

Compassion and Behaviour Change

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How did CFT Start

- **Clinical observation of people struggling with standard therapies –**
- **For depression 50% recovery but high risk of relapse**
- **Long focus on shame and self-criticism which are known to be linked to poor outcomes**
- **People who struggle with set backs and emotional regulation**

Working with Slimming World

- Many people struggling with weight have similar problems – dealing with set backs and emotional regulation
- Could work our on understanding/research on shame and self-criticism, and the value of developing compassion, be of any value in SW?
- If groups like SW focused more on shame and compassion training would that also reduce depression etc.

Why is weight control so tough

Culture can render an adaptive phenotype highly maladaptive, e.g. food seeking

Human evolved in times of scarcity

Adapted for the 'see food and eat it diet'

Adapted for energy conservation

No adapted for quick/internal limitation

Modern Culture: High available cheap and enhanced aesthetically, taste and textures, food

OBESITY, DIABETES HEART DISEASE

Shame and Self-criticism

- **If you are struggling with weight what are the best sources of coping with setbacks and succeeding?**
- **Use an affect regulation system that evolved to promote affiliation and regulate threat**

Understanding our Motives and Emotions

Motives evolved because they help animals to survive and leave genes behind

Emotions guide us to our goals and respond if we are succeeding or threatened

There are three types of emotion regulation

- 1. Those that focus on threat and self-protection**
- 2. Those that focus on doing and achieving**
- 3. Those that focus on contentment and feeling safe**

