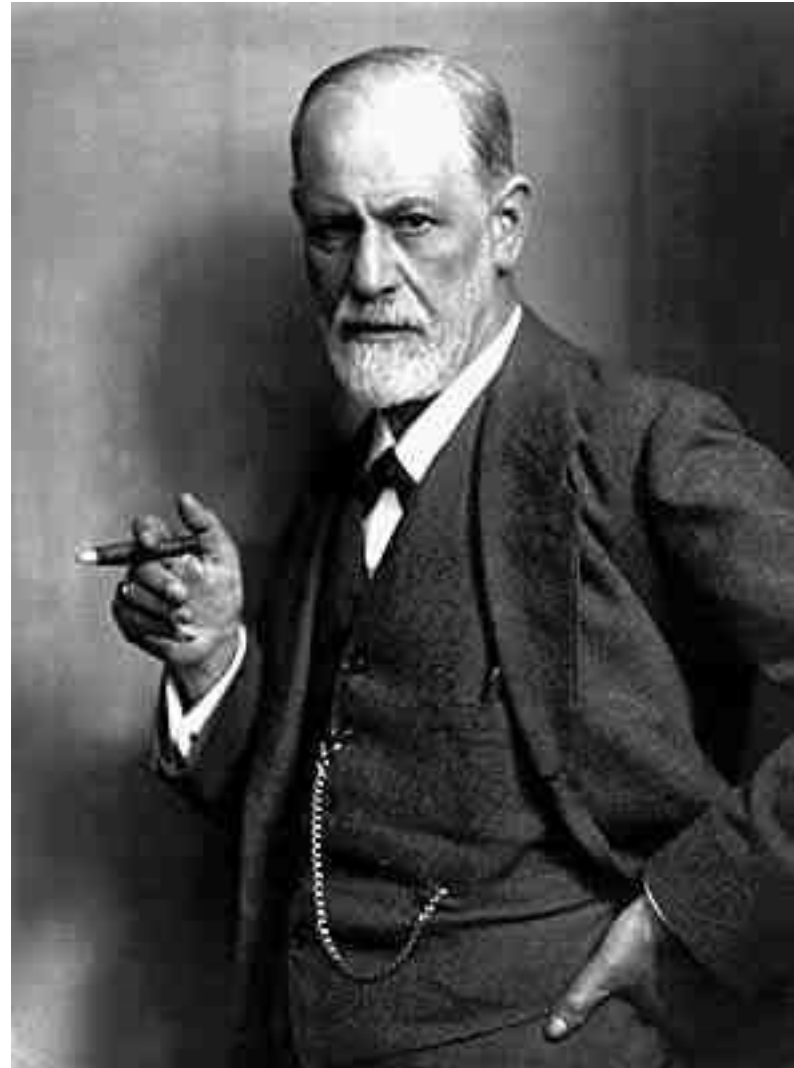


Psychotherapy...



...and the **BRAIN**

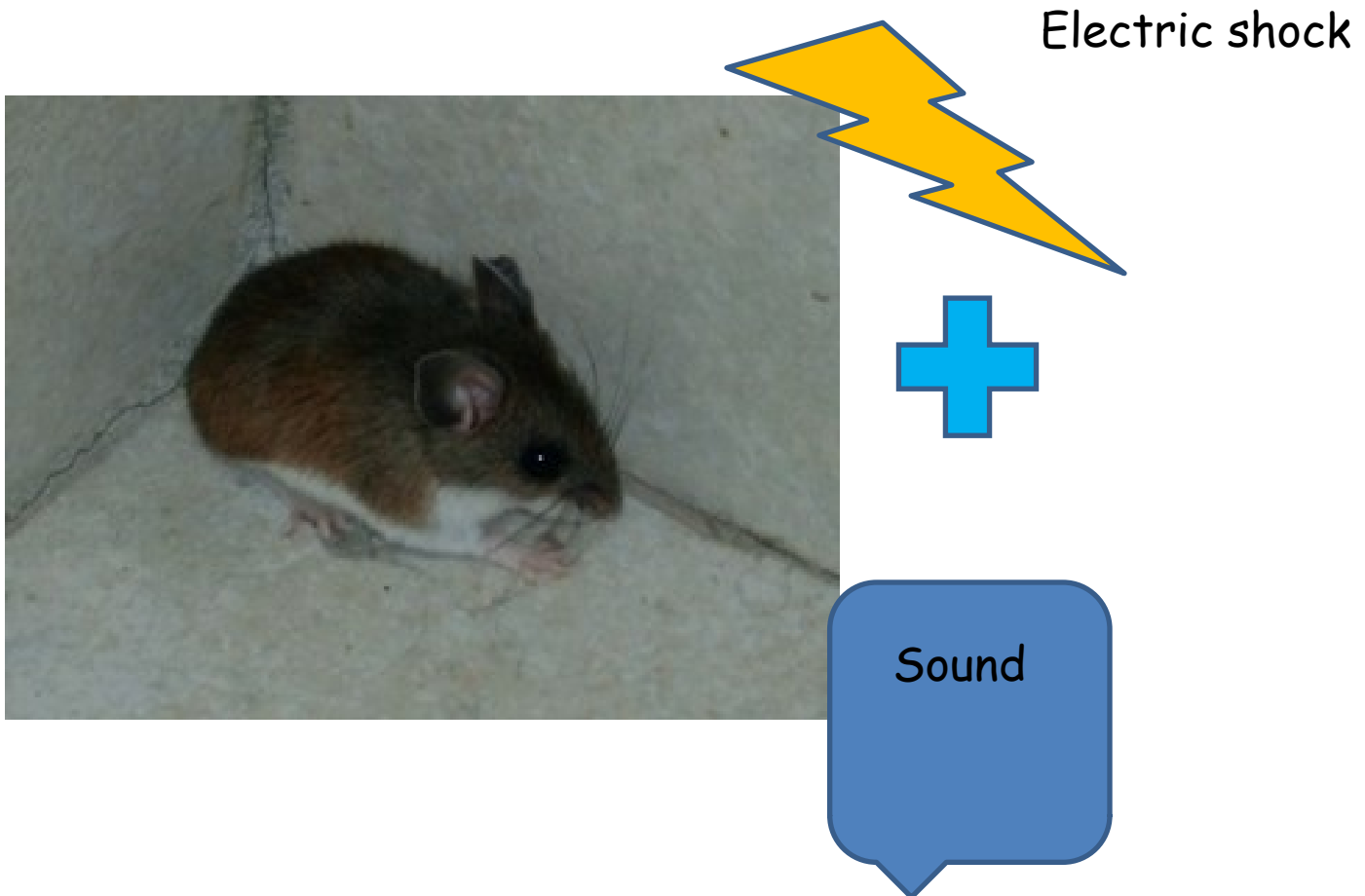
- What do you know about the theoretical basis of psychotherapy?

