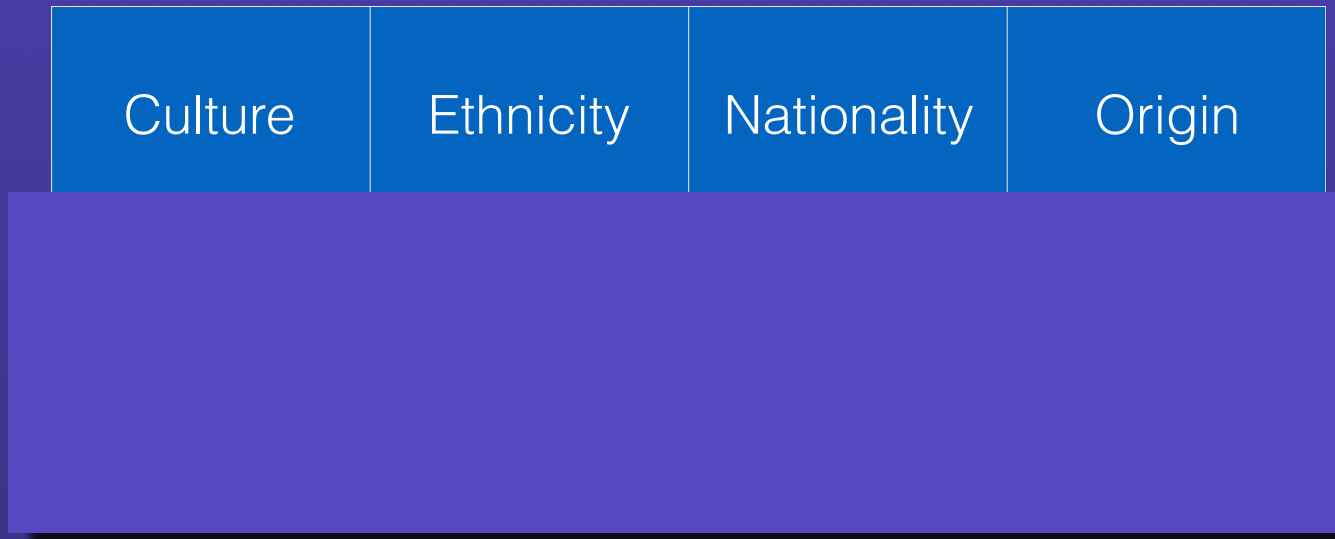
Visible?



Visible?

Culture	Ethnicity	Nationality	Origin
no	visible	no	no

Strong predictive power?



Strong predictive power?

Culture	Ethnicity	Nationality	Origin
	no	no	no

false positive associations

Okay: “Where do you live?”

Bad: “Where are you *really* from?”

Strong predictive power?

Culture	Ethnicity	Nationality	Origin
sometimes	no	no	no

false positive associations

Culture is hard to label/define

like music “genre”

People want to be
treated as individuals

Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism

the idea that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another.

Ethnocentricity

the belief that your own cultural or ethnic group is superior to that of another

Xenocentricity

the belief that another cultural or ethnic group is superior to that of your own

Cultural Norms & Norm Regulation

Norm

expectations and rules that guide
behavior of people within social groups

Norm Regulation

an action that enforces another group member to follow a certain norm

useful norms

seatbelt

less useful norms

you don’t watch football?? (incredulous tone)

Specific Tips

Political-view minorities

Cultural differences, now what?

Visibility

Norm regulating speech

Bonus?

