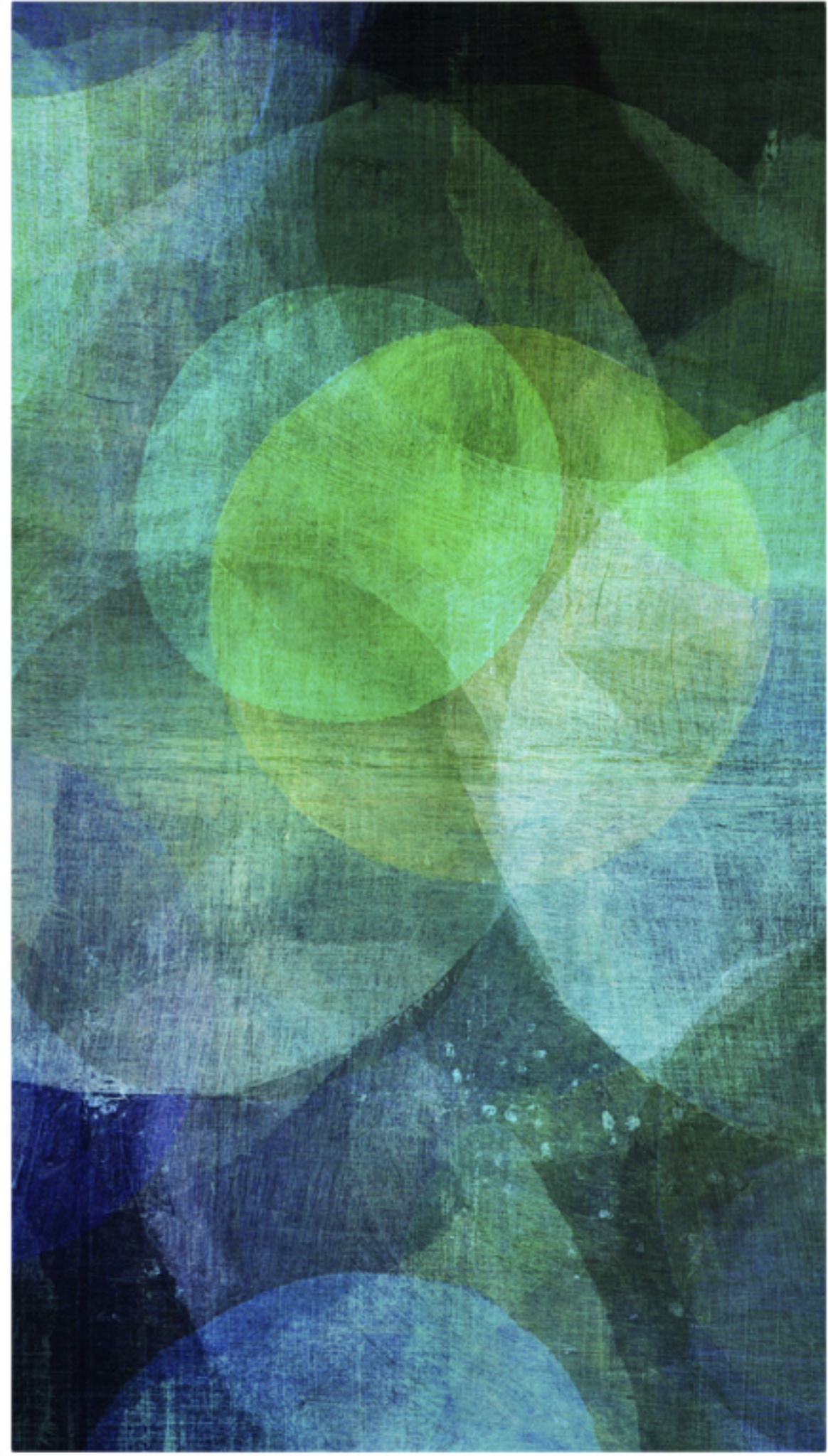


**ANXIETY,
POOP(!),
BRAIN
SCIENCE &
SCRIPTURE**

*OR, Anxiety, Peace & Happiness:
Beyond Life Hacks to Life Without Lack*





ANXIETY: THE POOP ON IT

#LetThatGo





NEGATIVE SELF-TALK POOP

- ▶ from Poo-Pourri's senior PR director:
It was going to be a “mind-blowing, transformative, fully immersive 360° experience that pushes out the bad s**t, makes room for the good s**t, and leaves you feeling like the s**t.”
- ▶ quoted on Dallas Innovates:
<https://dallasinnovates.com/poo-pourri-just-put-a-very-on-brand-poop-installation-in-klyde-warren-park/>

WHAT WE SAY TO OURSELVES MATTERS. IS AWARENESS ENOUGH?

• •



Me comforting my best friends



@myjesusjam

You are a child of God
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!



