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GREEN LIGHT THINKING

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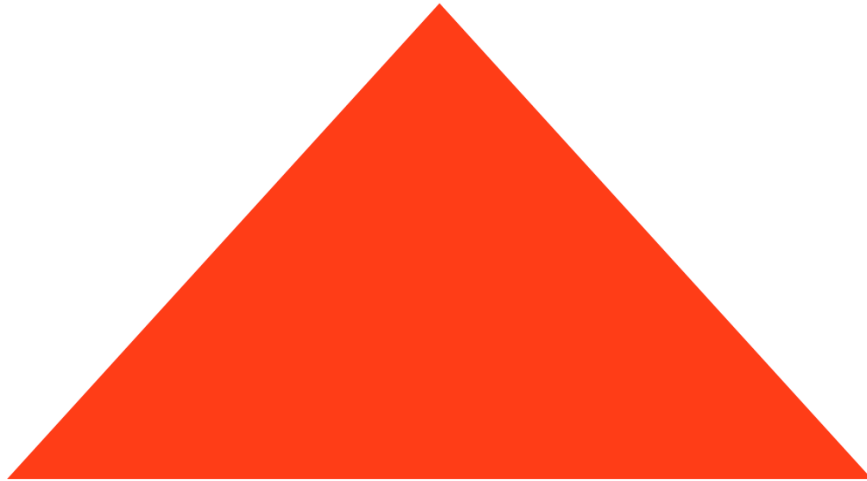
Dakar 2013

With huge thanks for inspiration from Tobyn Bell, Paul
Gilbert and Choden and the Compassionate Mind e-
group.



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Are we ending violence.....?



I would like to introduce myself. My name is Alice Welbourn and I was diagnosed with HIV 21 years ago, in 1992, when I was expecting a baby. I know there are quite a few of you in the room who are living with HIV or have experienced Gender-Based Violence – and some of you also, of course, have also experienced GBV either as a cause of HIV or as a consequence of HIV – or both.

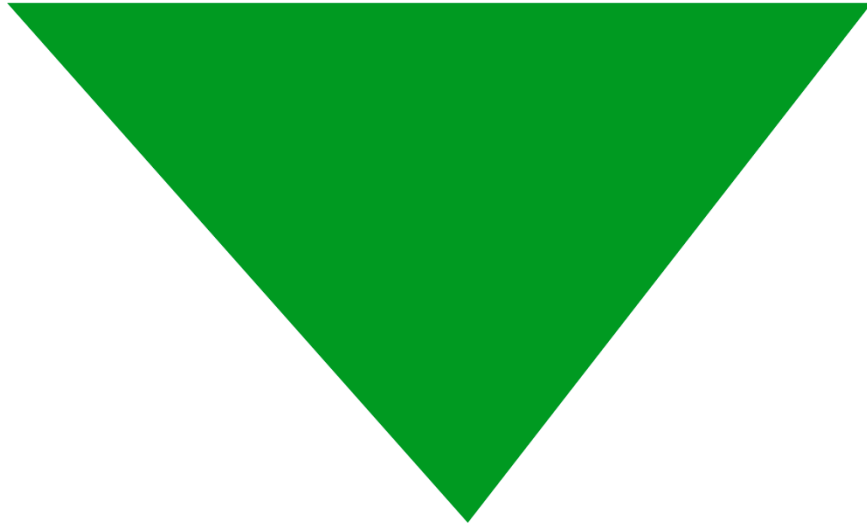
When we look around the room, you can't see these experiences written on our faces and sometimes you can't even see scars on our bodies. However any of you who have experienced these issues will know that they are inscribed on our hearts and are there with us in our memories and stories and histories.

We have all learnt over the years not just to survive but also somehow to thrive and for me, at least, one key way I have found to help myself thrive is to use positive language and positive concepts rather than being dragged down by negative language and concepts. So this is why I would like to share with you today some thoughts about "green-light thinking". If we look at this image on our screen, we can see maybe a red road stretching to a point in the distance. But what lies beyond that point? Nothing? A void? Or something positive, inviting and exciting?

If we just think about "getting to zero" it is hard to imagine what life might look beyond that point. So let us think instead of how this would look if we thought of something positive instead.

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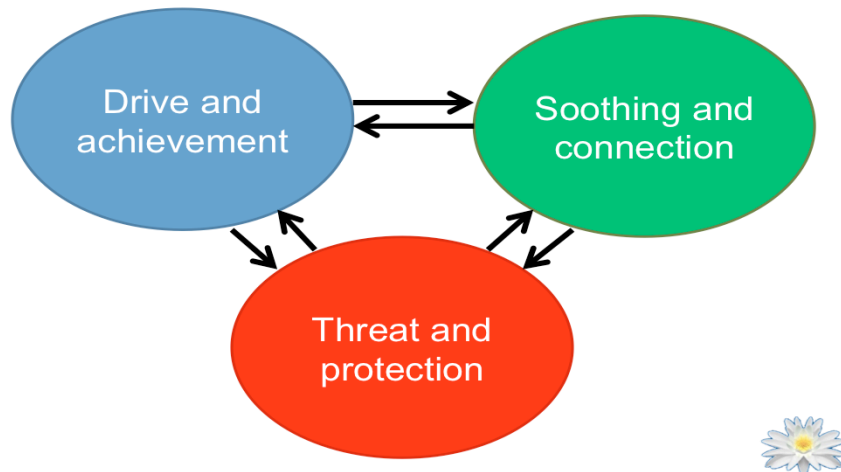
Or seeking safeness?



