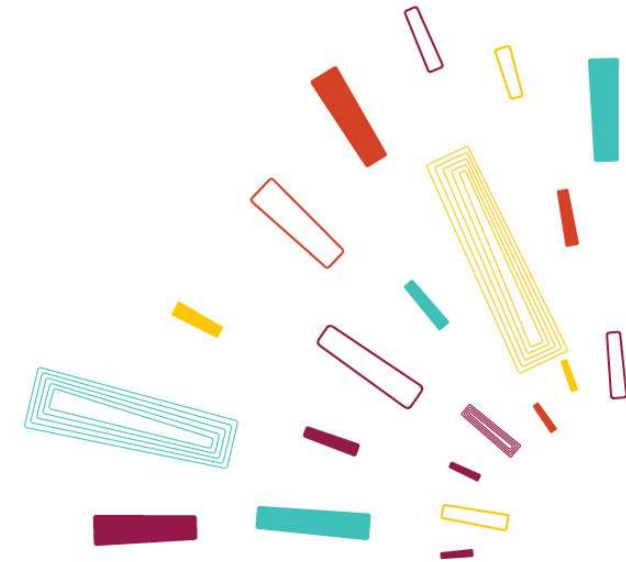


Praying Through Anxiety What Helps, What Doesn't ... *and Why*

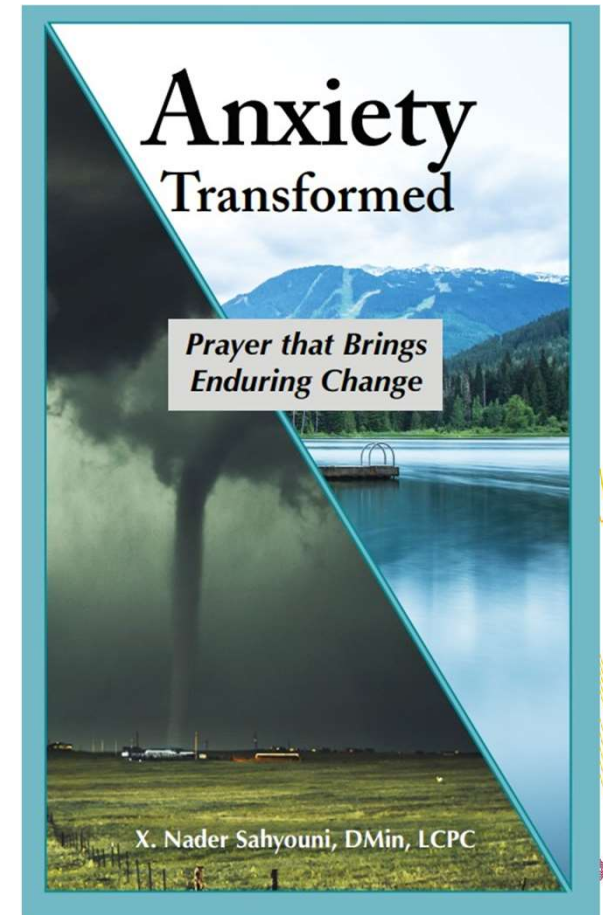
X. Nader Sahyouni, DMin, LCPC



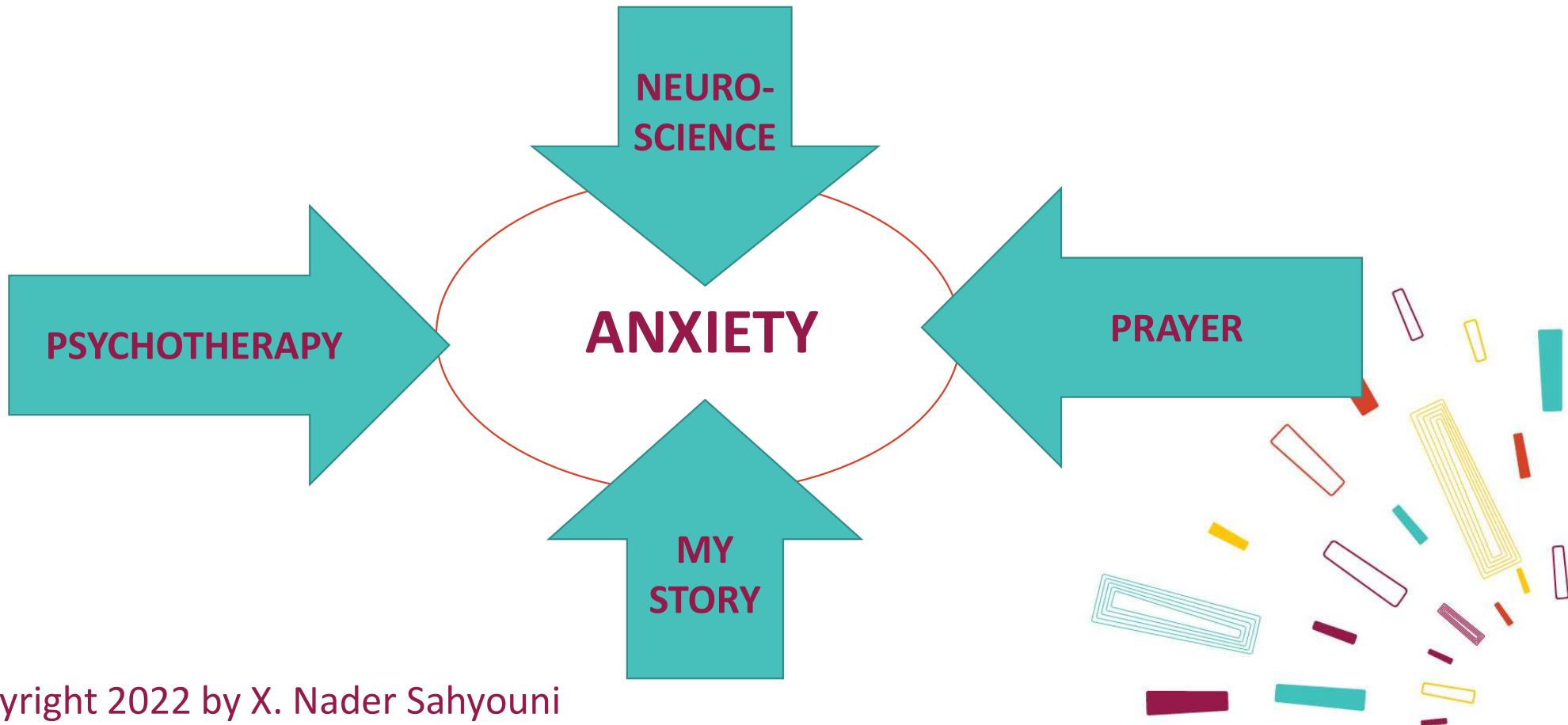
Anxiety and Jesus

- Generational
- Situational
- Brought me to prayer
- Some forms of prayer helped
- Some forms of prayer got in the way

- Myspiritualdirector.com



Integrated Prayer Approach



P.T.



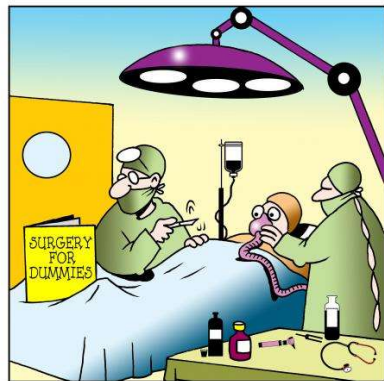
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THREE
CONTEXTS

1st Aid



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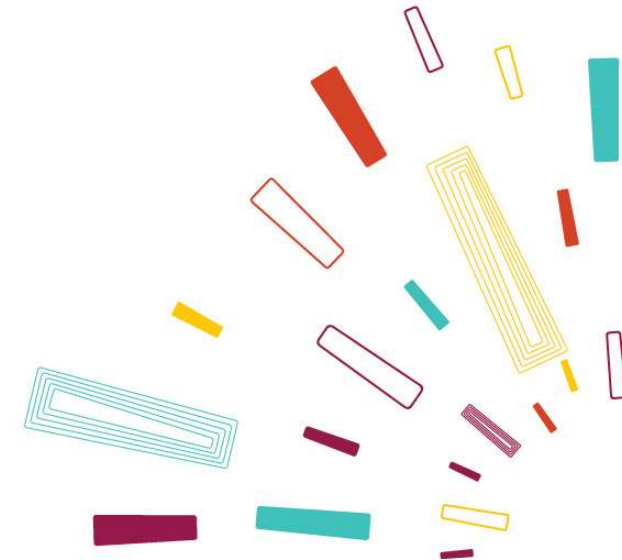
O.R.