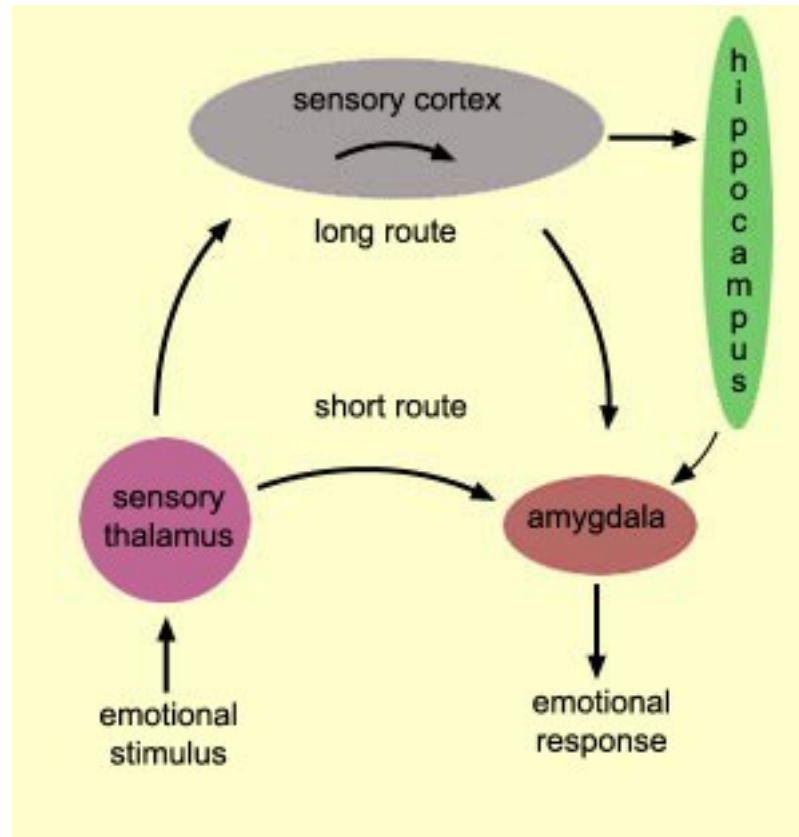


Ideas of Freud and other early theorists...

- The unconscious very important
- But does it exist?
- Relationships are very important
- Emotions are very important
- But surely we are all rational, independent beings?
- EARLY experience vitally important
- But how can it be, if we can't remember it?

Unconscious processing: The rat who couldn't hear...



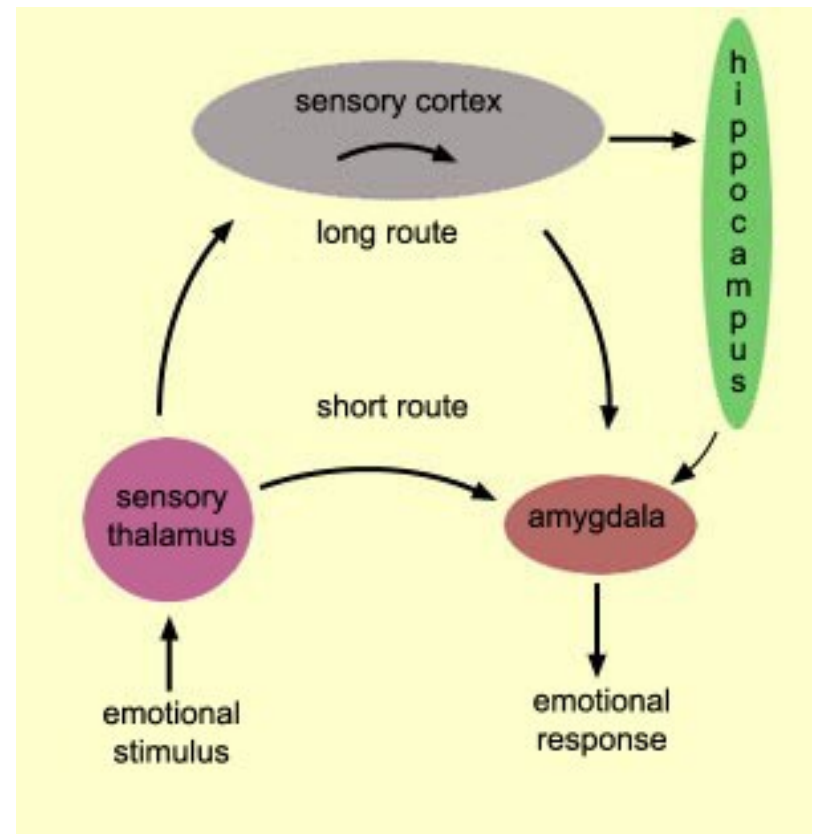


There are levels of consciousness, according to Freud

Conscious

Pre-conscious

Unconscious



Ideas of Freud and other early theorists...