Political View
Minority

Your coworkers

Haidt's
"Moral Foundations Theory"

from the book
"A Righteous Mind"

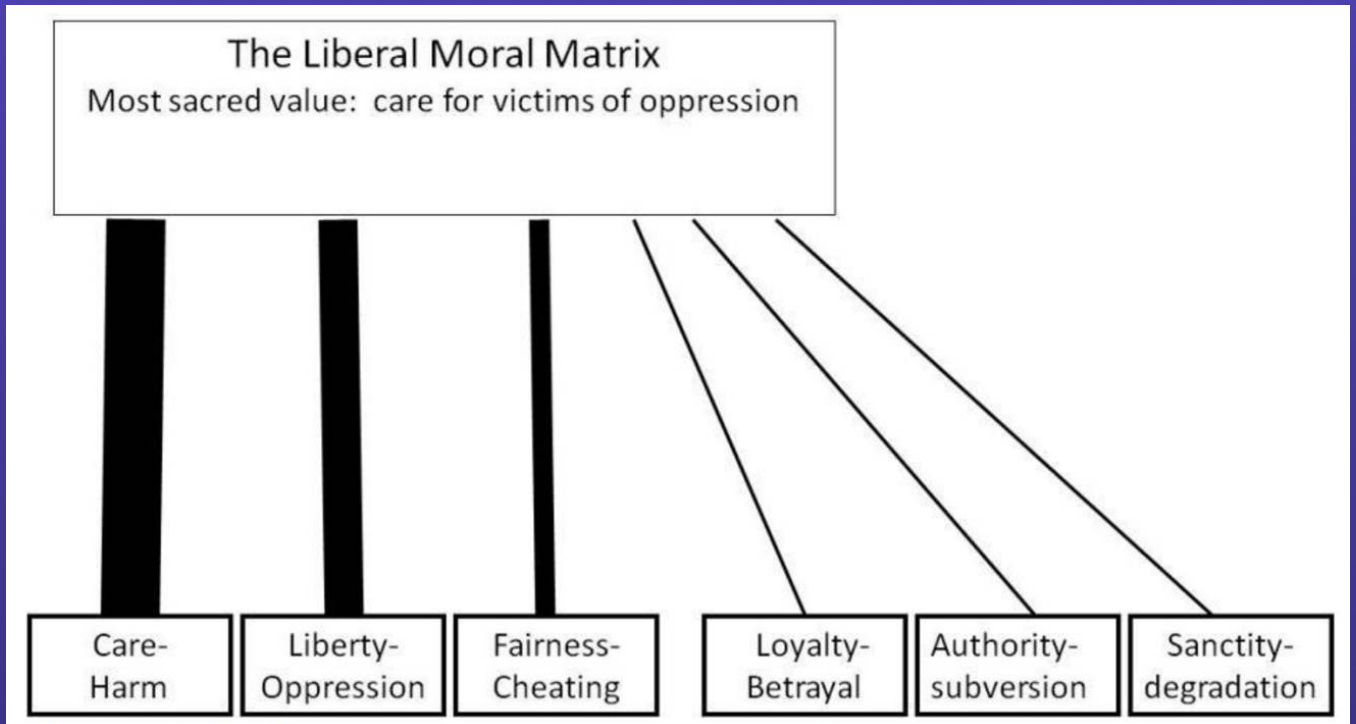


Figure 12.2. *The moral matrix of American liberals.*

@kyloma

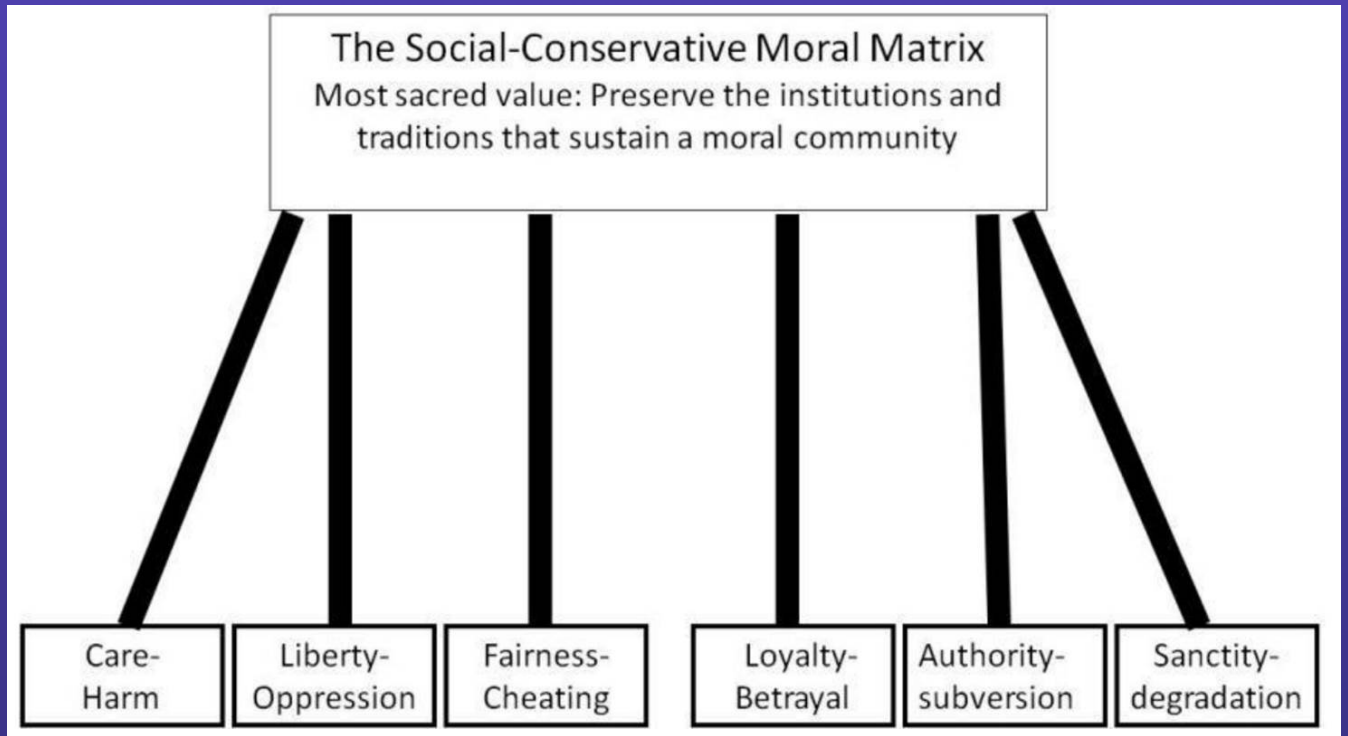


Figure 12.4. *The social conservative moral matrix.*

@kyloma

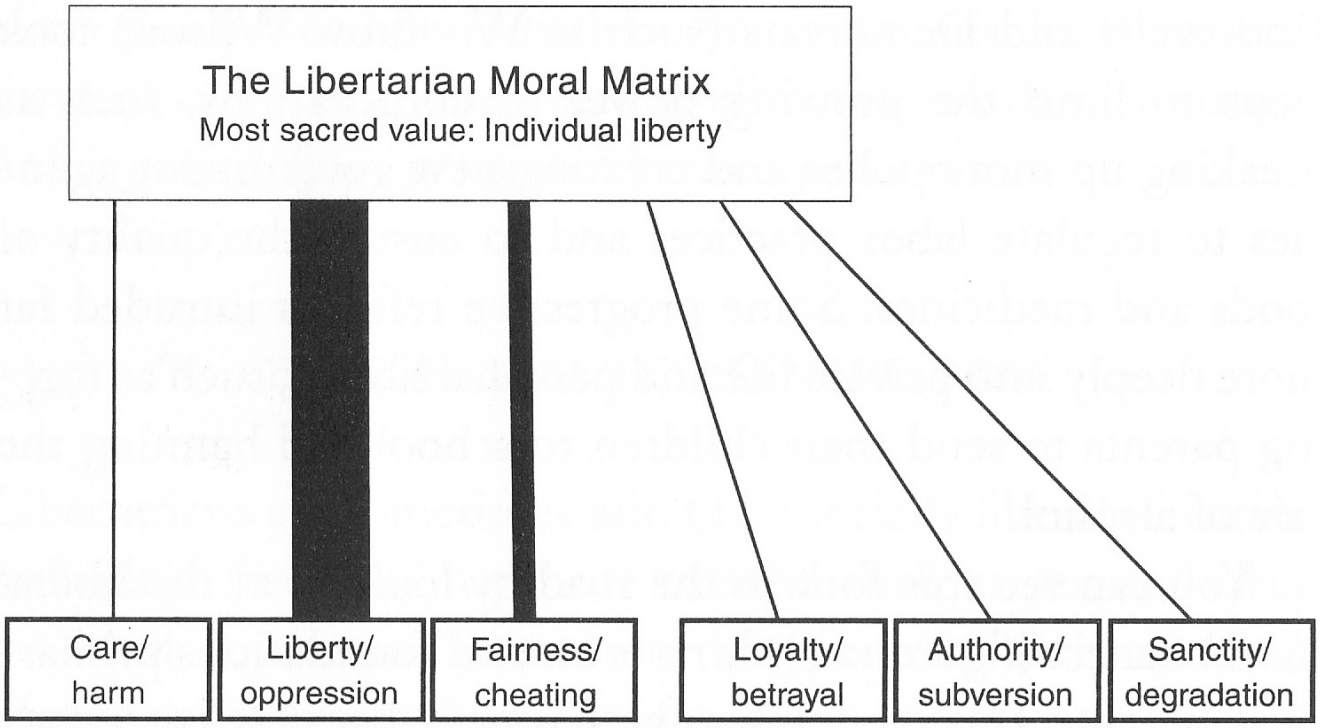


FIGURE 12.3. *The moral matrix of American libertarians.*

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Deep Values

positive customer impact

conserving engineering resources

Difference in Culture?

Try to understand theirs

Help them understand yours

Critique/analyze norms together

explicitly

Meet in the middle

Visibility

minorities:

can you be visible?

Casey's 3 visibility tricks

1. rainbow lanyard
2. #queeries
3. talk about partner

intersectionality

support your own minority
AND
be an ally to others

allies:

don’t call attention to their minority status

Norm Regulating Speech

Inclusive Speech
vs
Exclusive Speech

-1

You don’t watch Rick and Morty???

(incredulous tone)

I like Rick and Morty!
You might too?

Judginess

everyone is concerned
that others will
judge them negatively

Example:

Casey schedules an event for the wrong time

“Casey Watts - such a mess!”

Good joke? Bad joke?

Good joke? Bad joke?

Good joke? Bad joke?

A: “You know I’m just joking… right??”

B: “…you’re only half joking, aren’t you?”

50% joking recovery:

A: “sorry - I don’t know exactly what I meant by that. [more accurate description]”

Negation

I like vim!

I hate vim! I like emacs!

I like vim!

Cool! I like emacs!