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A cluster of several small, colorful rectangular shapes in shades of yellow, teal, purple, and red, scattered in the top-left corner.

Before We Start...

- What we are going to talk about today are ways that prayer can help and support
- **BUT NOT REPLACE...therapy or medication**



Praying Through Anxieties In The Present



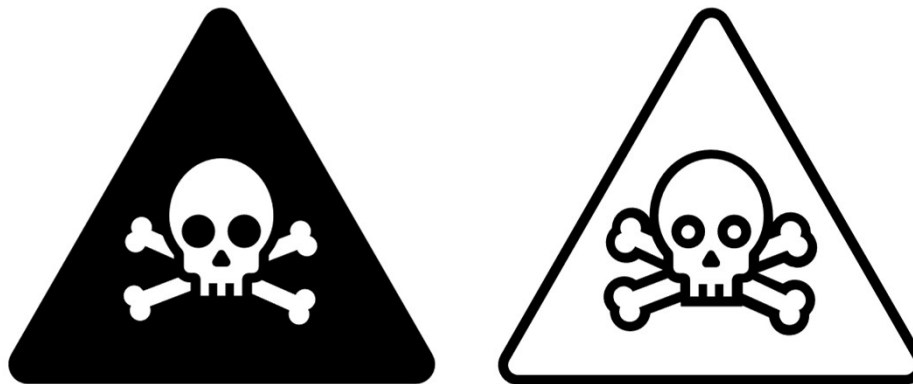
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First Aid



Two Poisons

- **Avoidance & Repeated Reassurance Seeking** tell your brain that there really is something to be concerned about
- Temporary relief, but in long run increases anxiety
- Anxiety treatments usually involve doing the opposite: ***exposure of some type***