ANXIETY & STRESS

Students Around UTD, the US and the World



UTD—FOLLOWS NATIONAL TREND: ANXIETY/DEPRESSION #1

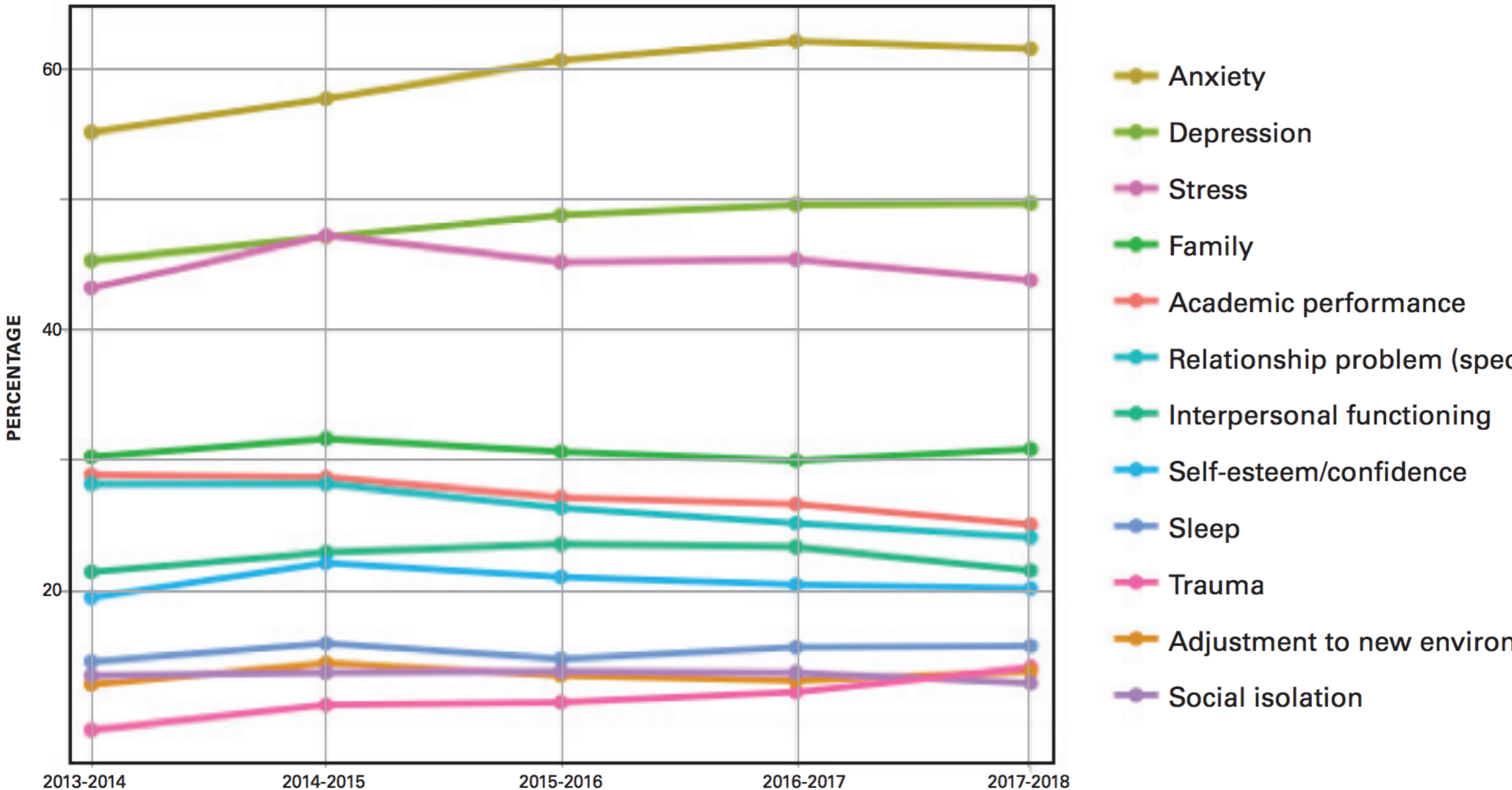
- ▶ **Over 70%** students presenting to the Student Counseling Center at UTD complain of **anxiety & depression**

“The symptoms around these can vary, however they are often exacerbated by stress of school, feelings of loneliness, relationship/familial issues, identity exploration, or stress overall with the pressures of college and this stage of life.”