just and should

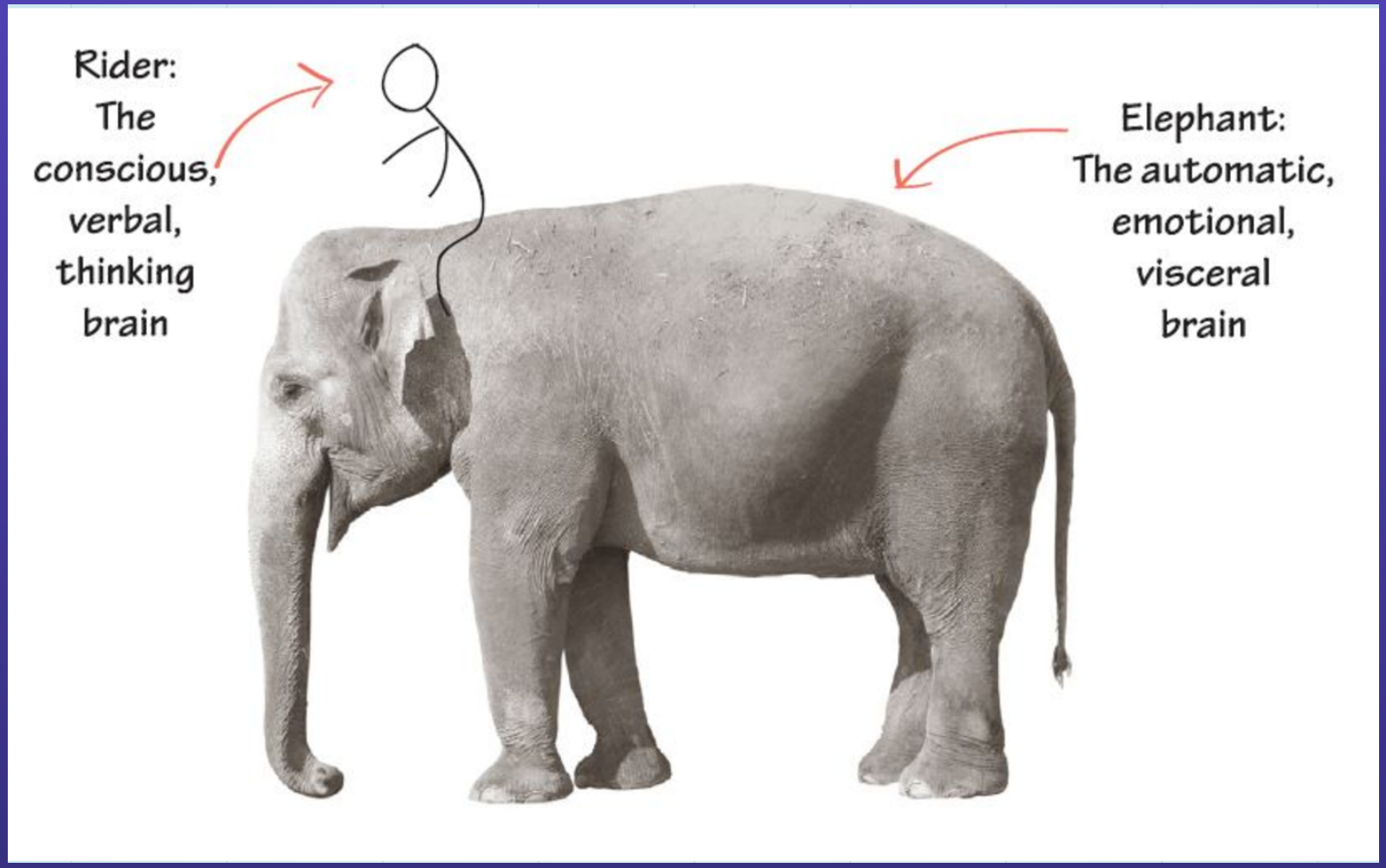
both overgeneralizing

Automatic prompts:

Slack keywords?
Remove word from Chrome dictionary?

Bonus

Haidt's Elephant Model


Rider:
The
conscious,
verbal,
thinking
brain
Elephant:
The automatic,
emotional,
visceral
brain

@kyloma

Rider wants to seem “in charge”

reliable, predictable

Why did you just come in the room and walk right back out?

Post-hoc Rationalization

Overlapping speech

Pronouns

Casey vs Corey

he vs she vs they

What if you don’t know?

it is polite to ask

your intent is appreciated

don’t focus on yourself

just thank them

Tips

Try using "they" in your head for everybody for a while.

Try using their pronoun in sentences for practice. Flashcards?

Summary

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Whoop!

6 Processing Techniques

A List of Emotions

Go beyond the obvious to identify exactly what you're feeling.