Two Poisons & Antidote

ANXIETY



AVOIDANCE



LIKELY MORE ANXIETY

ANXIETY



REPEATED
REASSURANCE
SEEKING



LIKELY MORE ANXIETY

ANXIETY

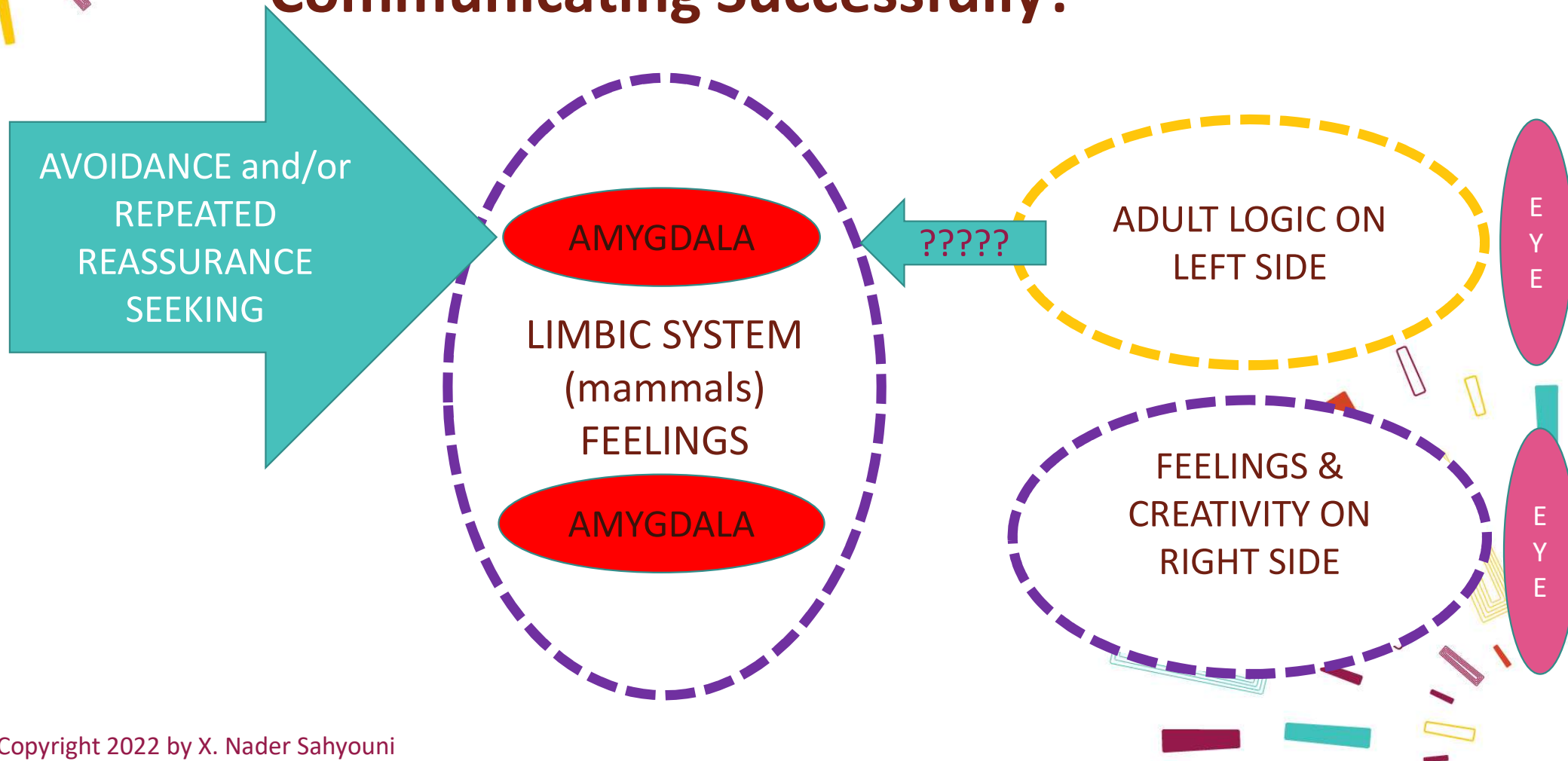


EXPOSURE



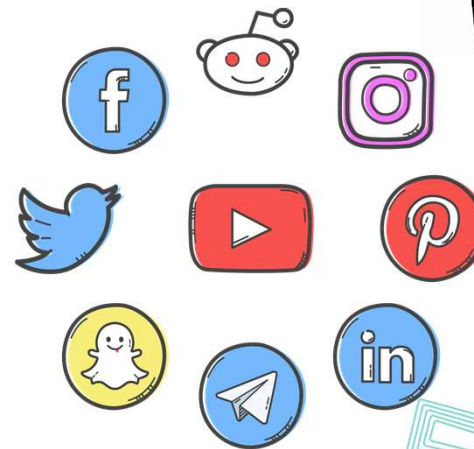
LIKELY LESS ANXIETY

Anxiety and Logic Centers Communicating Successfully?



Typical Anxiety Scenario for Fictional Jim

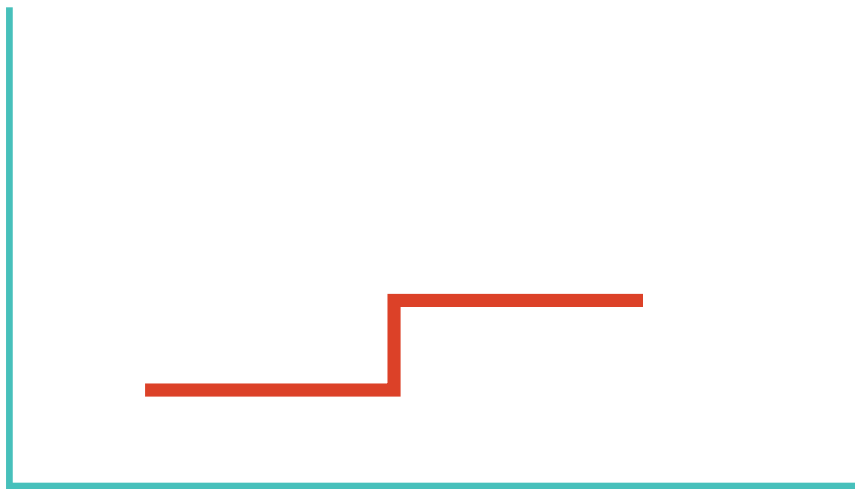
- Anxious about some work task
- Takes lots of breaks
 - What does that tell his brain?
- On break:
 - Uses social media to keep avoiding
- Social media → Repeated Reassurance Seeking
- What is happening in the brain?