Types of Affect Regulator Systems

Drive, excite, vitality

Content, safe, connected

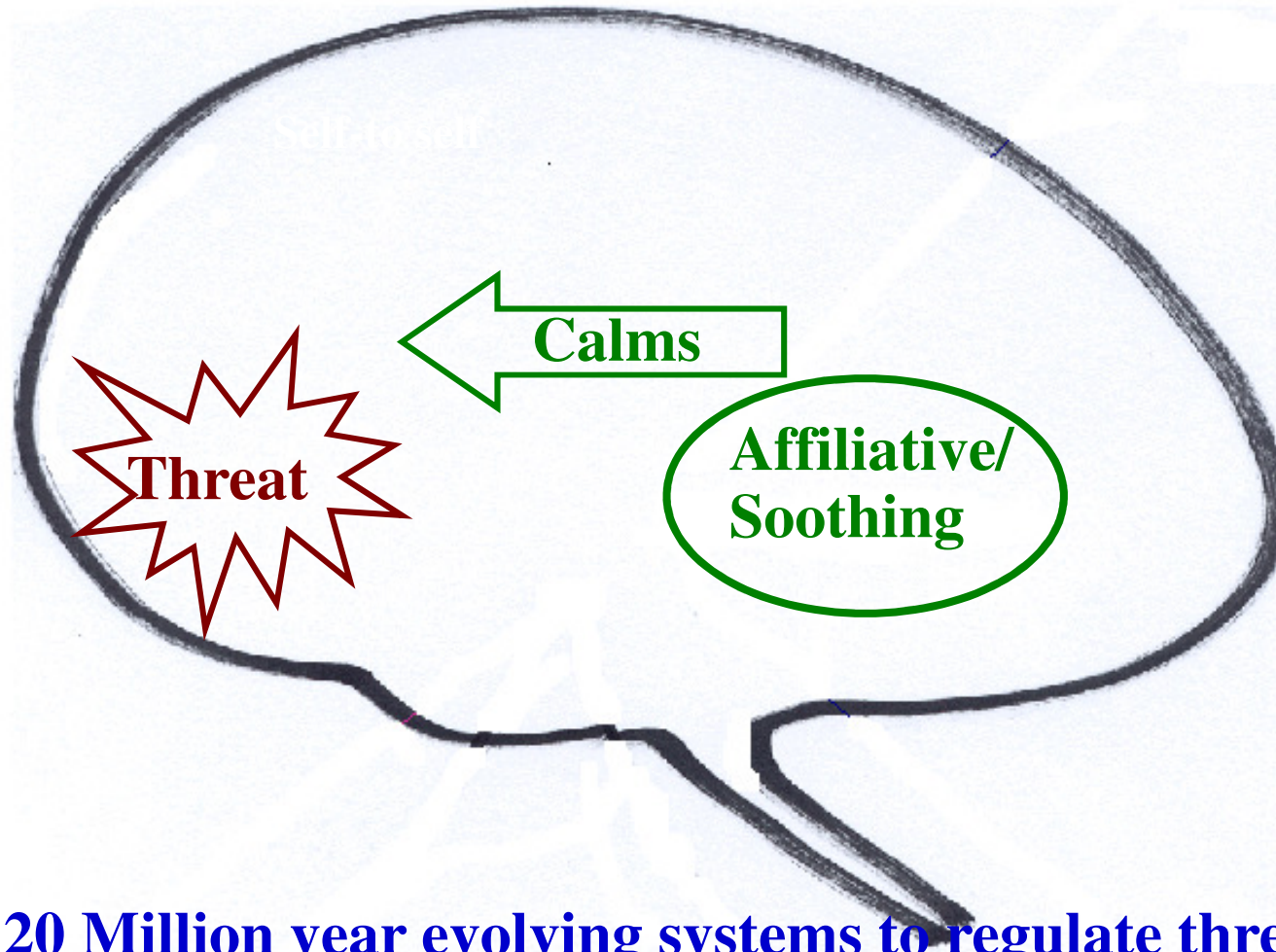


*Safeness
And
Affiliation*

*Soothing
and Affect
Regulation*

Self and others

Self and self



120 Million year evolving systems to regulate threat

Social relationships are the most important sources of meaning, self regulation and learning