- Jenna Temkin, PsyD, Clinical Director at UT Dallas' Student Counseling Center

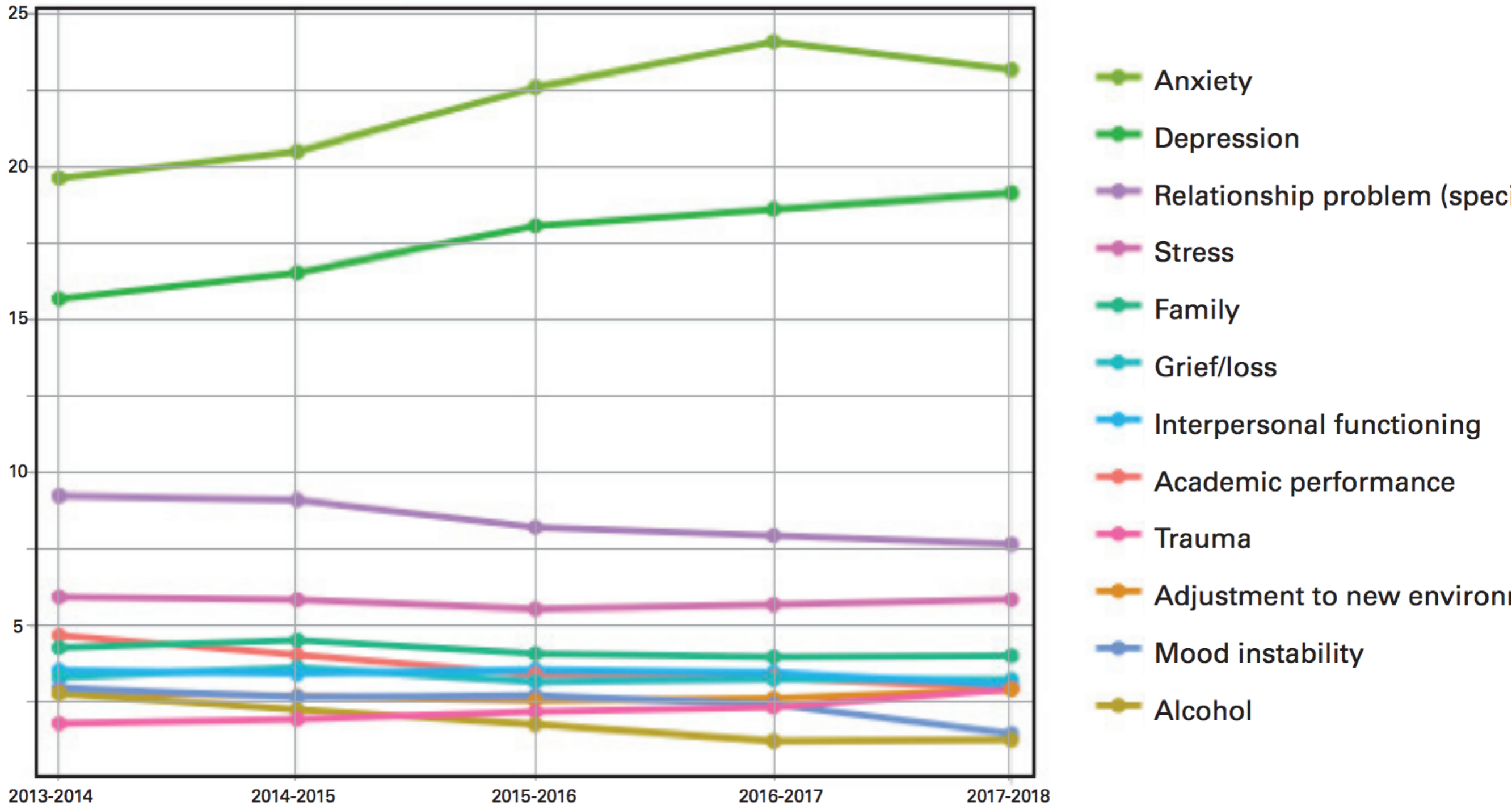
NATIONWIDE: ECHOES TREND—ANXIETY TOP PROBLEM

CLICC Trends (Check All That Apply): Percentage of Clients with Each Concern from 2013 to 2018