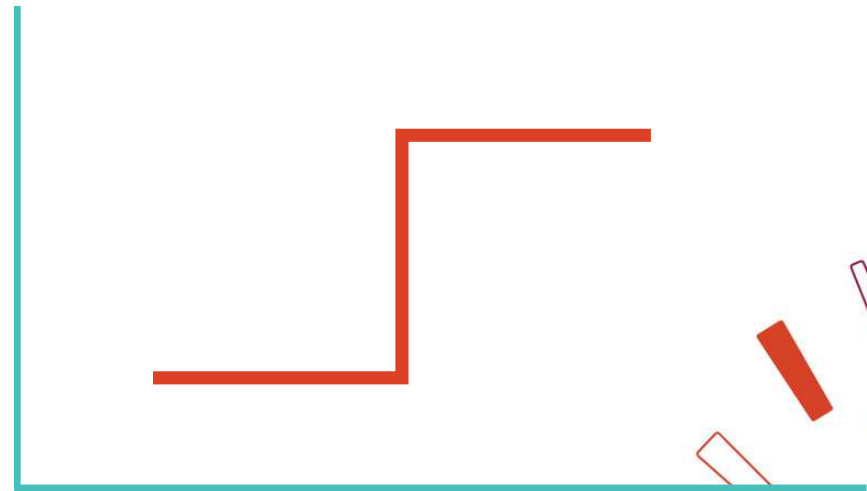
Dopamine and Motivation



Normal Dopamine Levels



Increased Dopamine Levels

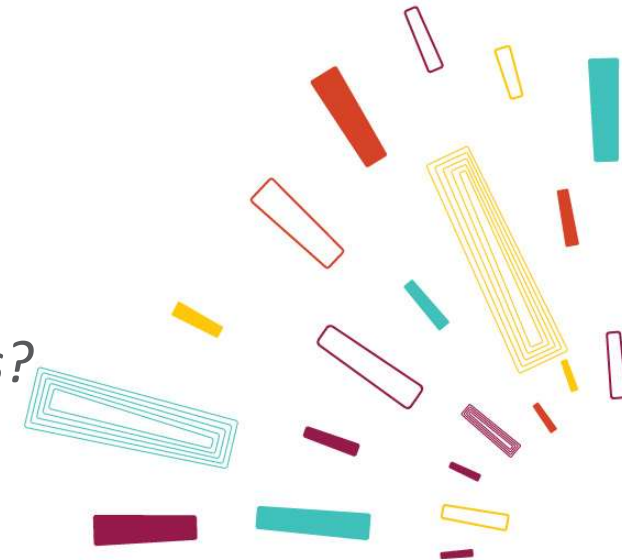


Effort level needed to accomplish a task increases as brain gets used to more Dopamine



What Do We Need Most In Order To Stop Taking The Poisons?

- Motivation, Motivation, Motivation
- **More motivation** is needed to stop avoiding
- **More motivation** is needed to stop repeated reassurance seeking
- Jim is **reducing his motivation** by staying online
- Jim is stuck in an anxiety cycle
- *How many of you have seen “Jims” stuck delaying work on a task for days as they keep taking breaks?*