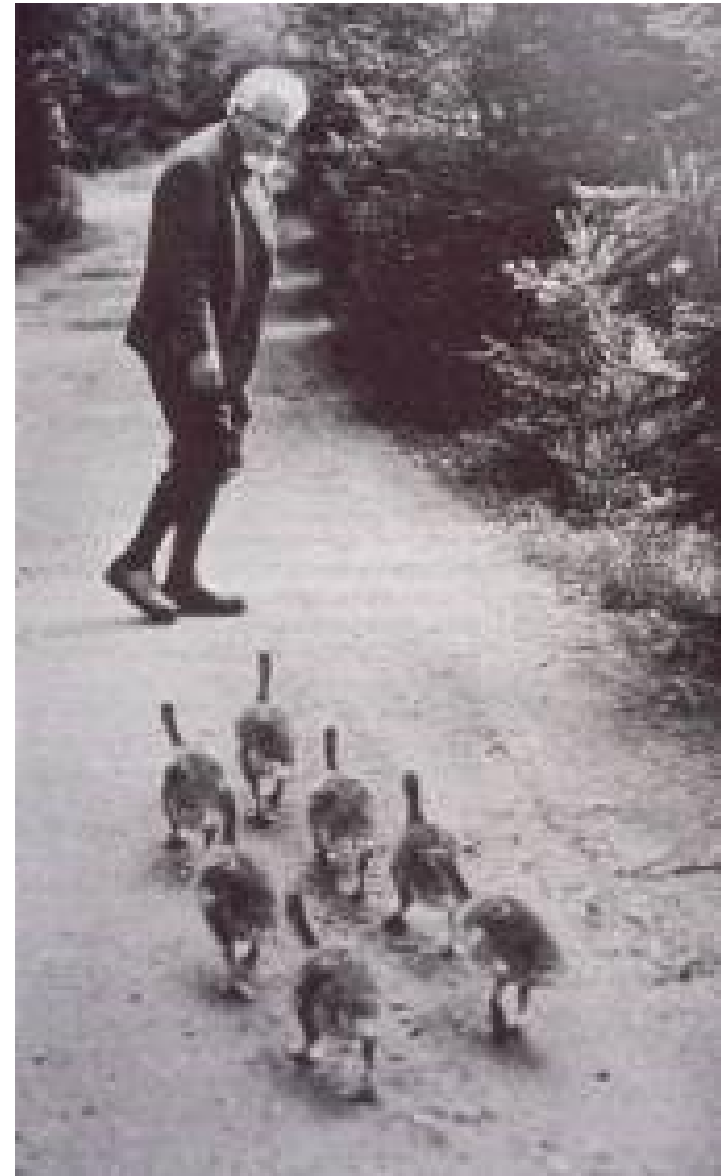
- The unconscious very important
- **But does it exist?**
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- Emotions are very important
- **But surely we are all rational, independent beings?**
- **EARLY** experience vitally important
- **But how can it be, if we can't remember it?**

Which do you think is more important for normal brain development?

- 1. Genetics 'We are our nature?'
- 2. Environment 'We are a blank slate?'
- 3. Both equally important?

Imprinting

Konrad Lorenz



How important is emotional security for early development?

- Harlow's monkeys
- Monkeys don't develop right without 'comfort', 'love'



Normal human attachment

- An innate, biologically-driven need to seek attachment with other human beings.
- Essential for the development of:
 - Empathy
 - Social relational skills
 - Affect regulation
 - Control of aggression and impulsivity

How human brains develop with relationships

- Biologically-driven seeking of relationships...
- ...Just at the right time when the 'emotional' brain is developing connectivity (age 0-2)
- Complex gene-environment interactions

The Emotional Brain: why relationships are so important

- When a baby looks at its mother and sees its mother's **positive** response, its own nervous system responds by releasing neurotrophic chemicals (**endorphins and dopamine**) that promote cell growth and connectivity.
- THE MOTHER'S BRAIN ACTIVELY REGULATES THE INFANT'S BRAIN
- And fathers too!!!!!!



The Emotional Brain: why relationships are so important

- When the baby is **upset, cortisol**, a stress hormone, is released. The baby can't regulate this him/herself.
- The parent's care lessens cortisol in the babies' brain.