Angry	Sad	Anxious	Hurt	Embarrassed	Happy
Grumpy	Disappointed	Afraid	Jealous	Isolated	Thankful
Frustrated	Mournful	Stressed	Betrayed	Self-conscious	Trusting
Annoyed	Regretful	Vulnerable	Isolated	Lonely	Comfortable
Defensive	Depressed	Confused	Shocked	Inferior	Content
Spiteful	Paralyzed	Bewildered	Deprived	Guilty	Excited
Impatient	Pessimistic	Skeptical	Victimized	Ashamed	Relaxed
Disgusted	Tearful	Worried	Aggrieved	Repugnant	Relieved
Offended	Dismayed	Cautious	Tormented	Pathetic	Elated
Irritated	Disillusioned	Nervous	Abandoned	Confused	Confident

SOURCE SUSAN DAVID

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10 Most Common

Maladaptive Thought Patterns

link at: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

All or nothing thinking

Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

If I'm not perfect I have failed

Either I do it right or not at all

Over-generalising

*"**everything** is **always** rubbish"*

*"**nothing** good **ever** happens"*

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

Mental filter

Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

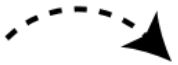
Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

Disqualifying the positive

Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

That doesn't count

Jumping to conclusions

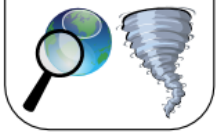


$2 + 2 = 5$

There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading** (imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling** (predicting the future)

Magnification (catastrophising) & minimisation



Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

Emotional reasoning

Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.

I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot

should

must

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

Labelling

Assigning labels to oursleves or other people

I'm a loser
I'm completely useless
They're such an idiot

Personalisation

"this is my fault"

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

creative commons

Psychological Safety

Communication

Earned Dogmatism Effect
Declare Unknowns
Frame as Learning
Acknowledge Fallibility
Model Curiosity

Empathy

Propinquity
Task vs Relationship (PEARLS)
Validation
Depersonalize Ideas
Vulnerability

Inclusive Culture

Background

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Norms & Norm Regulation

Specific Tips

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Cultural differences, now what?

Visibility

Norm regulating speech

Bonus?

Outro

A Neurobiologist's Guide to Mind Manipulation

Quick link to this page: caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation

Video Slides Mailing List

caseywatts.com/mindmanipulationvideo

Cognitive Restructuring / Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy overview
- How to do Cognitive Restructuring
    - Whoop! and the "whoop space"
    - Improve Noticing Inputs
    - Improve Processing Emotions
        - Expand Emotional Vocabulary **(print/save this)**
        - Journaling
        - Discussing with a friend
        - Read more Fiction
    - Improve Processing Thoughts
        - Mindfulness training
        - Cognitive Distortions / Maladaptive Cognitions / Unhelpful Thinking Styles
            - Full List (wikipedia)
            - 10 Unhelpful Thinking Styles Poster **(print/save this)**
- Joyable (webapp for social anxiety)
- CBT Book (David Burns)

Psychological Safety (PsycSafety)

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Homework

1. **Bookmark** caseywatts.com/mindmanipulation
2. **Print** ones in purple
3. **Weekly** 15-min calendar event to go through the articles ^

Help motivate me?

twitter, slack, email

Share Back To Me?

Feedback really helps me keep going. Feedback helps me continue giving this talk, discussing these topics, and even introspecting myself. I'd love to hear from you! 🤗