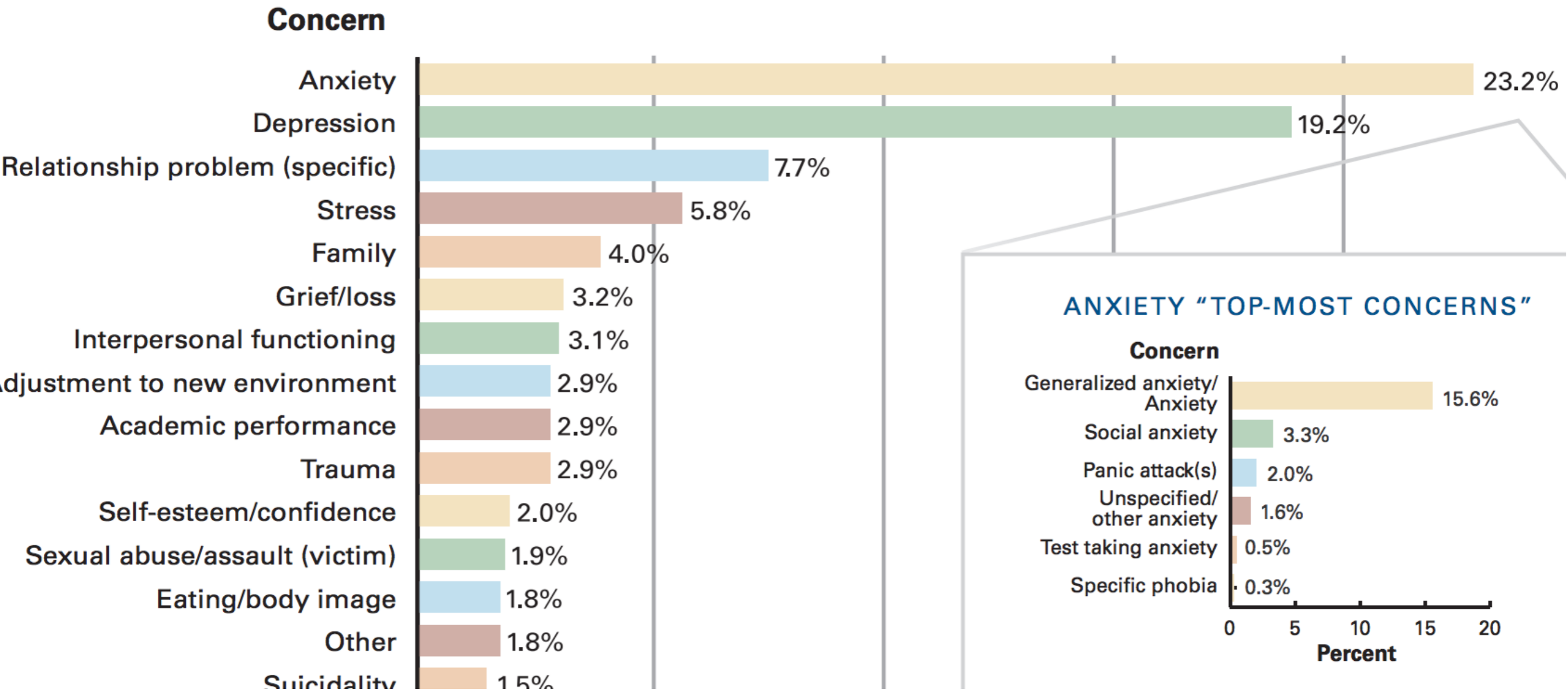


NATIONWIDE: ECHOES TREND—ANXIETY TOP PROBLEM

CLICC Trends (Top Concern): Percentage of Clients with Each Concern from 2013 to 2018



NATIONWIDE: ECHOES TREND—ANXIETY TOP PROBLEM



AFRICAN YOUNG PEOPLE ADVOCATE TO END SUICIDE, STIGMA

- ▶ Marching in streets of Nigeria “to battle ignorance and stigma” surrounding mental health issue
 - ▶ **To increase “not mental health awareness” but rather “mental health literacy”** —Victor Ugo, founder
 - ▶ Ugo: med student in university
 - ▶ major depressive disorder: lost interest in everything
 - ▶ Friends and professors intervened
 - ▶ began therapy, recovery
- “If I could go through this, then what about everyone else who didn’t have the same access or friends that I had?”



SMARTPHONES, DUMB USERS

- ▶ U Texas study:
Mere availability of smartphone caused diminished intellectual performance, attentiveness

“It’s not that participants were distracted because they were getting notifications on their phones,” said [lead researcher].
“The mere presence of their smartphone was enough to reduce their cognitive capacity.”

“Ding” = stress!

FOMO—What if they text or post?



WHERE'S THE HOPE?

Brain Science & Scripture Lining Up on Solutions



“

“I felt different, messed up, and alone”

*-Dr. J.P. Moreland, Distinguished Prof. of
Philosophy, Talbot School of Theology, author
Finding Quiet, My Story of Overcoming Anxiety
and the Practices That Brought About Peace*

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE PROMISES PERMANENT RELIEF

- ▶ “The name of the **LORD** is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe.” (Proverbs 18: 10)
- ▶ “**Don’t worry about anything**, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the **peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**” (Philippians 4: 6-7, CSB)
- ▶ “I am leaving you with a **gift—peace of mind and heart**. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So **don’t be troubled or afraid.**” (Jesus speaking, John 14: 27)

“

“Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

-Jesus of Nazareth

“Science shows the beauty of what happens when we align with God. Science is a way God shows us that we are part of him, and when we follow his laws we reap the benefit”

*-Dr. Caroline Leaf, Audiologist, Comm. Pathologist, Cognitive Researcher, author
Switch on Your Brain*

“As an individual, you are capable of making mental and emotional change in your life. Through your thinking, you can actively recreate thoughts and, therefore, knowledge in your mind”

-Dr. Caroline Leaf

“

On neurogenesis / neuroplasticity:
“What a remarkable and hopeful
portrait of the endless adaptivity of
the human brain God has given us”

-Dr. Caroline Leaf

Will you Dare?
Wake Up Your
Brain To The Gift
Of Change



COGNITIVE RESEARCH

Science Showing We Control Our Own Mental Health

“

“Each situation in our lives is an occasion for either positive formation or negative deformation”

-J. P. Moreland

“

“Our life is what our thoughts make it”