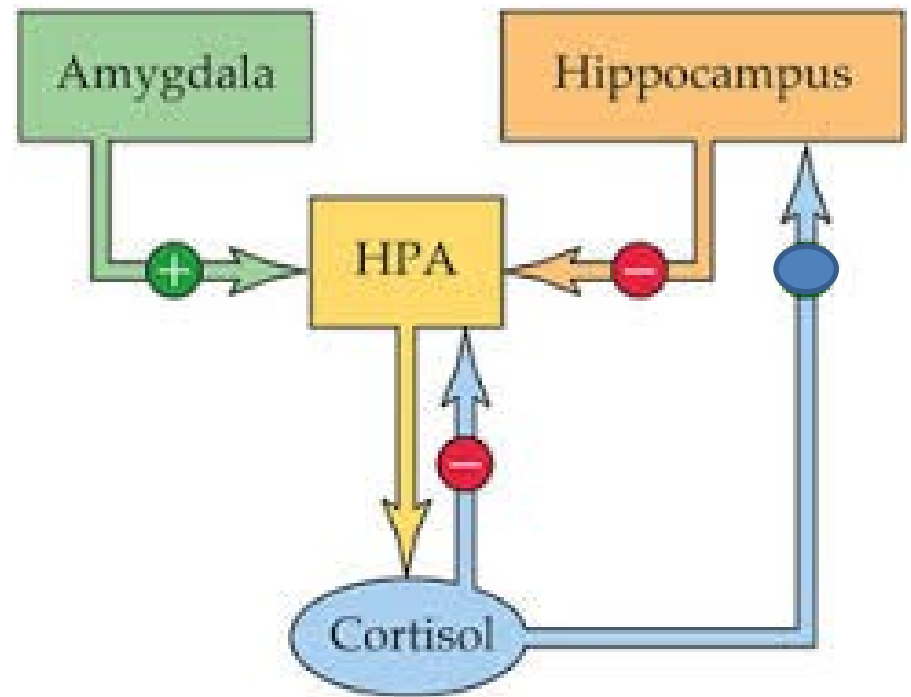
...And the effect of abuse/neglect

- **Negative** interactions/neglect with the mother cause the release of CORTISOL, which is damaging to the brain in large amounts, and makes the baby more vulnerable to stress in the future.
- If the baby is emotionally neglected, the emotional parts of the brain will not develop.
- EMOTIONAL NEGLECT IS MORE HARMFUL TO A BABY THAN ABUSE.
- (romanian orphans – scans showed almost no orbitofrontal cortex)

'A child's mind needs a mind that can keep
him/her in mind'



- FUTURE EMOTIONS AND BEHAVIOUR ARE WRITTEN INTO THE NEURONAL STRUCTURE OF THE BRAIN.
- It is unconscious, but played these patterns are played out again and again throughout our lives, becoming reinforced with each repetition.



HPA = hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis

The internal working model

(Bowlby)

- We don't just internalize a person, we internalize the **RELATIONSHIP** we have with them
- Loving Mother
- Lovable Baby
- Loving interactions
- All 'written' in the brain



Transference and countertransference

(Freud, others)

- Unconscious expectations of others
- Shapes relationships to others
- Countertransference...



Patterns of human attachment

- Critical period for attachment: 6 months-3 years
- Attachment patterns:
 - Secure 60-70%
 - Insecure Ambivalent 10%
 - Insecure Avoidant 20%
 - Disorganised 10%
 - Tend to continue as adults... emerge when stressed

Secure attachment: helpful therapist perceived as helpful



Anxious avoidant attachment:

Imagine a scenario: a first-time mother is very anxious:
'must do everything right for baby!'

- Baby screams for 12 hours
- Mother gets frantic trying to stop baby crying, feels a total failure
- Mother's brain flooded with stress, cannot calm baby....
- Baby flooded with stress, can't calm...
- Baby gets message (unconsciously) that he is 'too much' for his mother



Photo Courtesy of Stephen Rainer

Patient does exactly what she imagines therapist would want...is a 'good patient'



The abused child: parent cannot keep the baby in mind, and actively harms the baby

Internal working model

- ABUSIVE/hateful parent
- ABUSED/hated child
- ABUSIVE, warped relationship

- Try to care for mother so she'll be less abusive: become a parent to own mother?

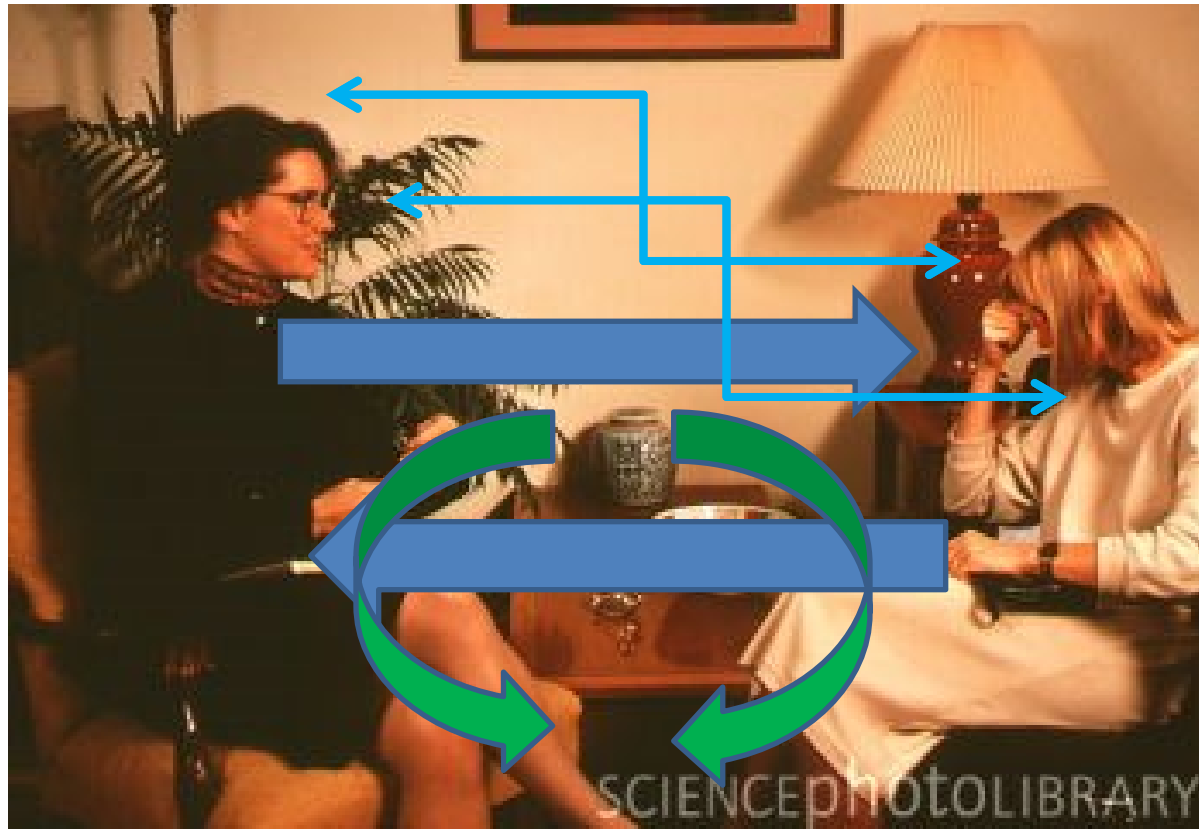
engage in abusive behaviour as the only way to get love?



