

Compassion is Happiness

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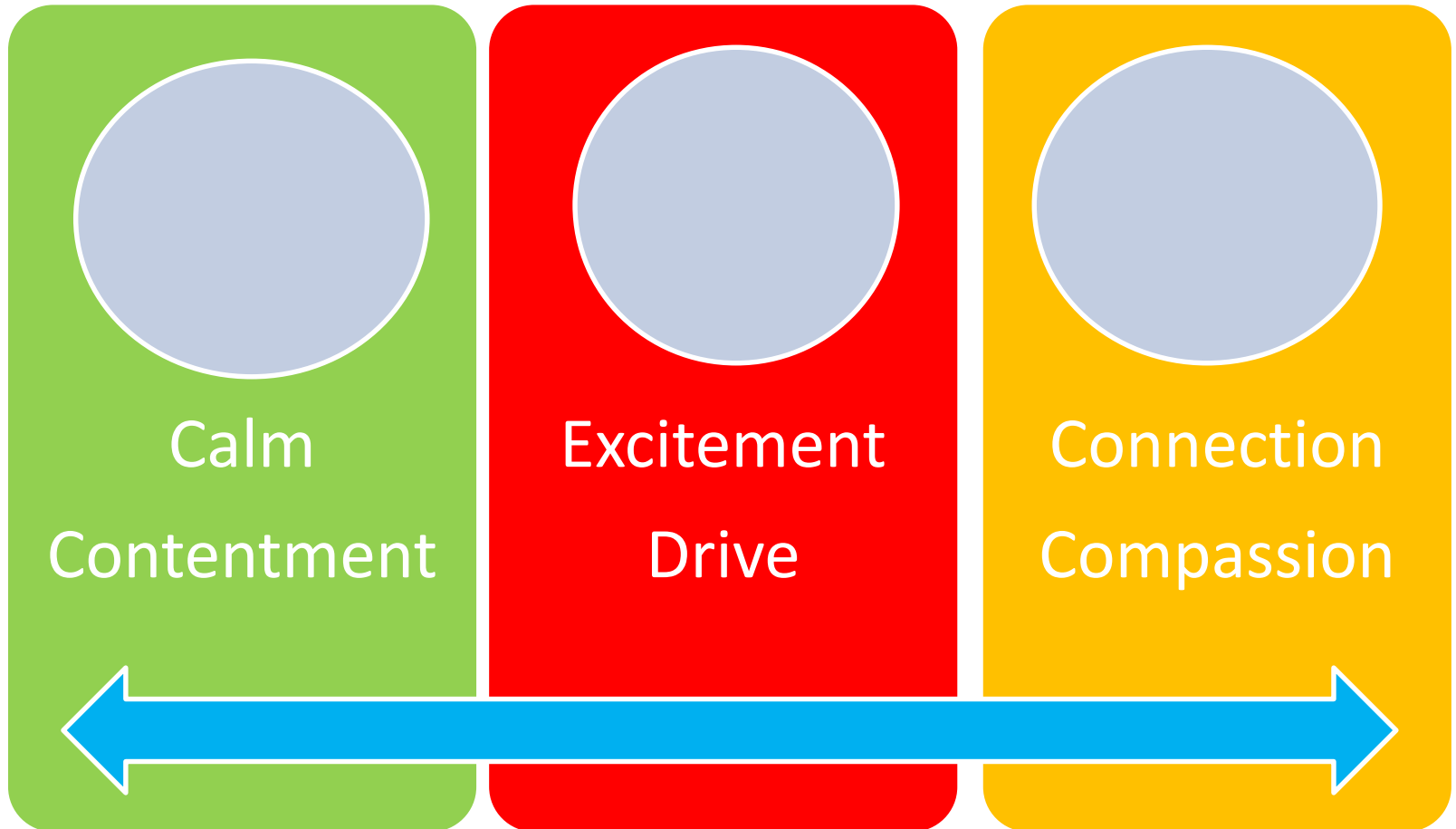
Gratitude



- ~1200 doctors, ~800 nurses
- ~400 + med students
- ~150 ED staff, 20 hospice patients
- Inmates of Mt Eden Corrections facility
- University of Auckland, Mind and Life Institute (HHDL)



Circuitries for happiness



(Approach) Prosocial Emotions

- Connection
- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Compassion

Golden Rule

- “Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”
- “If you want to be happy, practice compassion”
- “True happiness consists in making others happy”
- “Allah is with those who are of service to others”

Definitions

Empathy

Recognising another being's emotional state



Inferior parietal cortex (understanding others, feeling their pain)

Compassion

Empathy + **wanting to alleviate suffering**



Dorsolateral PFC and nucleus accumbens (emotion regulation and positive emotions)

- What about self-compassion?
 - Kindness to oneself
 - Part of humanity

 - *self-compassion.org* (Kristin Neff)
 - *compassionatemind.co.uk* (Prof Paul Gilbert)

 - *UQ Compassionate Mind Research Group*

Why bother with compassion?