*-Marcus Aurelius, Stoic Philosopher,
Roman Emperor*

FROM FIXED BRAIN STATE TO MALLEABLE MIND & BRAIN

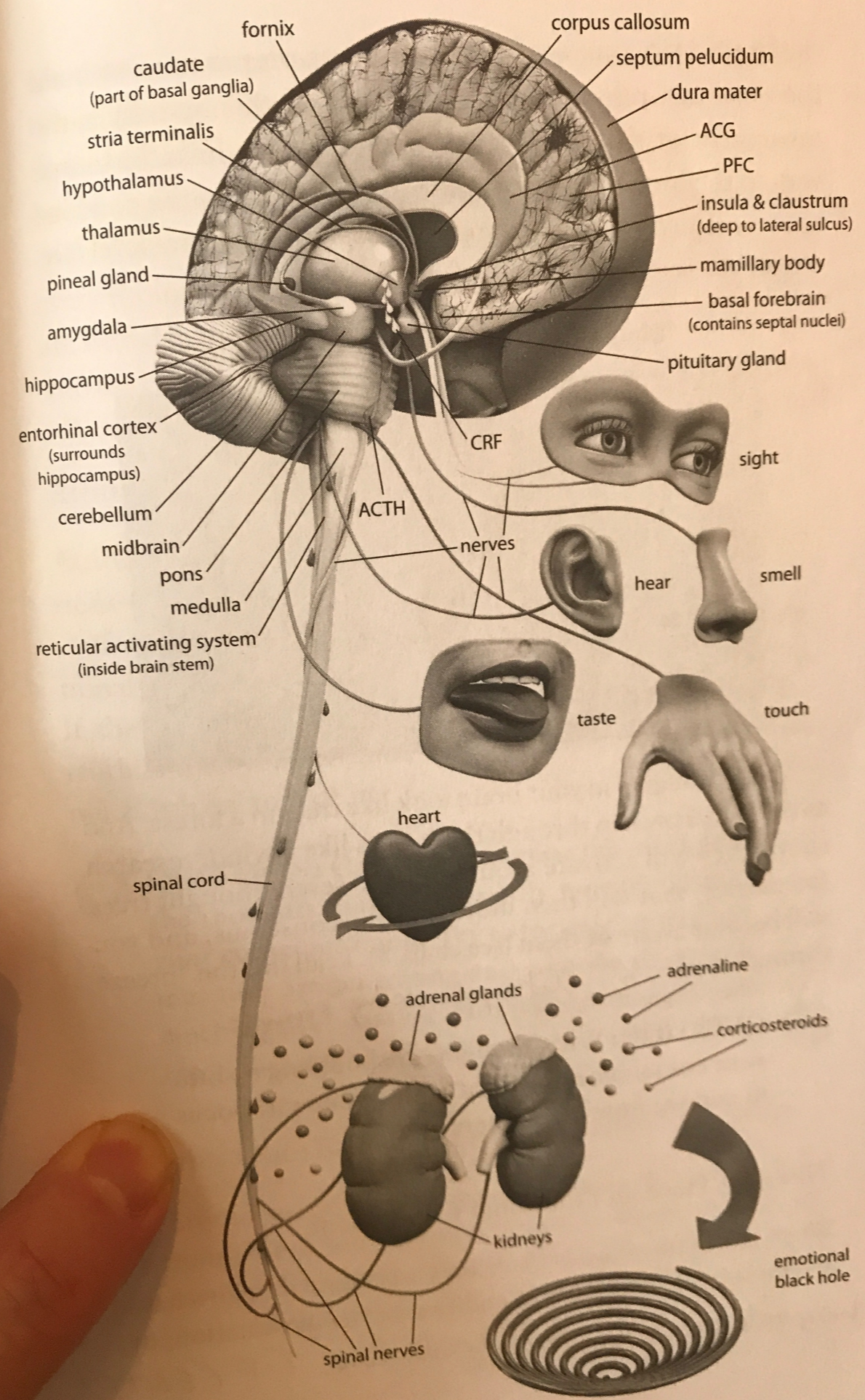
- ▶ Until a few decades ago scientific consensus about brain:
 - ▶ Fixed, hardwired machine
 - ▶ Brain damage untreatable, irreversible, hopeless condition
 - ▶ PTSD, stroke, cardio event, traumatic brain injury, aging
 - ▶ **Protocol used to be: compensation**
- ▶ **Since then huge advances in restoring capacity—not settling**
 - ▶ Almost as if self-healing built into our bodies (and souls)
 - ▶ Dr. Leaf’s patients did awesome things when mind set on it
 - ▶ Follows Scripture directly: “be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2)

““

“From the moment God created us with free will, we entered into a realm of creative responsibility for our own choices”