Abusive parent...



How psychotherapy works in practice



How to handle this complexity?
Structure, 'rules', 'observing eye'

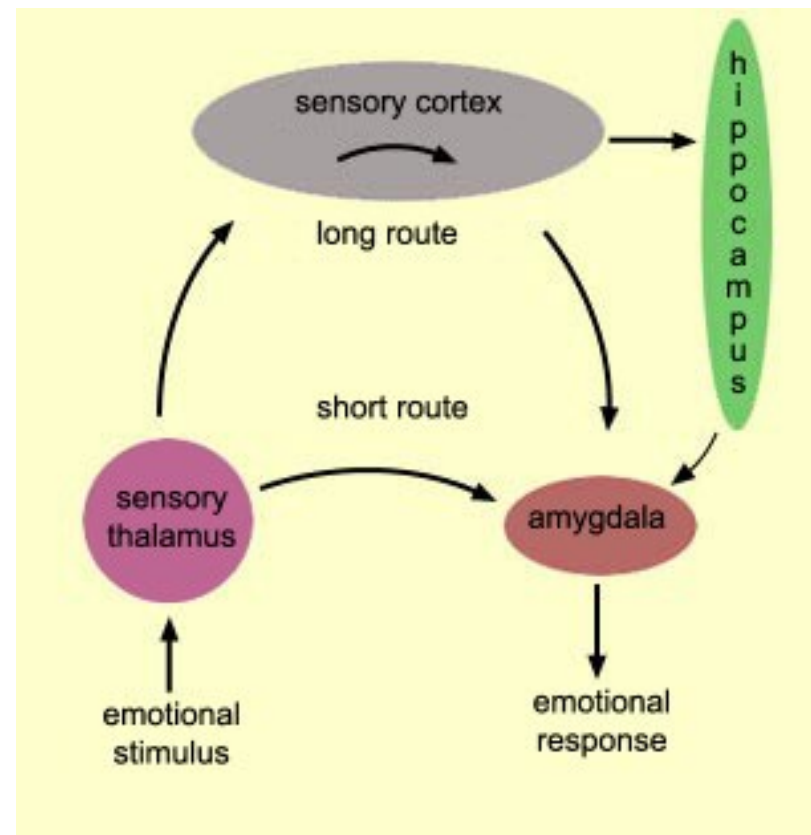


Some 'rules' of therapy

- Maintain boundaries: 'how am I being 'pulled' to alter the boundaries?'
- Maintain a degree of silence: allows transference to develop
- Therapeutic 'abstinence': Try to think before speaking/acting: 'what am I being pulled to feel/do here? What does that tell me about this person?'

The work of therapy

- Bring things that are unconscious into consciousness
- Alter unhelpful unconscious patterns
- Help patients to build a coherent 'narrative' of their lives
- Help patients 'to love and to work' (Freud's definition of mental health)