- Because we benefit
- Decrease burnout?
 - Compassion satisfaction

Brain (and body) is wired to feel VERY good
when we are connected/ compassionate

Lighting up of our
pleasure centres

Why bother with compassion?

Because others benefit

- **ALL of us suffer!**
 - Gross suffering
 - Subtle suffering
- Everyone needs compassion
- Better outcomes mentally and physically
- Compassion contagion!

Compassion = survival

- ...for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best and rear the greatest number of offspring.
 - Charles Darwin
- Oxygen for our species

Urge to connect is so strong...

When disconnected,
rejected, uncared for:

worst human experience

feels like we have been
dismembered

On Bryan's deathbed

- *Most happiness:*
 - *Father, mother, wife and children*
- *my biggest setback is losing a child- he went out to the city to pick up a movie*
- *but he never returned. He fell from the bridge on Smith Street...*
- *you can call it suicide , you can call it accident, I still don't know...*

Isolation and Loneliness “Kills”

- **Risk factors for early mortality**
- 70 prospective studies, 3 M participants followed for average of 7 years
 - Smoking
 - Sedentary lifestyle
 - Air pollution

 - **Social isolation, loneliness, living alone**
- J Holt-Lunstad et al Perspectives on Psychological Science 2015

Implications

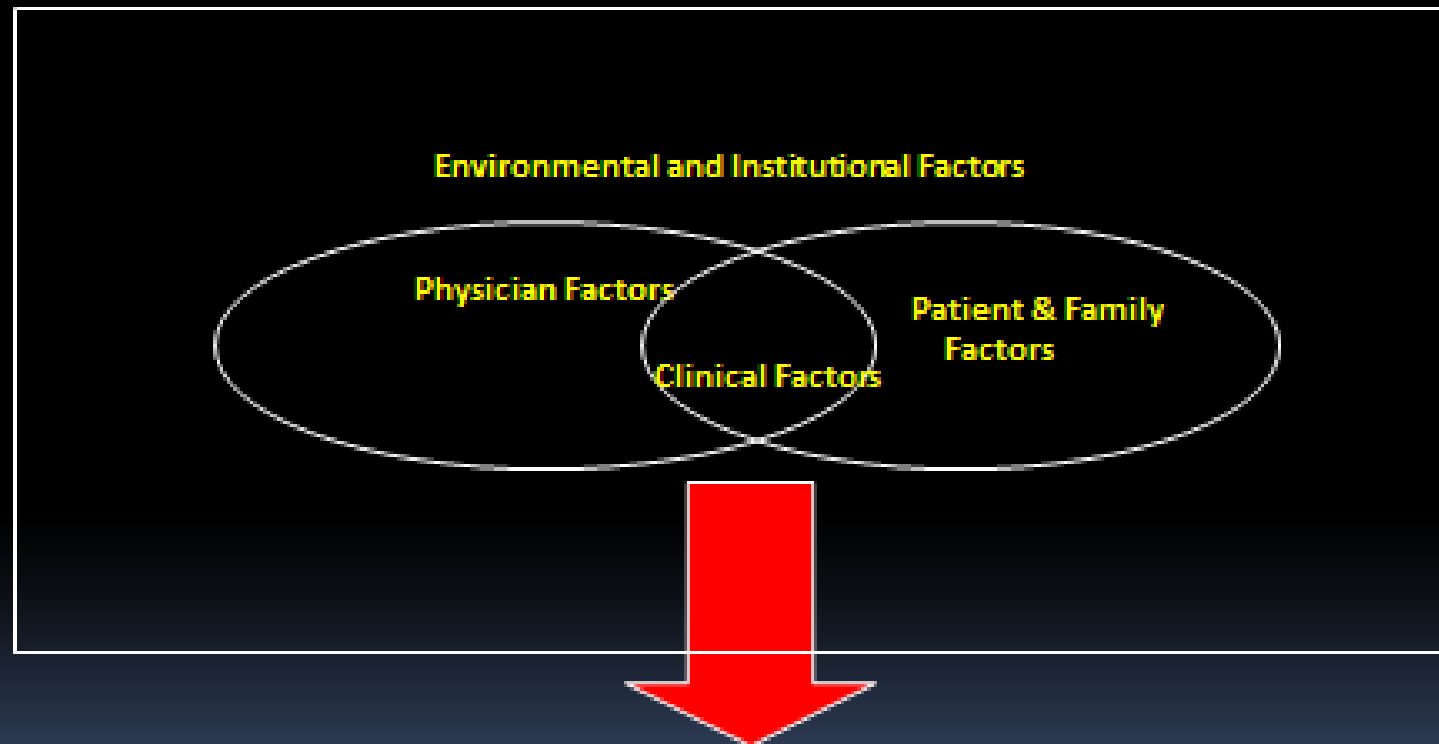
Compassion not as simple
as turning on a “switch”

Compassion is conditional
likeability/ similarity
external
environment,
bystander effect
stress/ pressure

Seminarians in Princeton
study

Transactional Model of Compassion

Fernando AT, Considine NS



- ***It's not all about the doctor** Physician Compassion

Barriers to Compassion in Medicine (Education?)