-Dr. Caroline Leaf

Inside the Brain



NEUROPLASTICITY: SUCCESS STORIES

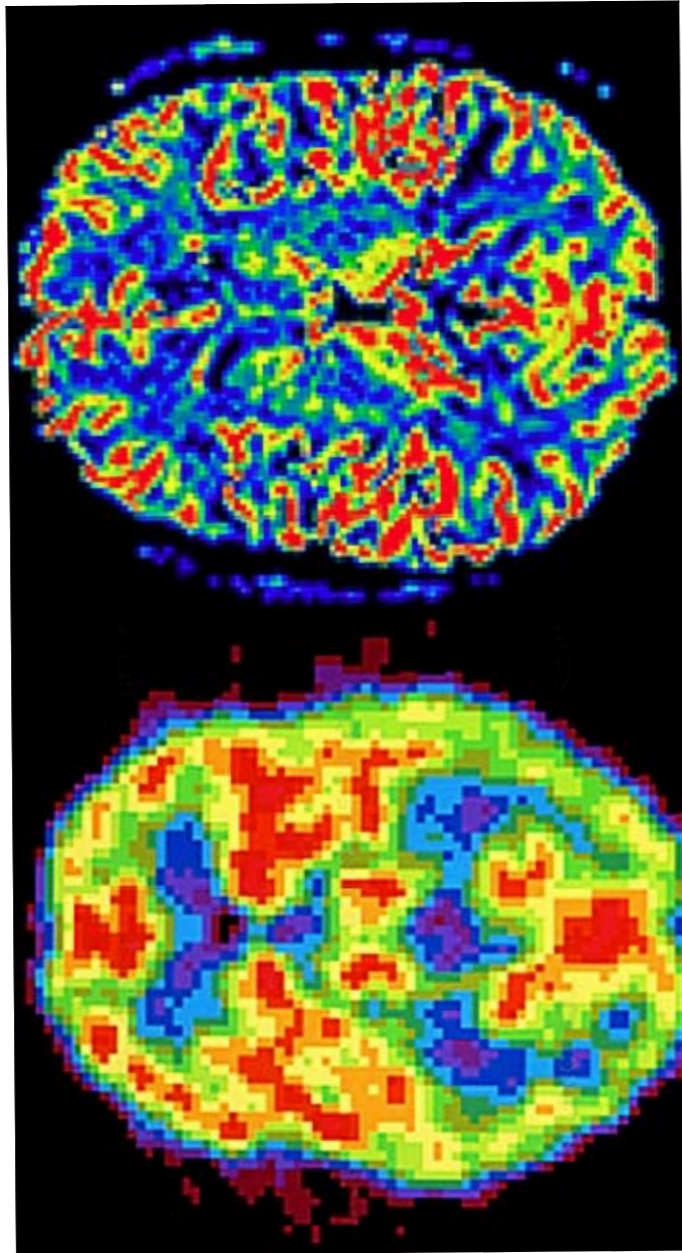
- ▶ **Neuroplasticity:** capacity of the brain to be changed by its owner intentionally using the mind for restructuring
- ▶ **Autistic kids** cope in social and academic environments
- ▶ **Oldsters** in their 80s able to change careers, earn degrees
- ▶ **“Vegetables”**—accident victims written off by neurologists retrain brains, earn post-secondary degrees
- ▶ **Learning disabled** students master learning, great grades
- ▶ * **“Suicidal** and emotionally traumatized minds set free
- ▶ **Entire schools** improved grades across core subjects

“

“The brain is always learning how to learn, always changing”

-Dr. Caroline Leaf

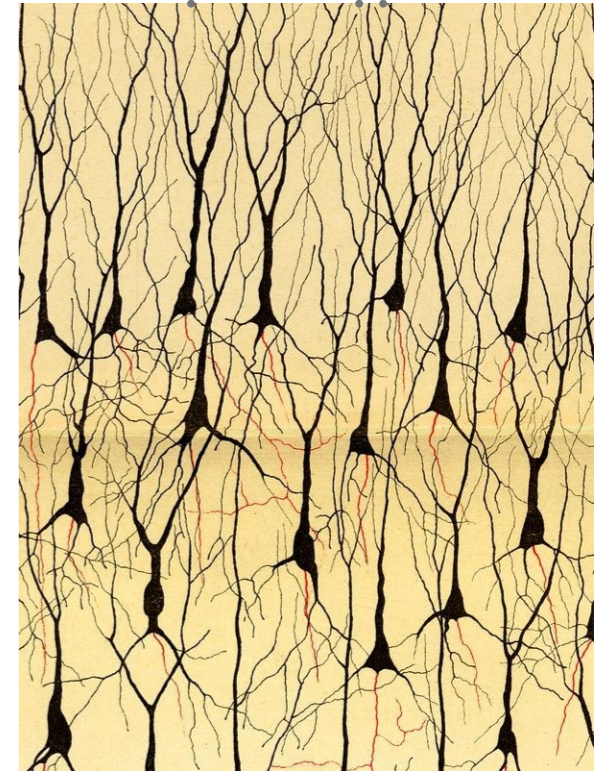
SCIENCE IS NEVER SETTLED



- ▶ Brain-imaging techniques
- ▶ Behavioral changes
- ▶ Measure neuronal activity
- ▶ Predict the “seeming elusiveness of mind’s main functions—thinking and choosing”—via quantum mechanics