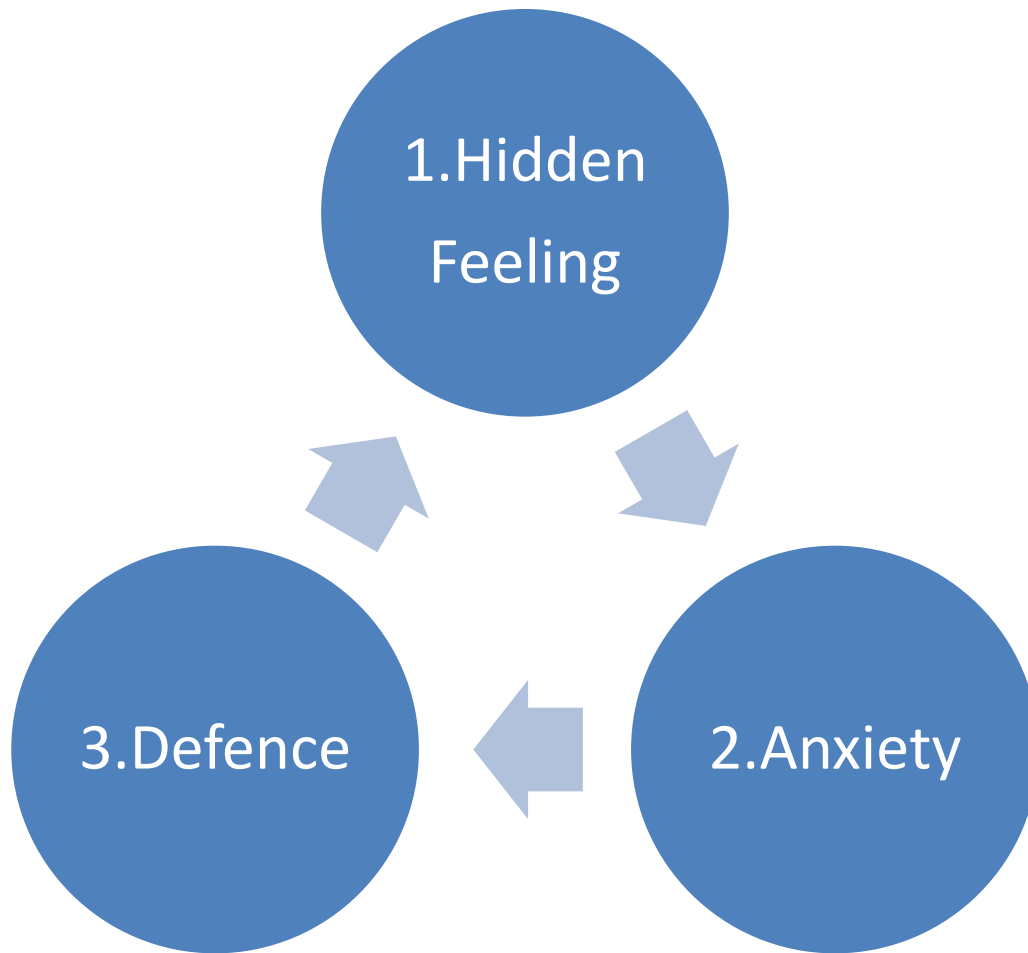
Key messages

- A lot of our brain processing occurs out of our awareness, but has a large effect on how we act
- Our brains are very good at deciding things for us, which we later rationalise (like driving automatically)
- Under stress, we may revert to well-worn defensive behavioural patterns; some of these may be unhelpful
- Under stress, our ability to be flexible (and to think) diminishes

Defence Mechanisms...

- Universal
- Mostly unconscious
- Intended to help us (defence)
- Can be pathological, especially if used inflexibly





Anger?



-She'll reject me
if I show my anger
-She cannot bear
me to have
feelings

Be a 'good girl'

Problem with never allowing your self to feel anger...

- End up passive
- Can't defend self, even when you should (victim)
- End up passive-aggressive
- There are some things in life that you should be angry about
- You never discover a part of yourself
- It's quite difficult to argue in a healthy way with someone who refuses to acknowledge anger....

Defences can be....

- 'Mature'
 - Humour, altruism, sublimation (rugby!)
- 'Neurotic'
 - Repression, reaction formation, projection...
- 'Primitive'
 - Primitive denial, Splitting, Idealization/Denigration, Projective identification, Dissociation...

Humour (mature)



London, WWII

Rationalization (neurotic)



'I did NOT have sexual relations with that woman'

Splitting, Idealization/Denigration (primitive)

Das Problem: Die
Juden
Die Losung: Das
Deutsche Folk!!



Emotional abuse: making someone else take responsibility for the parts of yourself you can't deal with

Can be physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect.

Neglect is worst of all

Which is worse: physical or emotional?

Summary

- Defence mechanisms are universal
- Our brains can only handle a small amount of reality...
- But defence mechanisms, if used to excess, can undoubtedly make relationships tricky...

Summary

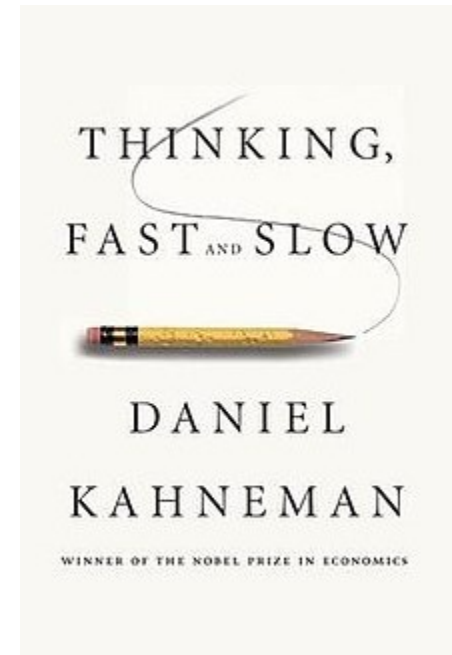
- Psychological theories of human behaviour can be very helpful, and can help people in distress
- Understanding primitive defences and states of mind most useful to those working in the NHS
- But the person is not everything; often the most helpful things you can do is change your environment
- Knowing about human cognition helps too...

So far, we've talked mainly about emotional development and how it affects our behaviour...

- What about the way the brain works, quite apart from emotions?
- What about the environment and culture in which we live?

Thinking, fast and slow...

- 2 modes of thinking
- System 1 – quick, automatic, very prone to irrational bias and errors!!
- System 2 – slower, more logical, more rational



Winner of Nobel Prize

Sample errors in thinking

- **Diffusion of responsibility**
- The more people are aware of a problem, the more everybody else thinks someone else will do something about it

March 13, 1964 | New York Woman Killed While Witnesses Do Nothing

BY THE LEARNING NETWORK MARCH 13, 2012 4:01 AM

On March 13, 1964, a 28-year-old woman named Catherine “Kitty” Genovese was raped and killed in two separate late-night attacks near her home in Kew Gardens, Queens. Police found that at least 38 people had seen the attacks or heard Genovese scream, but no one intervened and just one woman called the police.

The story was barely reported until two weeks later, when Martin Gansberg covered it in vivid detail in [The New York Times](#): “For more than half an hour 38 respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks in Kew Gardens,” Gansberg wrote. “Twice their chatter and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted him and frightened him off. Each time he returned, sought her out, and stabbed her again. Not one person telephoned the police during the assault; one witness called after the woman was dead.”



