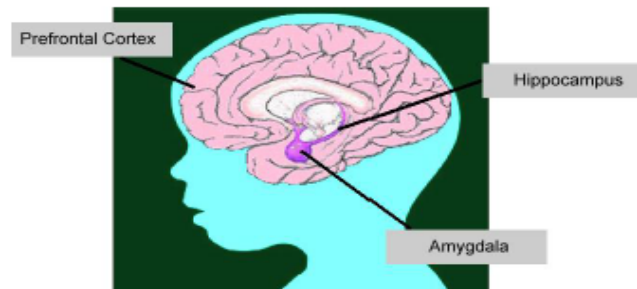




Come to terms with past experiences, trauma and loss

Trauma and the Brain

This is a very simplistic explanation of a very complex process. There are three main parts of the brain which are greatly affected by experiencing severe or chronic traumatic events.



Hippocampus

- The hippocampus processes trauma memories, by recycling the memory, mostly at night via dreams, which takes place over weeks or months. It then transfers the integrated stored memory to another part of the brain. High levels of stress hormones causes the hippocampus to shrink or under-develop, resulting in impaired function. Childhood trauma exaggerates this effect. The trauma memory therefore remains unprocessed in the hippocampus, disintegrated, fragmented, and feels 'current' rather than in the past. (Some people may be born with a smaller hippocampus making them more vulnerable to develop PTSD.)

Amygdala

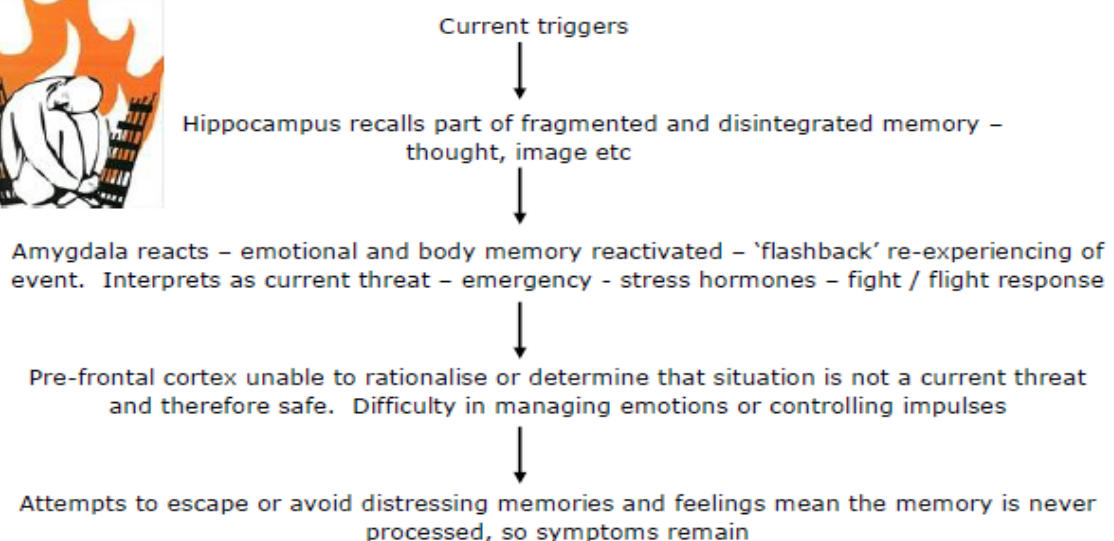
- The brain's 'fear centre'. The amygdala helps to store memories, particularly emotions and physical sensations. It also controls activation of stress hormones – the body's fight or flight response. In PTSD, the amygdala becomes over-reactive causing frequent or near constant high levels of stress hormones.