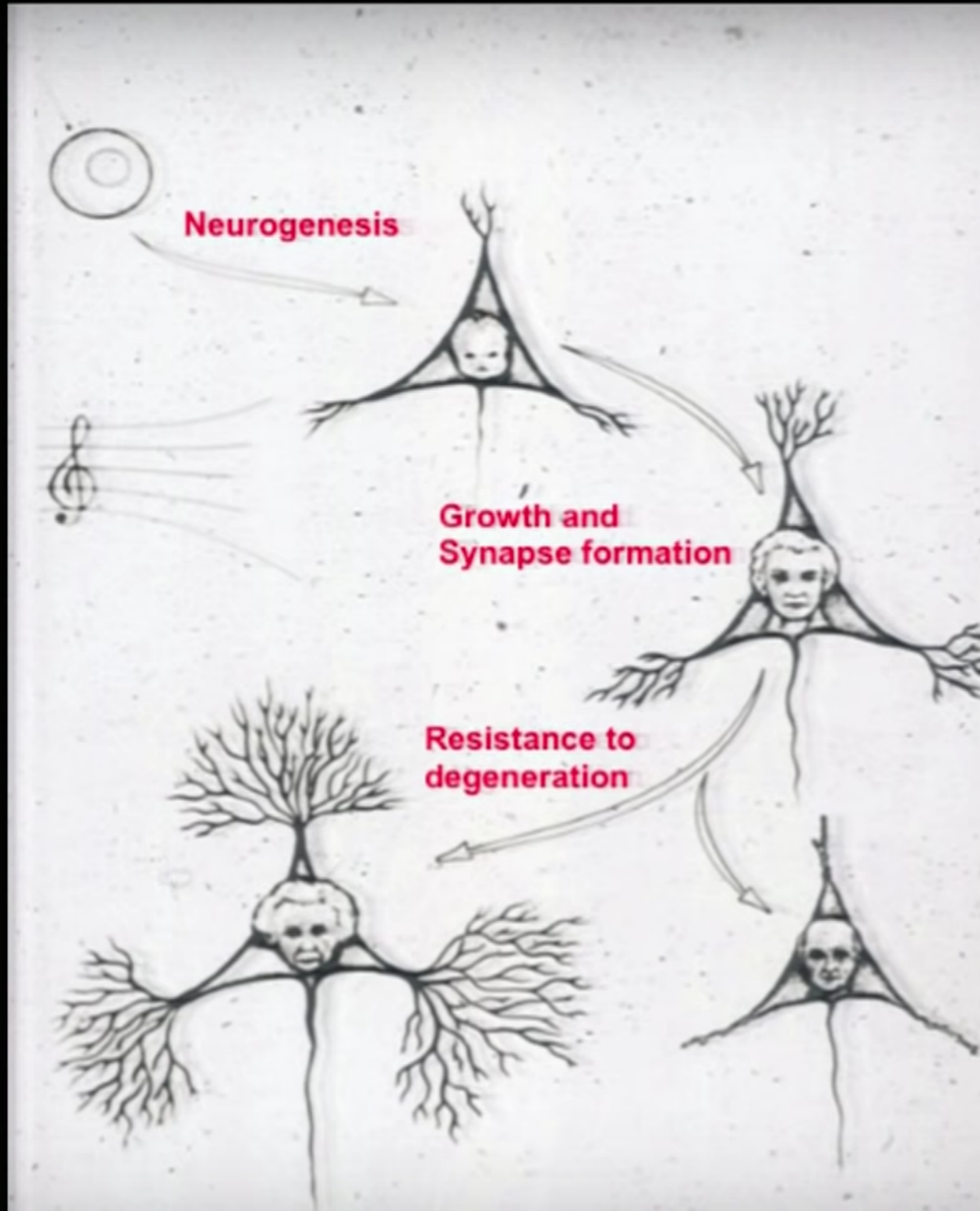
REFORESTING OUR MINDS: “THE BREEZE THROUGH THE TREES”

- ▶ Picture of actual thoughts in a mind
- ▶ Signals from outside pass through thalamus, insula, basal ganglia—circuits and columns
- ▶ They “flavor, enrich, and distribute the info all along the way”
- ▶ Circuits & columns deep in the brain (basal ganglia) prepare the brain—state of expectation—to build the new information
- ▶ Movement of thoughts (i.e., existing memories), linked to incoming info somehow and
- ▶ go from nonconscious (metacognitive) to conscious level
- ▶ New incoming info activates 4-7 “trees”. Now aware of thoughts!