(Fernando, Consedine PGMJ 2014)

- Burnout/ Fatigue
- Difficult Patient/ Family
- External Distraction
- Complex Situations



Can we enhance connection,
kindness and compassion?

Enhancing Compassion

- Individual level
- System/ organization level
- Practical tips

Individual

- Address burnout and fatigue
- Motivation: May I be of benefit
- See everyone as exactly like you- we all have dramas and baggage; we all want to be happy
- Mindfulness training
- Compassion training protocols/ APPs?

Individual



- Compassion Meditation
- May you be safe, happy and at peace
- http://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/compassion_meditation

Individual

- Acts of Kindness
 - Easily flows with nice people
 - Empty with tough/annoying people
 - Not expect recognition

- Study on 700 university students on kindness

Tips for kids- mentalization

- “Where is our food? This waitress is terrible!”
- Coming up with possible explanations for people
 - Maybe the kitchen is backed up and she’s doing her best.
 - Maybe she’s covering extra tables for someone who called in sick.
 - Maybe this is her second job and she’s been up since 4 a.m.

System

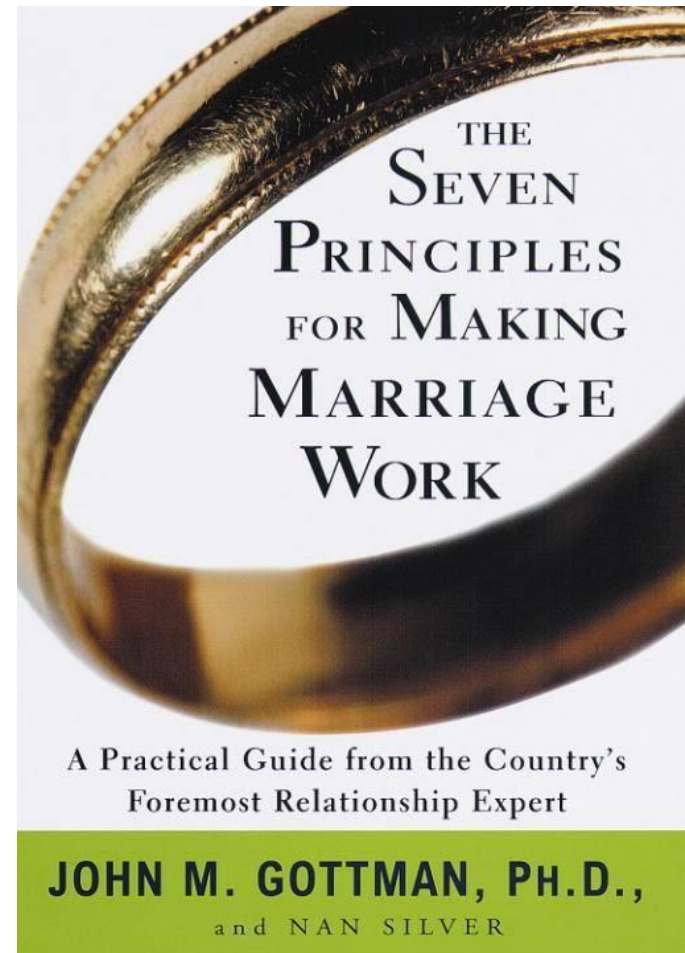
- Constant interruptions
- Lack of autonomy
- Unsustainable schedule
- Bullying, discrimination
- Unsupportive or toxic management

Difficult people

- Biggest compassion killer
- They do not deliberately want to annoy you
- **We all have our stories and dramas**
- **“difficult person” = “suffering person”**
- See aspects of ourselves in them
- Requires the most skill

Relationships

- Compassion in relationships
 - John Gottman studies
 - Acknowledgement
 - Compassion and not contempt when in conflict



- “secret” to happy and healthy life
 - good quality relationships, not quantity
-
- Robert Waldinger- Harvard Study of Adult Development

Compassion from palliative care patients

TOUCH "...the big difference is those who touch you, strange as it sounds, they just don't have to say anything. Come in and put the hand on your back, rub your arm, sometimes hold your hand and say 'how are you feeling today' and things?"

ATTENTION "...he is always happy to see you... he never acts as if there is anything else he needs to do, except see you".

ACTS OF KINDNESS "I got cramp in my legs and he went down on his knees on the floor in his surgical gumboots, massaging my calves to make me comfortable"

Compassion in little things

Dying patients and
happiness

If you want a copy of my slides, please email:

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subject: Compassion Talk