Pre-frontal cortex

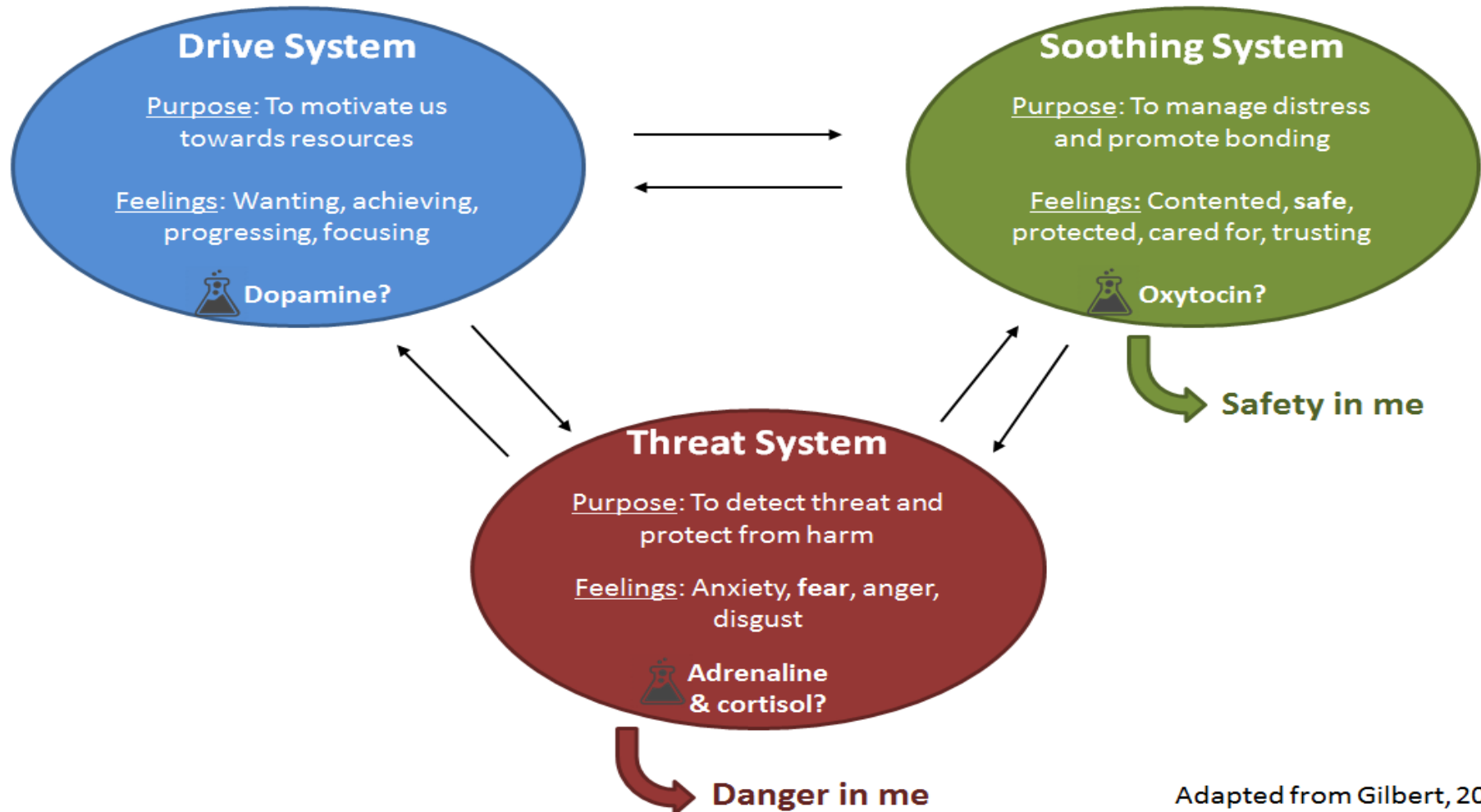
- The pre-frontal cortex helps us to assess threats, manage emotion, plan responses, and control impulses. It is the centre of rational thinking. Childhood trauma causes under-development of the pre-frontal cortex, which results in impaired ability to assess threat through rational thinking, manage emotions and control impulses.



PTSD



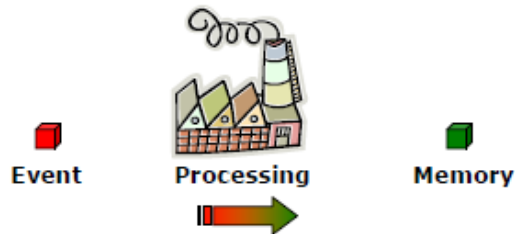
Emotion regulation systems



Adapted from Gilbert, 2009

Treating Traumatic Memories

The mind is like a factory, and one of its jobs is to process life events so that they can become memories. Most life events are of a size and nature that the factory can cope with:

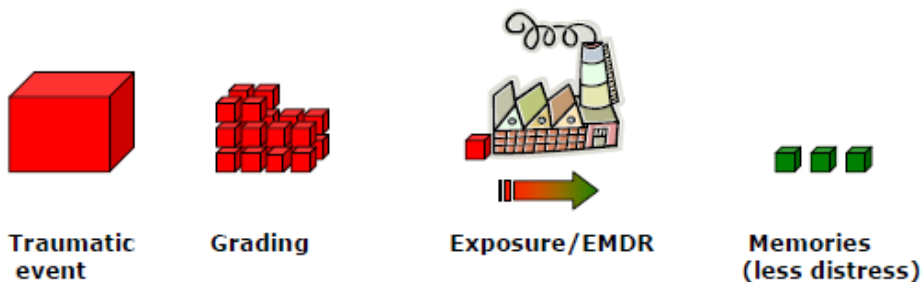


However, sometime an event occurs, such as a trauma, which is simply too large or difficult to process.