Shame and Self- Criticism in Behaviour Change

Eating Behaviour – Multiple Factors

Eating

Hunger

Pleasure

Social

Happy

Unhappy

Impulsive

Dissociations

Associations

Controlled eating

Health

Feel better

Look better

Shame

Social pressure

Dietary cycles

Major individual variations - person to person and time to time

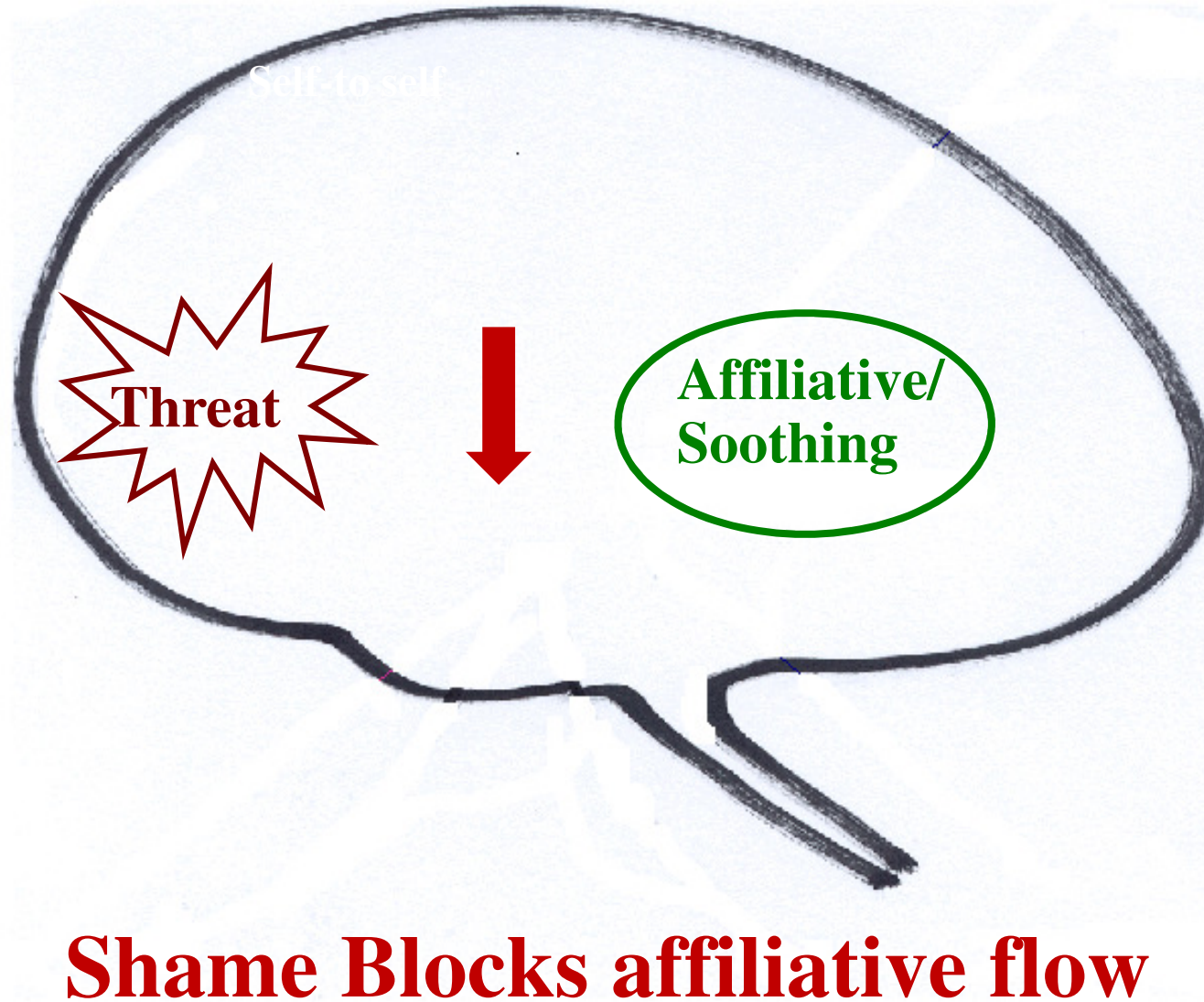
The Undesired/Unattractive Self

“...when ashamed, participants talked about being who they did **not** want to be. That is, they experienced themselves as embodying an anti-ideal, rather than simply not being who they wanted to be. The participants said things like. "I am fat and ugly“, **not** "I failed to be pretty" or "I am bad and evil“, **not** "I am not as good as I want to be“. This difference in emphasis is not simply semantic. Participants insisted that the distinction was important...”

(Lindsay-Hartz, de Rivera and Mascolo (1995, p. 277)

It is therefore not so much failing to meet standards but the meaning and experience of self from falling short