NT Model: Please, Yes, and Thank You

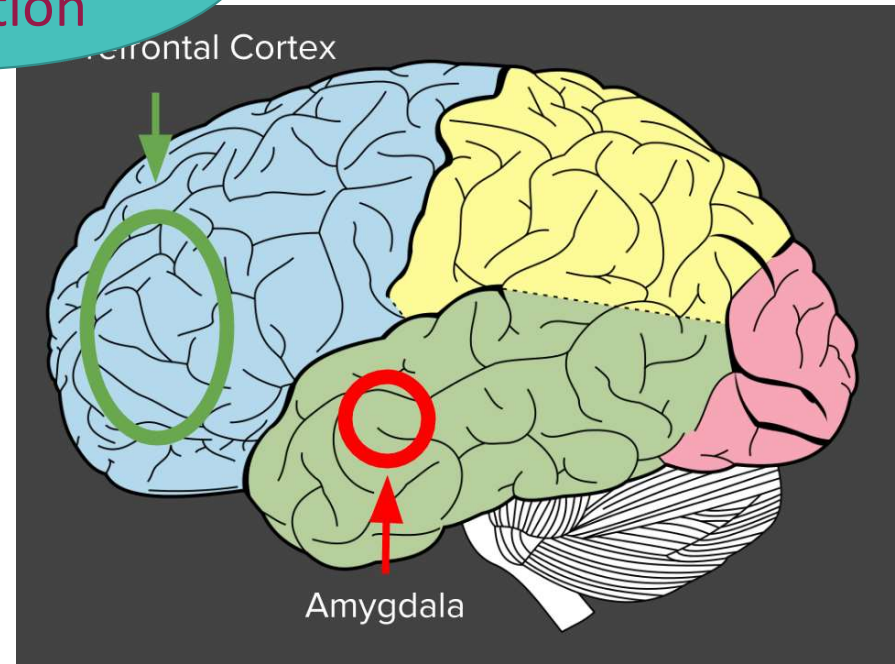
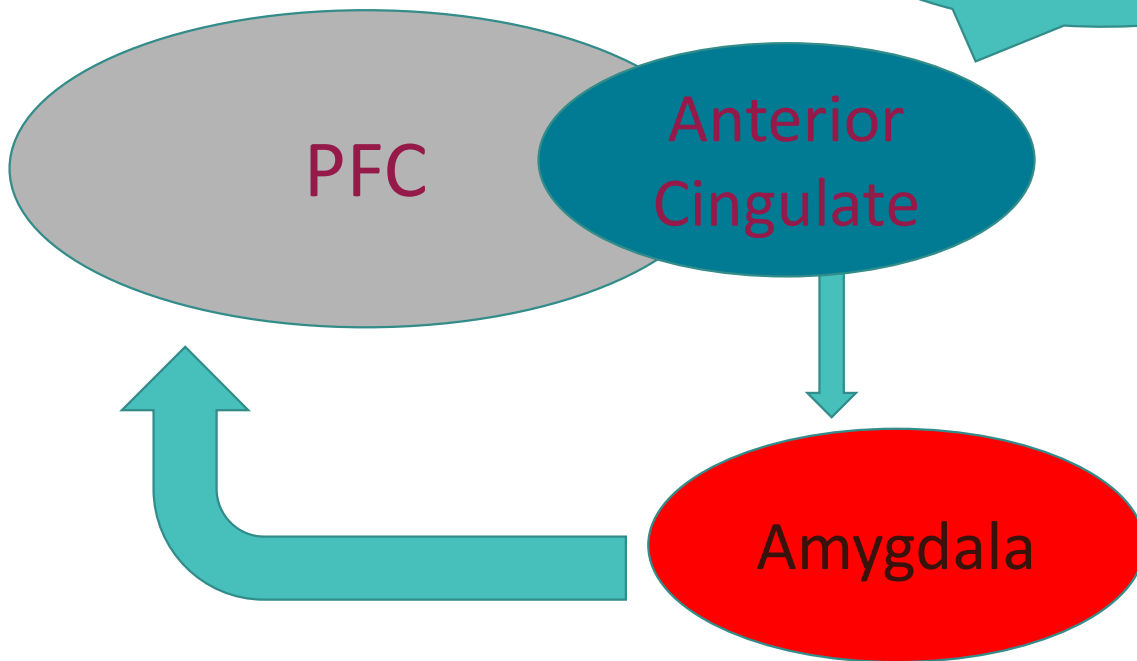
- Paul and thorn in flesh, Jesus in Gethsemane
- **PLEASE:** Both asked it be taken away three times
- **YES:** Both accepted answer was no
- **THANK YOU:** Both pressed into the redemption that was promised
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9 ...therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
 - Hebrews 12:2...For the joy set before him he endured the cross,



Thank You *Philippians 4:6*



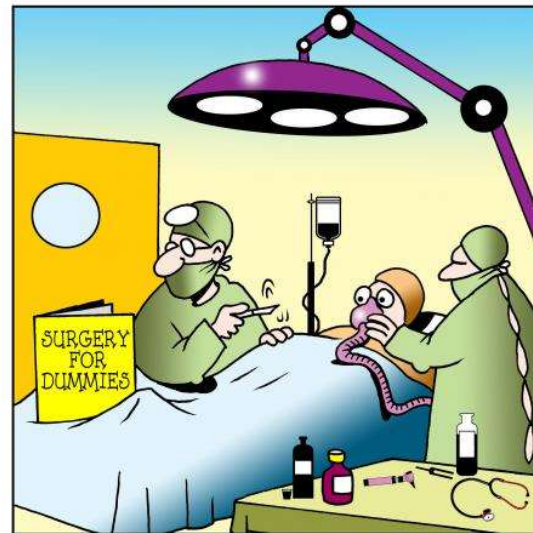
Thank You:
Emotional
Regulation



Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

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Surgery



Spectrum of Negative Experiences

- Technically, trauma is only major events
- Spectrum of negative experiences
- These negative experiences can have similar impact to “Trauma”
- For the purpose of our discussion will refer to all those experiences as trauma
- Negative experiences, when not effectively resolved, result in triggers
- Many of these triggers, when activated, cause anxiety