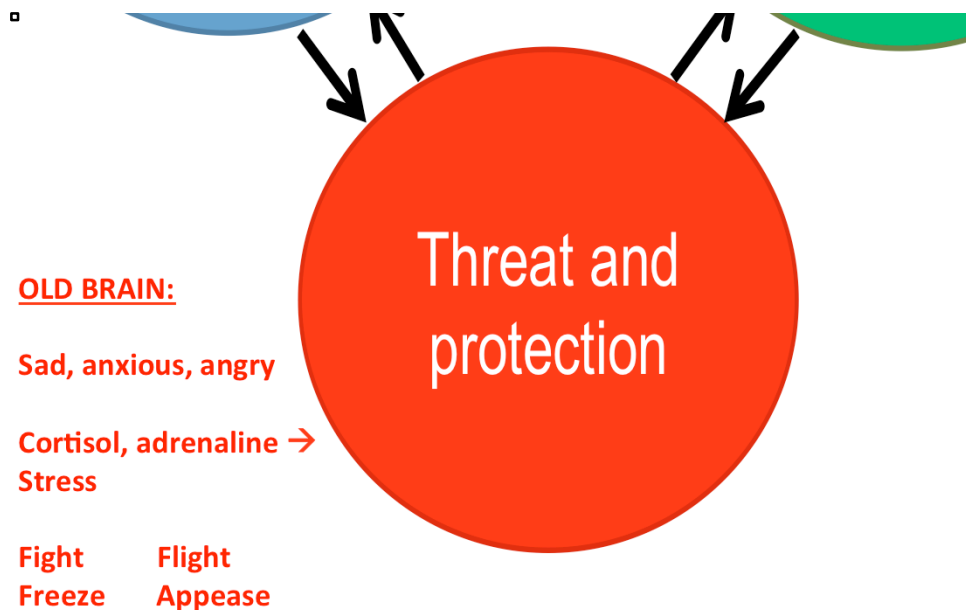
Here instead we have a beautiful green road stretching out ahead of us into our futures – some broad horizons to explore, which beckon us with creative possibilities.

There has been some really exciting research over the past 10 years by neuroscientists and evolutionary psychologists, which can help us understand the power of positive thinking.

Introducing the three circles model



Here is a sketch of all our brains. As humans, as you know, we have evolved over millions of years from other animals. Here in red, in the lower part of our brains, we have what is called our “old brain”. Then we have two other parts of our brain called our “new brain”. We are going to look at each of these parts of our brain in turn.



Our 'old brain' we have in common with other animals. Our old brains are very good at feeling sad and anxious and angry. We are good at doing this lot. When we have these thoughts, the cortisol levels in our bodies can rise and we feel stressed. Our response to these thoughts, just as with the animal kingdom, is fight or flight or freezing or appeasing – rolling over like a little puppy or kitten, saying “don’t hurt me, I’m only tiny.

We are very good at our brains feeling and thinking like this. It’s not our fault – it’s just the way that we have all developed – and it can be good at times of course, to be alert to danger. But not all the time!

Introducing the th

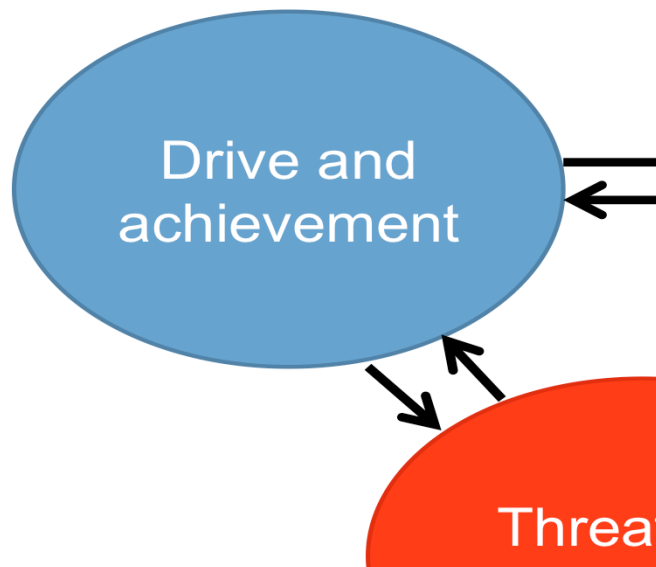
NEW BRAIN:

Driven, Want, Desire

Dopamine → Stress

ACHIEVE,
COMPETE,
ACQUIRE,
CONSUME,
CONTROL

(Cocaine, speed)



Now if we move to our “new brain” and first to this blue part. This is our drive to plan and succeed. This is what has enabled us as humans to build houses and tools, to invent cars, mobile phones, computers and even this mic I’m holding. But this drive can also run away with us, like a bus at full speed without a break. This drive encourages us to achieve, compete, to go on wanting and acquiring new material goods, to consume them and to control everything in our reach. Dopamine is associated with this drive in us.