Self and others Self and self



Shame Blocks affiliative flow

Coping with Shame

Drive, excite, vitality

Content, safe, connected

Try new diets
Joins groups
Good intentions
Hope

Feel Inferior
Shame
Self-critical

Anger, anxiety, disgust



Falling back into shame and self-criticisms – self dislike

Drive, excite, vitality

Content, safe, connected

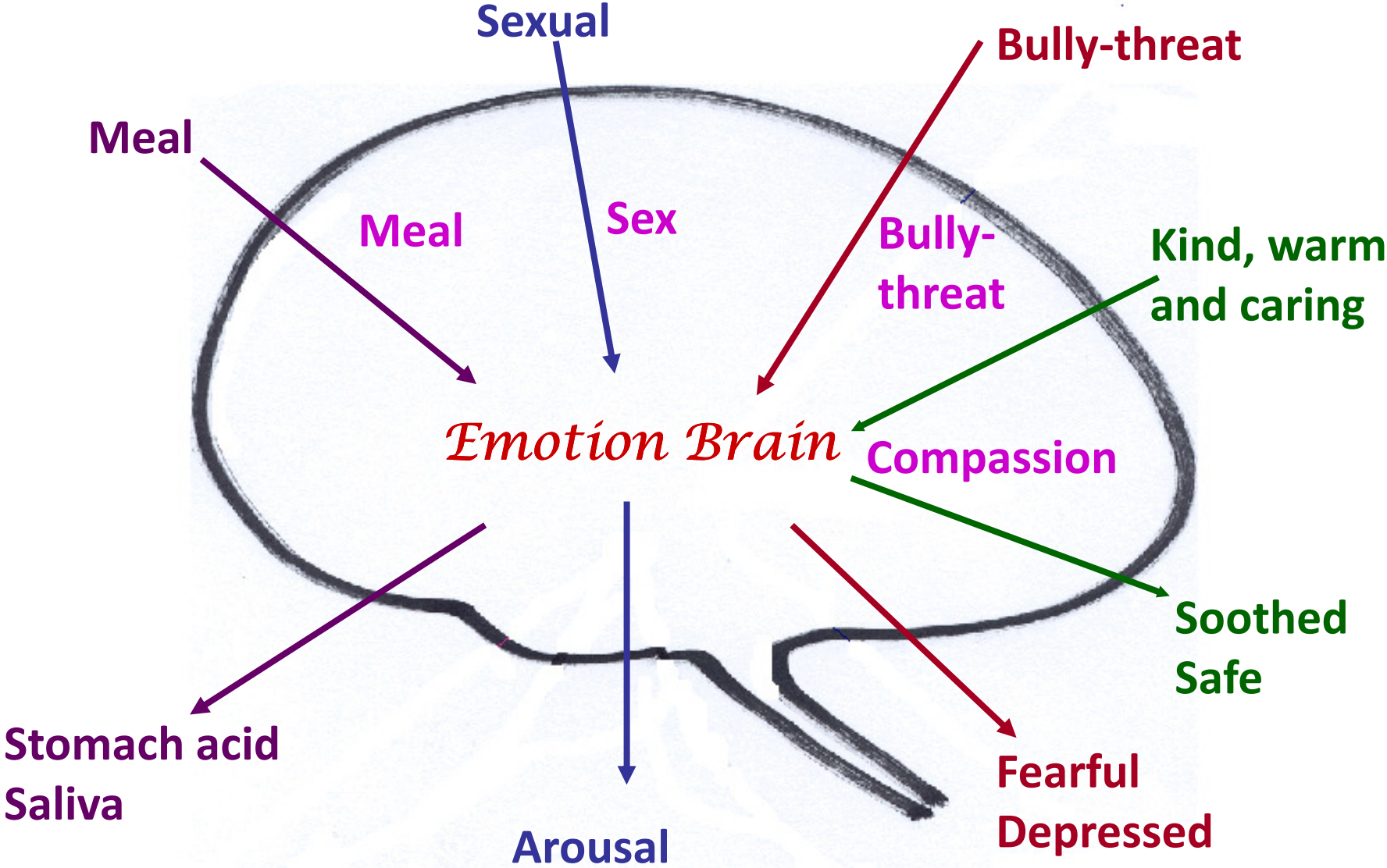
Can't do it
Can't maintain it
Fail



Feel Inferior
Shame
Self critical

Anger, anxiety, disgust

How our own thoughts and images affect our brains



Pink represents our inner images and thoughts

Cautions of behaviour change and national ideas

- What happens to those who try and fail?
- What happens if we say – Oh it is just about effort and knowledge?
- If we are not careful we are setting people up for shame and depression – especially in the modern world
- Behaviour change must focus on failure, not just relapse! That is not people's language.
- The secret of success is the ability to fail
- De-shaming and de-blaming

Types of Affect Regulator Systems

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Content, safe, connected



The Two Psychologies of Compassion

Compassion can be defined in many ways: “As a **sensitivity** to the suffering of self and others with a deep **commitment to try to relieve it and prevent it**”, Dalai Lama