Trauma And Memory Reconsolidation



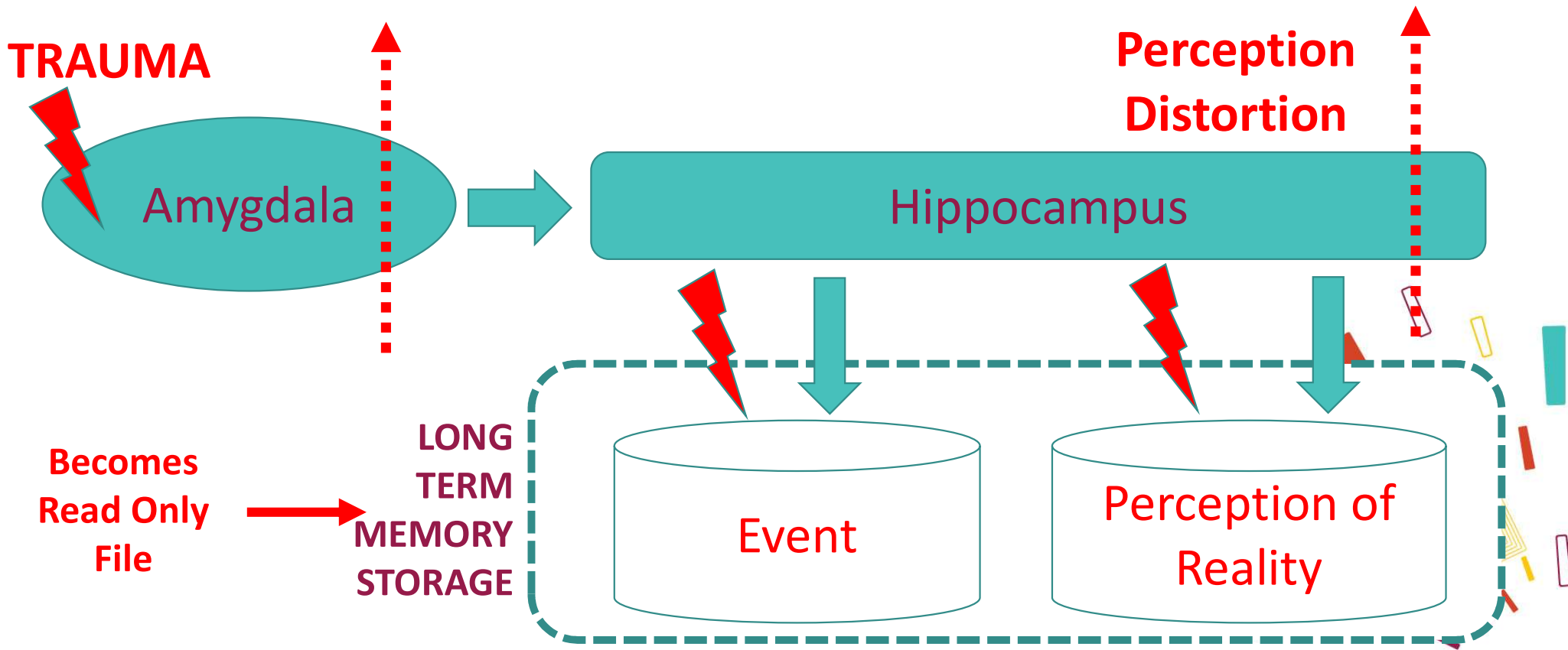
Amygdala

ANXIETY

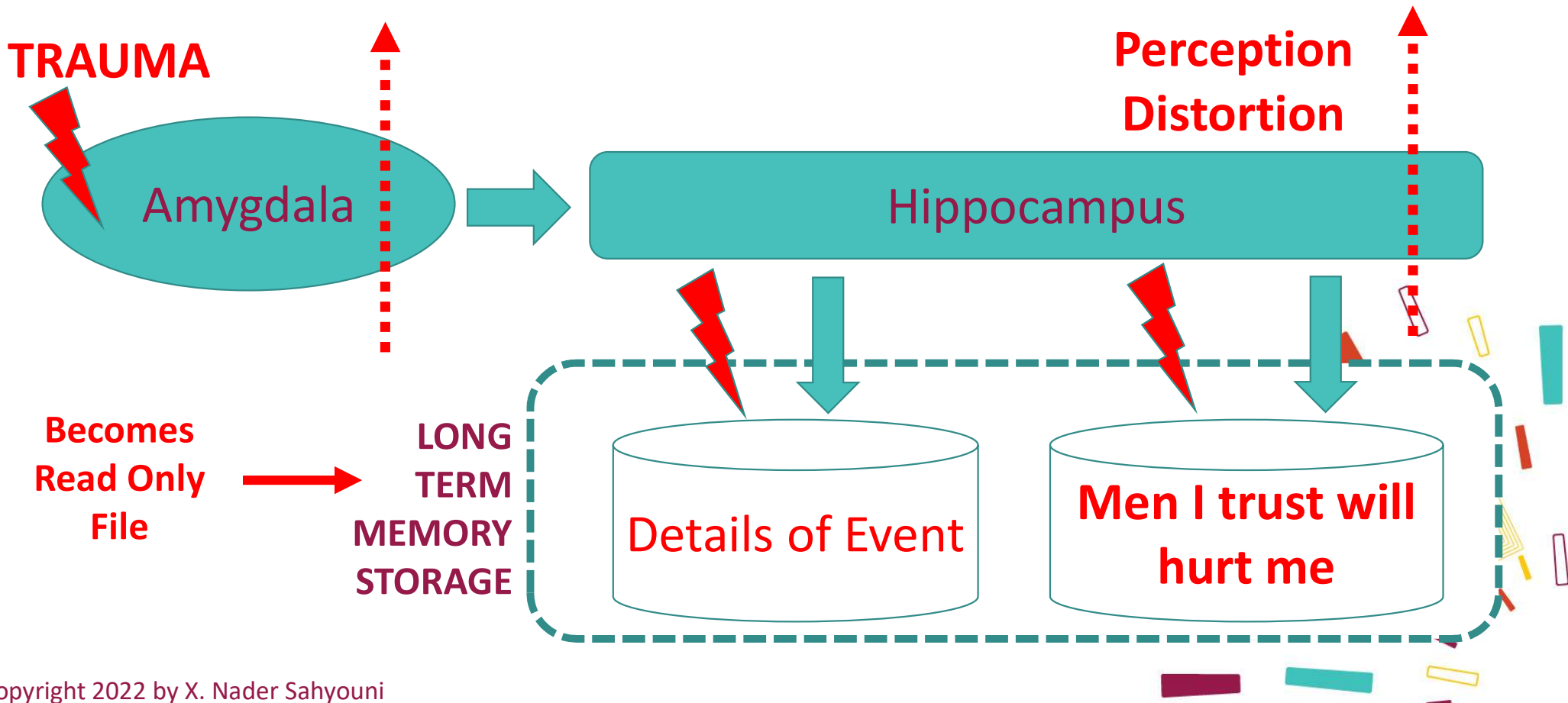
Hippocampus

MEMORY
STORAGE

Trauma Changes Perception



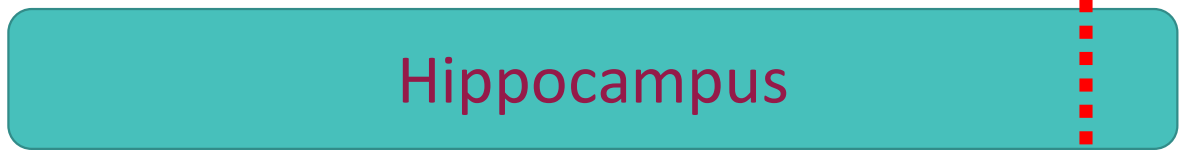
Trauma Changing Perception



Therapy Changing Perception



Recall In
Therapy



Perception
Correction