Our “tricky minds” as humans are also very good at our thinking these thoughts a lot.

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ee circles model

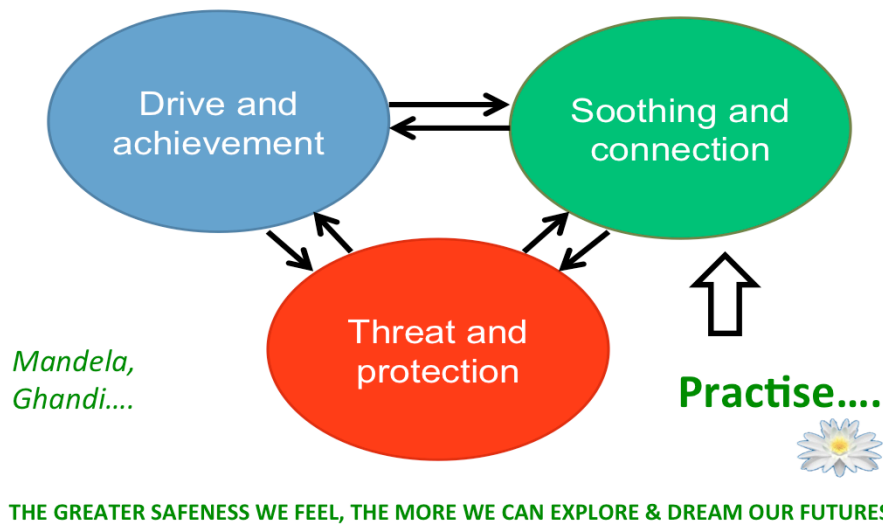


Then there is a third part to our minds, which is one we all *also* need – but which we are *least* good at remembering and supporting in us. This is the side of our brain that promotes soothing, protection, care, respect, calmness, safeness, *kindness*. It enables us to feel connected, to have empathy and to seek out to collaborate and support one another.

When we think and feel and act using this part of our brains, it also promotes endorphins in our body and serotonin which make us feel happy and creative.

When we use this part of our brains, we are able to be in touch with our most profound, creative thoughts.

Introducing the three circles model



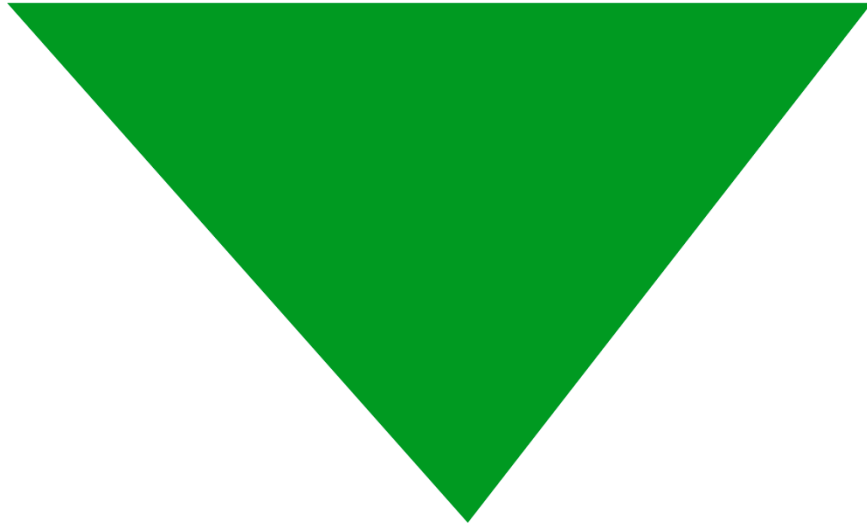
So going back to all three circles again. We need all 3 circles – but the one we are *least* used to working and which we *most* need to practise using is the green one on the right here. Someone has already mentioned Ghandi today. Imagine which part of their brains Mandela and Ghandi used most – which is why we hale them as such great and imaginative and inspiring leaders.

The greater safeness we feel, the more we can explore and dream our futures.

So I would like to invite you all to remind one another over the next couple of days to go on practising using *this* part of our brains. If you find your neighbour drifting back into “problems” and “zero” language, try to encourage them to reframe what they have said in more positive, creative language – language of visions for the future.

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Or seeking safeness?



We have that beautiful green road ahead of us. I invite you all to join us on this journey along this road, so that we can all not just survive but *thrive* together as we travel along it to new horizons.

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Salamander Trust
TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT HIV