The New York TimesThe photo of Catherine “Kitty” Genovese that appeared in the March 27, 1964, New York Times article about her death.

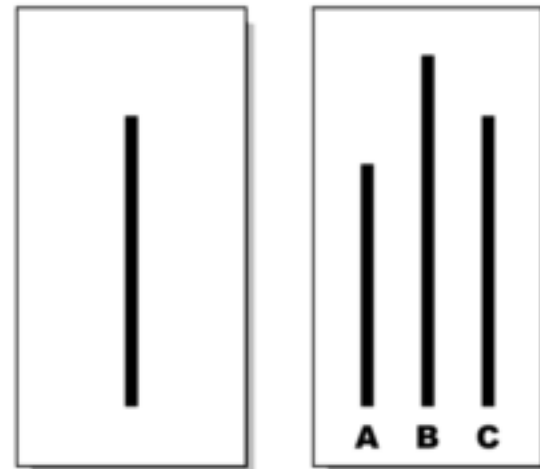
Historic Headlines

Learn about key events in history and their connections to today.

- [Go to related On This Day page »](#)
- [Go to related post from our partner, findingDulcinea »](#)
- [See all Historic Headlines »](#)

Sample errors in thinking

- **Pressure to conform**
(Asch)
- 75% of study participants gave at least 1 wrong answer
- Having a 'mate' greatly increased ability to give correct answers
- 3 or more opposing people is enough to encourage conformity



Which line is the same length as the single line?

Sample errors in thinking

- **Discounting of disconfirmatory evidence:**
- Tendency to stick with a diagnosis once it's been chosen, even when new/conflicting information comes in



I'm sticking with my original diagnosis: this lady's colour is normal...'

Sample errors in thinking

- **Inadvertently putting people into 'sets'**





- Putting people into 'sets'
- It can be done easily using language



In wake of Senate report, Dick Cheney says terrorists 'not covered by the Geneva Convention'

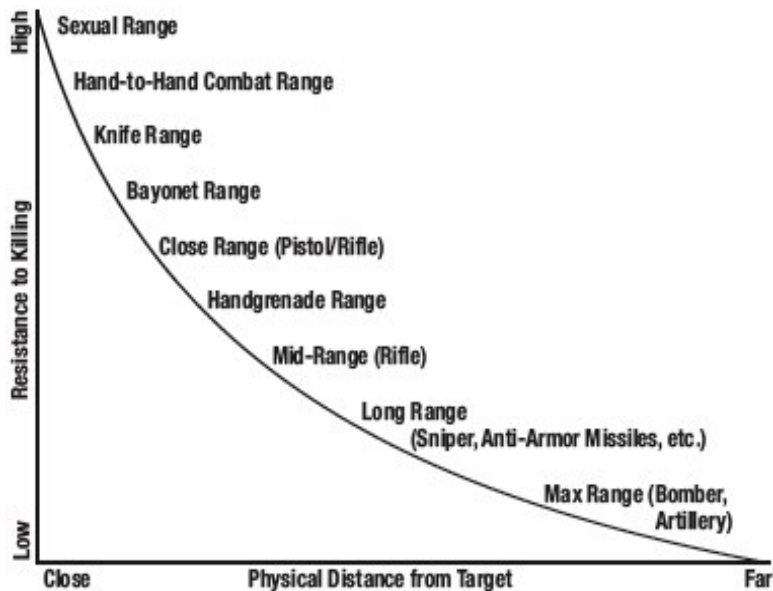
External factors in how we behave

- Milgram's experiments: the power of an authority figure
- Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment: The power of roles, the power of example



External factors in how we behave

- Grossman and the psychology of killing
- Learning from the example of others



Cultural factors: gender

- Study of transgender people post-operatively
 - An academic, Brenda, transitioned to become a man, Ben Barres (pictured). After giving a lecture he heard this...
- *"Ben gave a great seminar today—but then his work is so much better than his sister's."* (he has no sister)
- Women who become men notice
 - increased respect for their opinions
 - decreased interruptions
 - decreased challenges to authority
- Female vs. male performance at university and beyond...
- Effect of culturally defined roles?
 - Boys rewarded for confidence: increased levels of 'hazardous ignorance' (don't know that they don't know)
 - Girls rewarded for humility: too cautious in negatively marked exams; don't put themselves forward for promotion



A female orthopaedic surgeon wore a black suit to a research conference. How many times was she mistaken for a waitress?

- 0 times
- Once
- Twice
- Three times

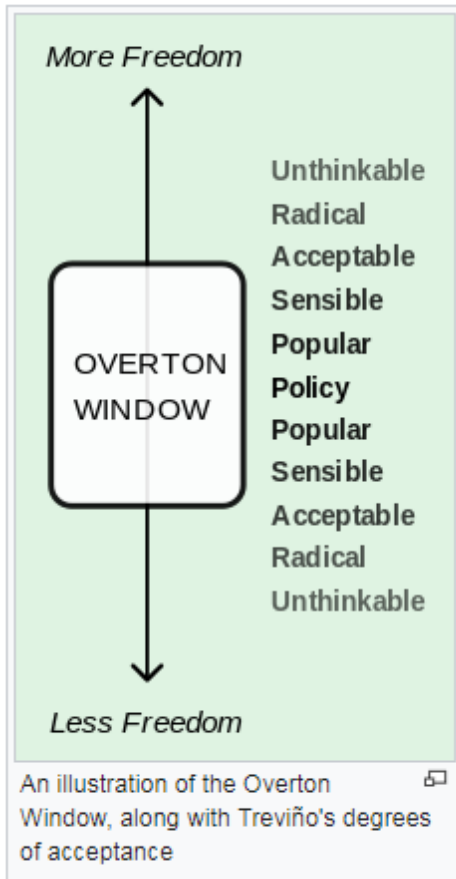
BMA

A woman at a surgical conference, they thought I was the waitress



Humans have a primeval response to first impressions. I was attending an orthopaedic conference as a surgical registrar in a crisp black suit, and three different people assumed I was a waitress on my one trip to the loo at dinner. I now only wear red, pink and green suits/dresses, and I save that black one for the coroner's court.