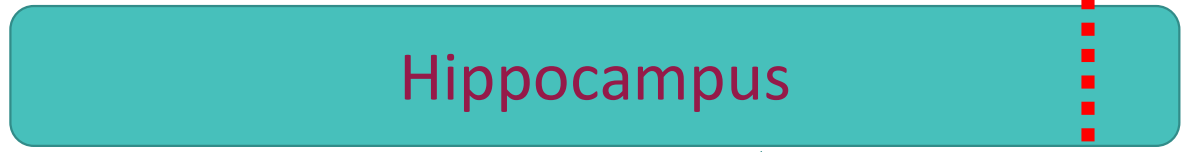
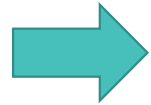
Becomes
Read Write
File in
Session

LONG
TERM
MEMORY
STORAGE



Peter's Trauma

Peter's
Betrayal

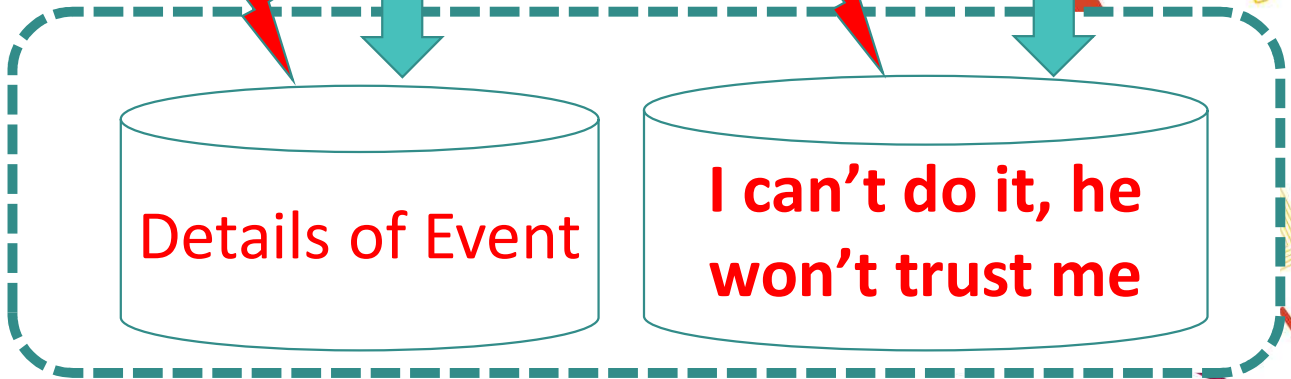


Perception
Distortion

Becomes
Read Only
File

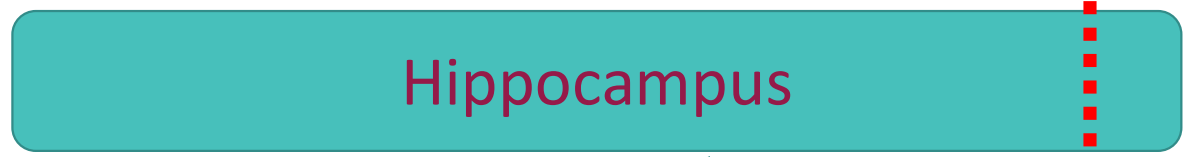


LONG
TERM
MEMORY
STORAGE



Jesus Healing Peter

Do you love me?