Two different Psychologies

- To approach and engage with suffering
- To work to alleviation suffering

Each more complex than might at first seem

Compassionate Mind - Engagement

Warmth

Warmth

ATTRIBUTES

Sensitivity

Sympathy

Care for
well-being

Compassion

Distress
tolerance

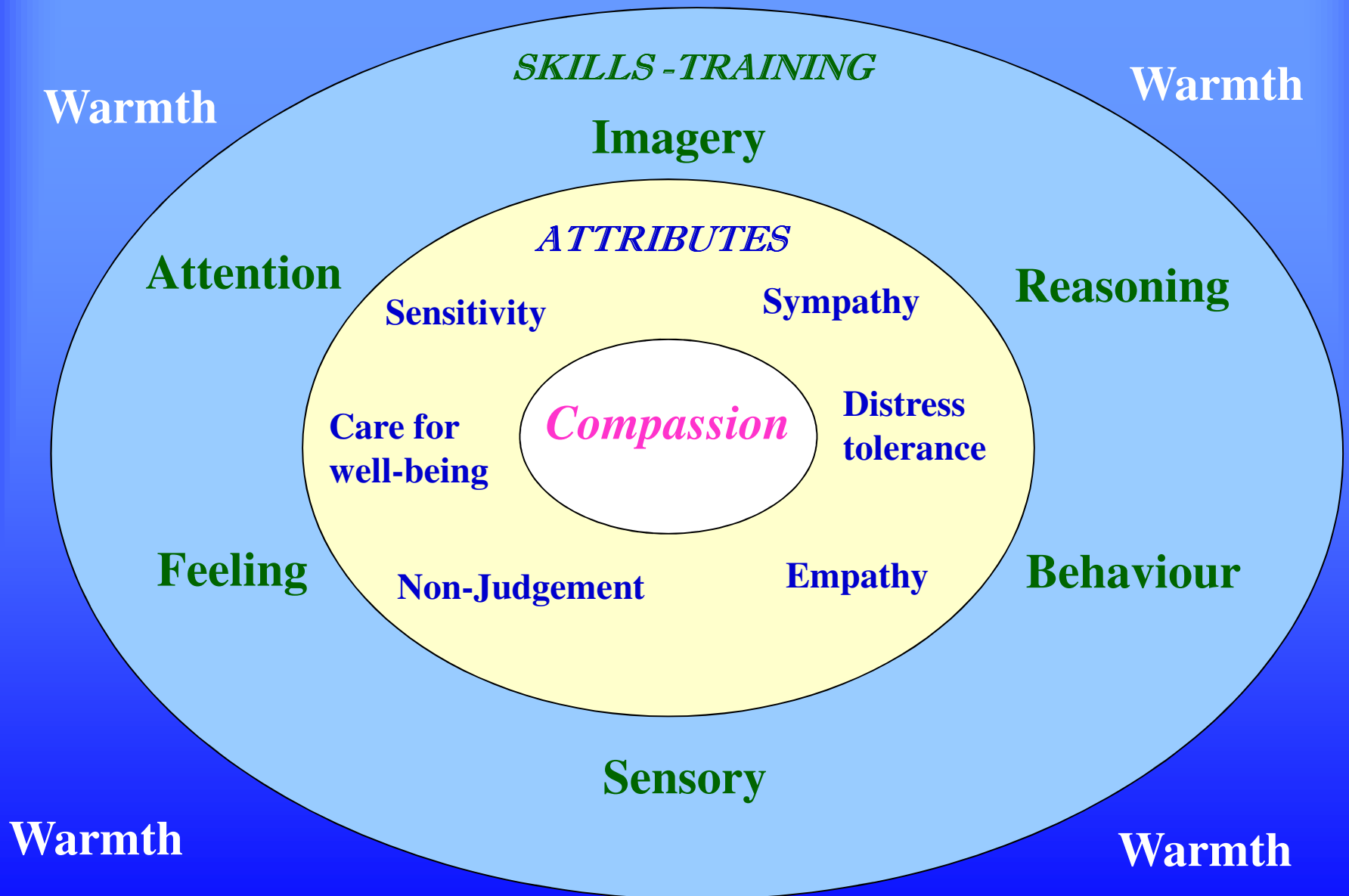
Non-Judgement

Empathy

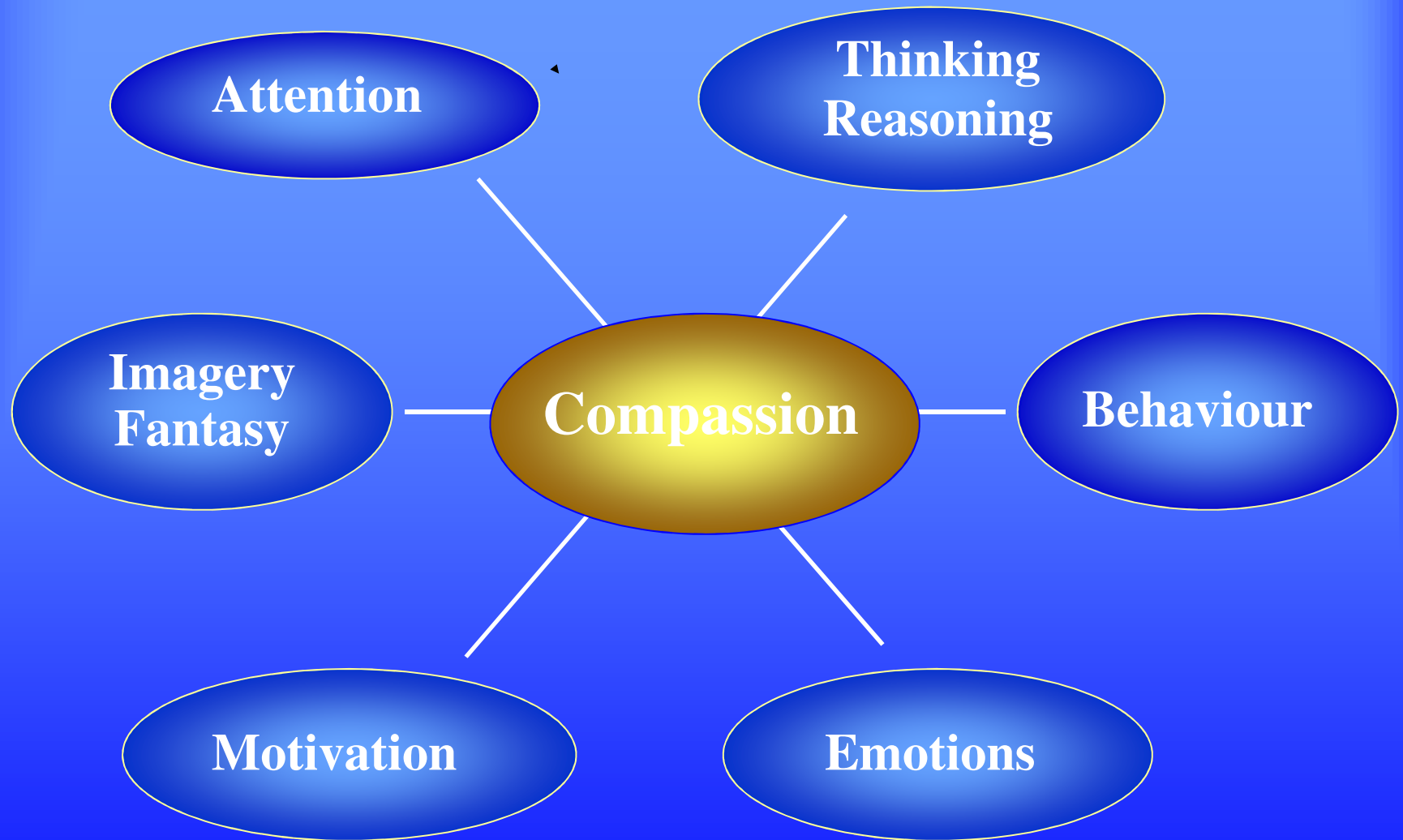
Warmth

Warmth

Compassionate Mind - Alleviation



Compassionate mind/mentality



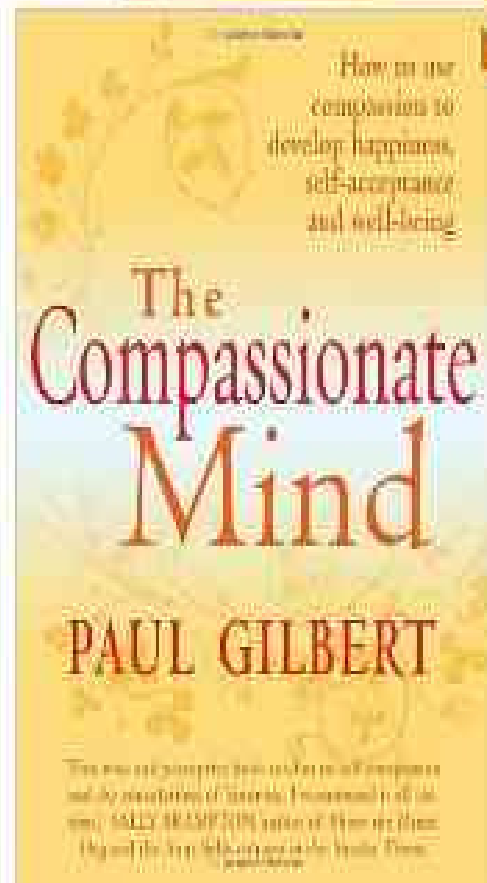
Threatened mind can block compassion



Ideas

- **De-shame people – give accurate information of what we are up against**
- **Understand the motivational and emotional drivers of behaviour change**
- **Address the issue in a biopsychosocial context – food industry and Media images**
- **Develop group support for encouragement but also for when things do not work out (disappointment, shame and self-criticism)**
- **Develop (self) compassion – activate green system.**

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