Because it isn't processed, the event is prevented from becoming a memory – this means that it remains a current problem, rather than one that's in the past. Current situations or events that remind us of the original trauma, trigger us to have 'flashbacks' which means we re-live and re-experience the emotions and physical sensations that were experienced at the time of the original trauma. At those distressing times, we tend to press the factory's STOP button. We also avoid situations which are likely to trigger these 'flashback' experiences, reinforcing the lack of processing.

Effectively treating the traumatic event so that our 'factory' can process them into memories, means exposing ourselves to thinking about and imagining the traumatic event, and/or gradually exposing ourselves to real situations which we normally avoid. This will result in experiencing distress, but will also cause the factory to effectively process the traumatic event, which will greatly reduce the distress in the long-term.



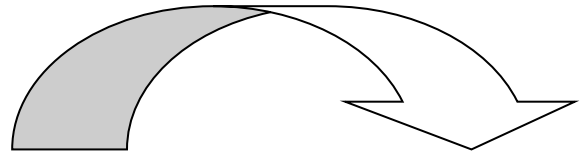
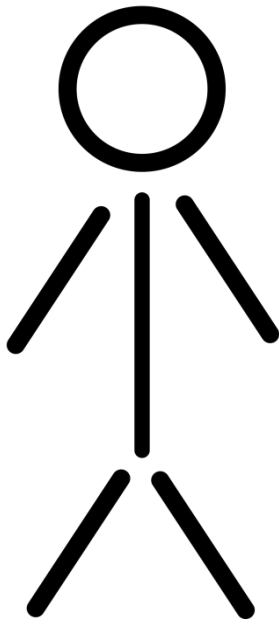
Mike Davison

www.getselfhelp.co.uk

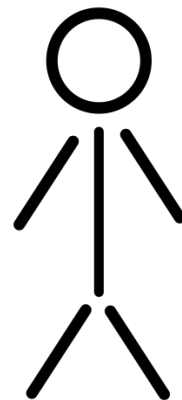
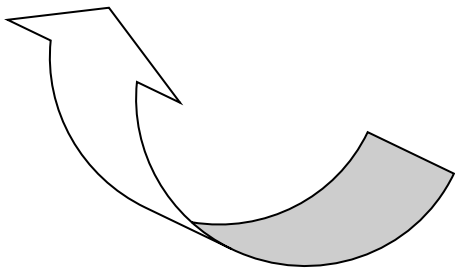
www.get.gg

Reciprocal Role

Powerful Adult



Powerless Child





Mum was.....

I was.....



Dad was.....

I was.....



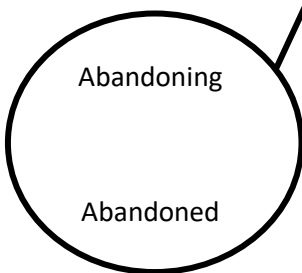
Can't sustain this for long

CRASH!

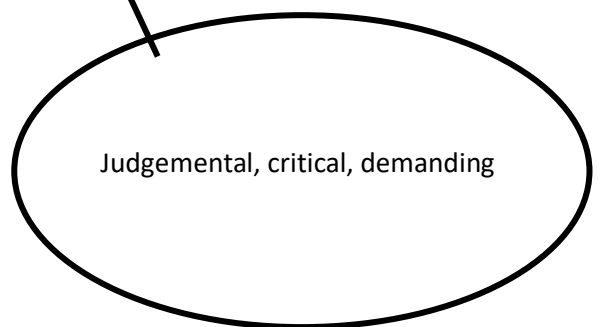
PAIN!

Shut myself away

Explode



Feel that nobody understands



Feel alone, depressed, scared.

Become more of a stoic

Feel more like a victim

Feel the need to justify oneself.

Strive Harder

Push...push....push to attain goals.

Feel like a martyr

Myths about Interpersonal Effectiveness

1. I can't stand it if someone gets upset with me
CHALLENGE _____
2. If they say 'No' it will kill me
CHALLENGE_____
3. I don't deserve to get what I want or need
CHALLENGE_____
4. If I make a request, this will show that I am a very weak person
CHALLENGE_____
5. I must be really inadequate if I can't fix this myself
CHALLENGE_____
6. I have to know whether a person is going to say 'yes' before I make a request
CHALLENGE_____
7. Obviously, the problem is just in my head. If I would just think differently I wouldn't have to bother anybody else.
CHALLENGE_____
8. Saying 'No' to a request is always a selfish thing to do
CHALLENGE_____
9. I should be willing to sacrifice my own needs for others
CHALLENGE_____