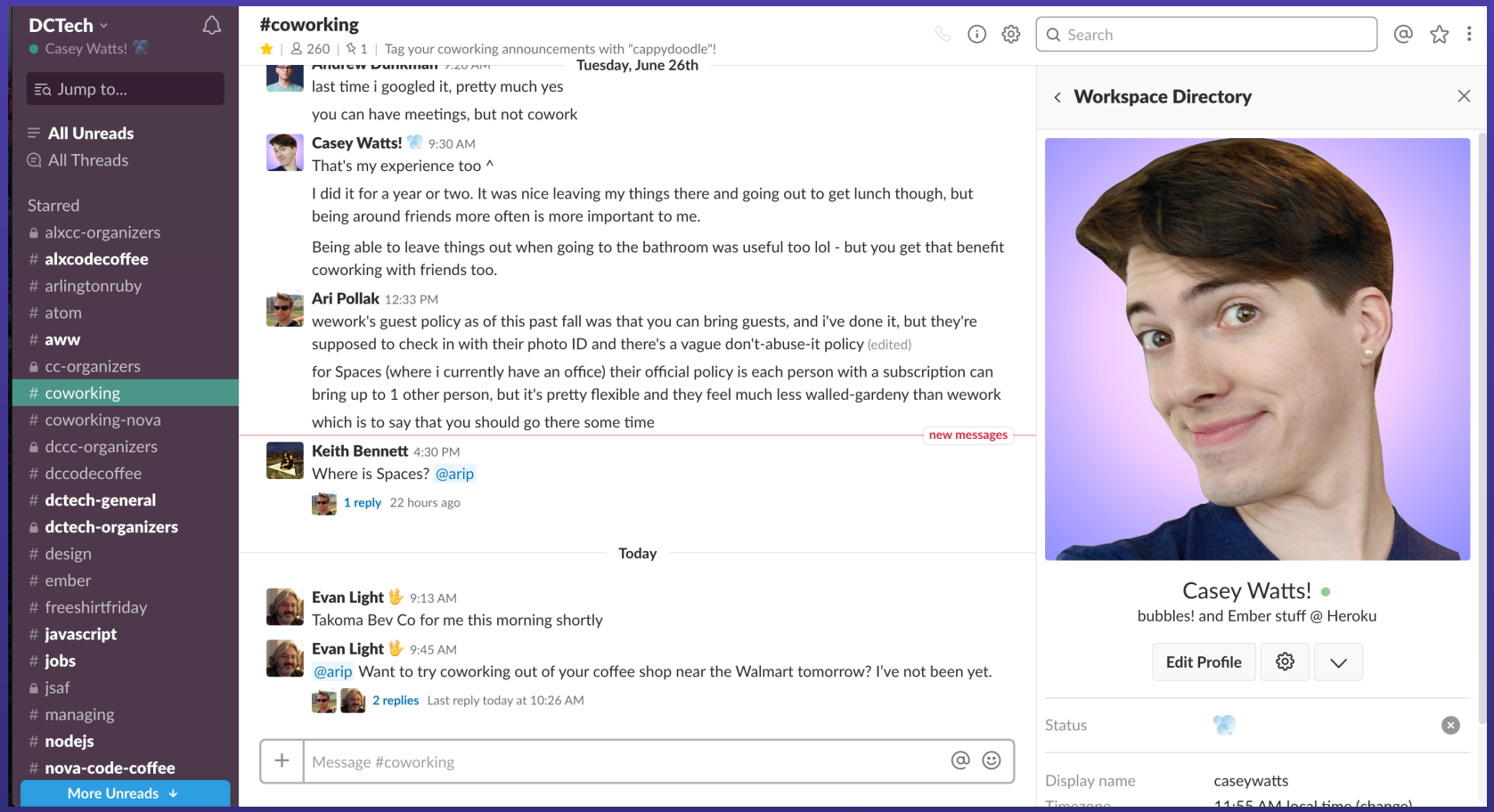
How has this talk affected you? Or people around you?
I especially want to hear things like:

- 📗 You come across an article/video/book [that reminds you of this talk]
- ✨ You have an experience [that reminds you of this talk]
- 👫 You share with a friend, and they're impacted too

Share with me me any of these ways:

- Twitter (@kyloma)
- DCTechSlack (@caseywatts) (get access at dctechslack.com)
- Email (casey.s.watts@gmail.com)

dctechslack.com @caseywatts



Want your company to learn all this?

1. “Lunch & Learn”
2. Half-day workshop

Questions?

Yay!

fin

Credits

Several Icons from TheNounProject.com

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=meditation&i=626017

https://thenounproject.com/EvocativeSigns/collection/reading/?oq=reading&cidx=0&i=91488

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=writing%20pencil&i=730756

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=rubber%20duck&i=1087596

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=talking&i=574839

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=battery&i=138757

https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=sine%20wave&i=1781283

Credits

Diagrams generated by graphviz and graphviz.it