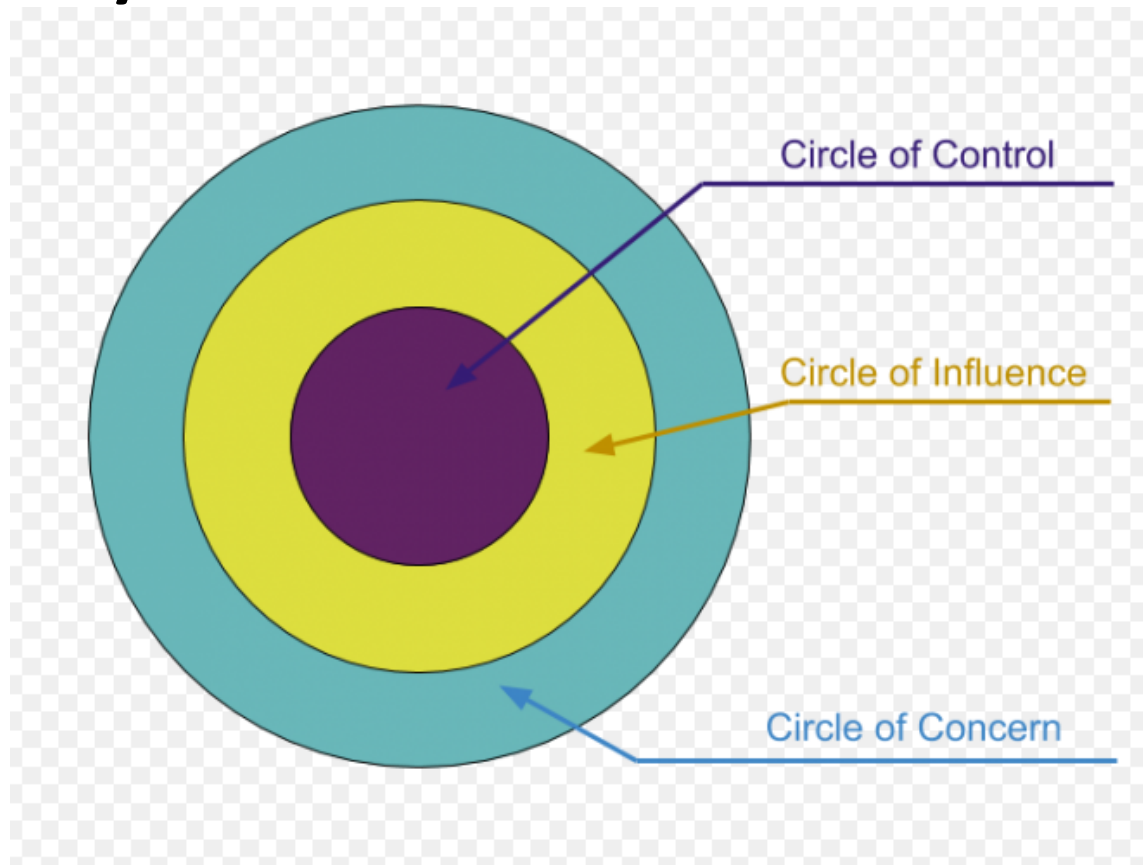
The Overton window determines what can become part of normal political discourse



How Trump Has Moved
The Overton Window To
The Extreme Right

The Young Turks
YouTube - 13 Oct 2017

Motivation for action: forget about the circle of concern and enlarge your circle of influence



Role modelling

- Donald Rumsfeld:
- Secretary of defense, USA



- In a memo...detailing how ...interrogators would induce stress in prisoners by forcing them to remain standing in one position... Rumsfeld scrawled a handwritten note in the margin reading: "I stand for 8–10 hours a day. Why is standing [by prisoners] limited to four hours?"

Is this personality or environment?



And finally:

How to be psychologically healthy?

- Don't have too many life events (avoid stress), especially early in life
- Have nice people around you
- Be interdependent on (nice) people
- Take responsibility for your own feelings when you can
- Say sorry when you get it wrong
- Forgive yourself and others
- We are all (most likely) not as horrible as we think we are...
- ...Nor as nice...

Topics for discussion

- 1. Should 'managing relationships' be part of the school curriculum? What would be the potential risks and benefits for children and society?
- 2. Is it helpful to label people as having a personality disorder? What are the potential risks and benefits?
- 3. Do you think that psychological problems are an individual or societal problem? Where does responsibility lie?
- 4. Most child abuse happens in the home, in the family. Do you think the current media reporting of child/sexual abuse amongst celebrities is psychologically helpful or unhelpful (or both)? Are there any defence mechanisms potentially in play?
- 5. Is our focus on individuality harming society? What are the risks and benefits?
- 6. A child is growing up in an abusive, chaotic family. Is s/he better off remaining with the family, or being taken into a care home? Which would you rather?

Project: The 2018 UN climate report states that the world has just 12 years to avoid catastrophic climate change

- Group 1:
 - You are climate change deniers and oil producers
 - What psychological tricks will you use to delay and frustrate action on climate change?
 - Who will be most susceptible to your message?
- Group 2:
 - You are members of Greenpeace
 - What tactics will you employ to promote action in the population?
 - Who will be most susceptible to your message?