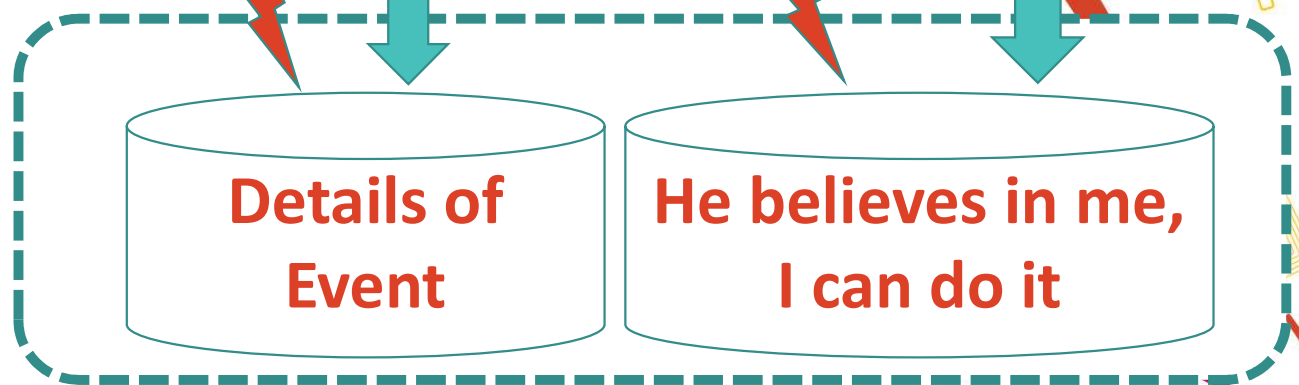


Feed My Sheep

Becomes Read Write File When Triggered



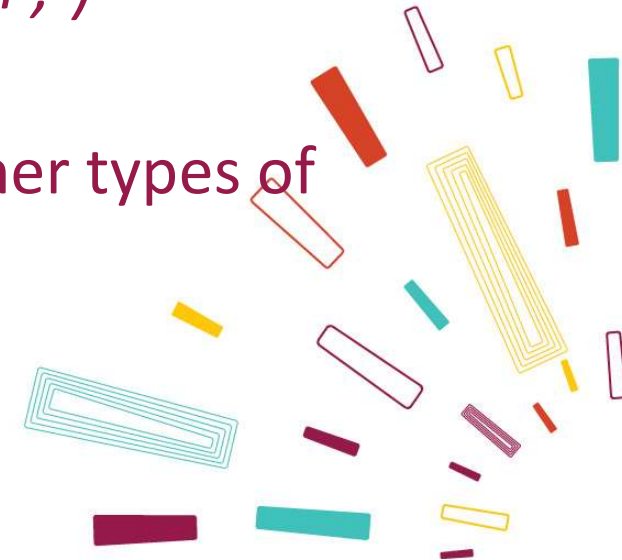
LONG TERM MEMORY STORAGE



A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of several small, overlapping, colorful rectangles in shades of yellow, teal, red, and purple.

God Still Does This

- Removes obstacles to calling and connection
- God seems to do this at times in inner healing prayer
 - *Even before the science caught up to him ;-)*
 - Prayer Ministry available at Urbana
- God uses psychotherapy just as he uses other types of modern medicine
 - EMDR, Coherence Therapy, etc...



Praying In Ways That Building Resilience



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Physical Therapy

Surrender, Trust, and Resistance

- Jerry Bridges:
 - Trust because we know God loves us
 - Trust because we know he is all powerful
 - Trust because we know he is all wise
- Trust is not in the cognitive part of the brain
- Needed experiences of God in prayer



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Faith and Attachment

- Bowlby, Ainsworth and attachment styles
- Secure, anxious, avoidant, disorganized
- Secure base
- Can we develop a secure base with God?

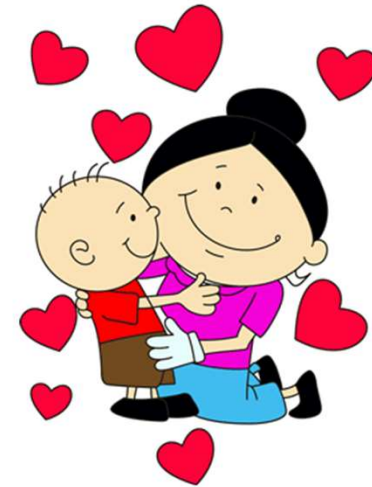


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Attunement

- I see you & hear you
- I can sense what you are feeling
- I am happy to be with you in it
- I can take care of you
- I successfully communicate all of the above to you



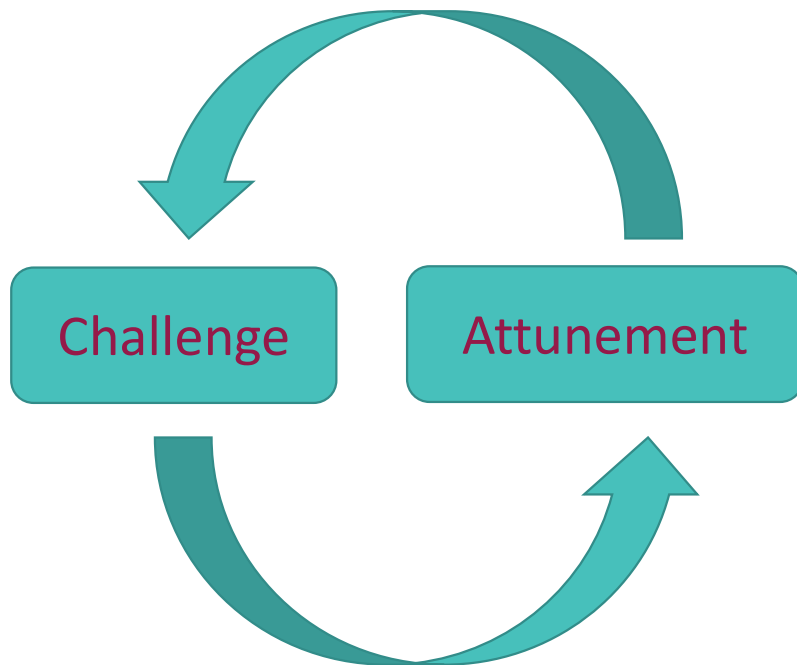
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How Attachment Happens



Cycles of challenge & attunement



Lead to attachment



“Earned” Attachment with God

- Attachment to God often happens ...
 - *We have cycles of challenge and attunement*
 - We spend significant time in prayer
 - We share our feelings with God
 - We experience God’s comforting presence
 - We experience his provision on a regular basis
- Prayer as Secure Base



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God our Secure Base



- Throughout adult life the availability of a responsive attachment figure remains the source of a person's feeling secure. All of us, from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organized as a series of excursions, long or short, from the secure base.
- Throughout adult life the availability of **[God as]** a responsive attachment figure remains the source of a person's feeling secure. All of us, from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organized as a series of excursions, long or short, from **[our time spent in God's loving presence in prayer]**

John Bowlby, *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development* (London and USA: Basic Books, 1988), 62.