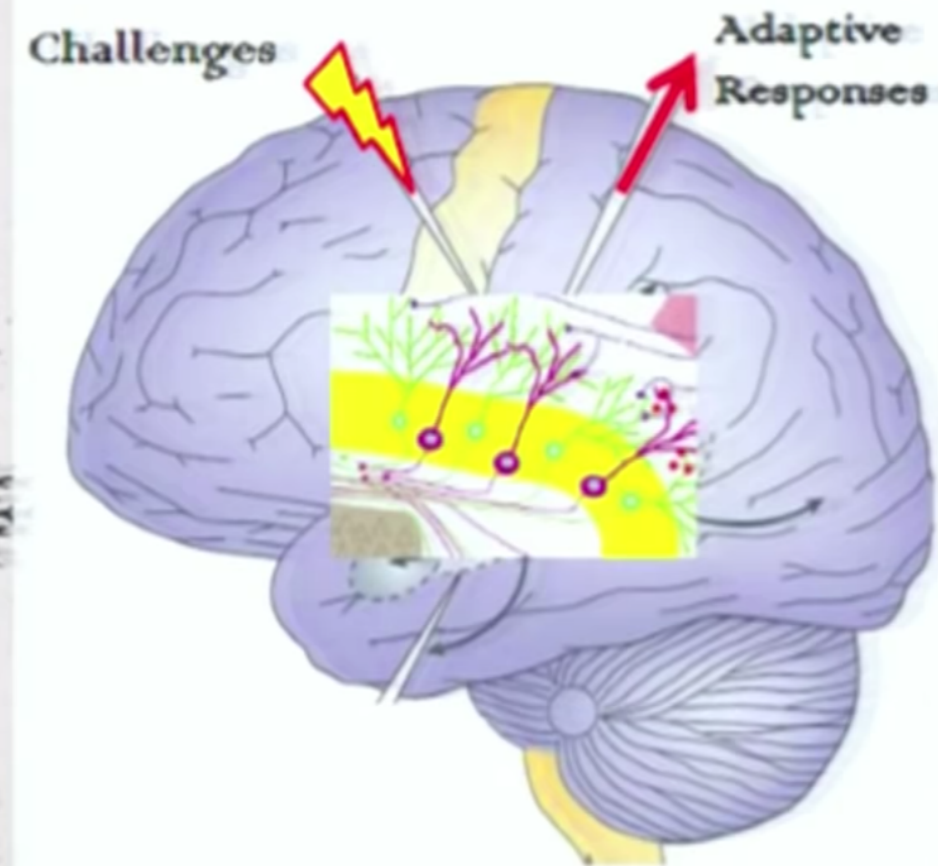


BIBLICAL PRACTICE OF FASTING BEING AFFIRMED

Why fasting bolsters brain power: Mark Mattson at TEDxJohnsHopkinsUniversity



Why Does Fasting Bolster Brainpower?





MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION

.. ..

Not the Purview & Practice of Eastern Religion Only

MINDFULNESS & MEDITATION: A CHRISTIAN VIEW

- ▶ Instant defense raised for many Christians—Moreland makes compelling case for biblically based meditation
- ▶ Non-believers benefit from meditation as well but cannot—biblically speaking—enter into fullness of peace & wisdom
- ▶ Mindful Meditation:
 - ▶ not like taking a pill
 - ▶ not a quick fix
 - ▶ not for dulling senses or to rid self of desire
- ▶ Biblical kind: saturated with God's Word, prayerful, submitted, awaiting God's presence (experience or none)

MINDFULNESS MEANS MANAGING OUR MINDS

- ▶ Self-control over self-talk:
 - ▶ mentor your own mind to improve your brain
 - ▶ settle your soul
 - ▶ habituate your heart toward health, and
 - ▶ set free your spirit to respond to the spiritual
- ▶ Center for Healthy Minds, Univ. Wisconsin-Madison:
 1. “you can train your brain to change
 2. that change is measurable
 3. new ways of thinking can change it for the better”

BRAIN CHANGES WHILE “ON MEDITATION”

- ▶ Grey Matter/Cortical Thickness increases in:
 - ▶ **Anterior Cingulate Cortex**—self-regulatory processes like monitoring attention conflicts, flexible cognition
 - ▶ **Prefrontal Cortex**—executive functioning: planning, problem solving, emotional regulation (school!)
 - ▶ **Hippocampus**—oversees learning and memory
Very susceptible to stress, depression, PTSD
 - ▶ **Decreased Amygdala Size**: “fight or flight” center: fearful and anxious emotions live here.
Less fear after mindfulness practices

BIBLICAL CASE FOR CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

- ▶ “Not in there” (Bible) objection—cuts off application of more “mystical” passages (“abide in Me, and my Words abide”)
- ▶ Exercises found throughout Christian history
- ▶ Scripture saturated, prayerful practice done rightly
- ▶ Moreland makes compelling case in *Finding Quiet*



COGNITIVE & CARDIO RESEARCH

.. ..
Brain, Mind, Soul, Heart—Huh?



BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE SOUL / ROLE OF PARTS

- ▶ Soul is the person (taken for granted in this talk)—
 - ▶ Die—person moves on, inanimate body-shell stays behind
 - ▶ Cut off leg, no less the person you were
- ▶ Two faculties of the soul:
 1. Intellectual cognition (reasoning role)—brain
 2. Intuitive perception (intuition)—heart
- ▶ Work together to form:
 - ▶ thoughts
 - ▶ emotions
 - ▶ moods
 - ▶ attitudes

THE HEART ORGAN IN SCIENCE & THE BIBLE

- ▶ Some solutions for anxiety won't work by direct effort
- ▶ Inaccessible or stubborn **obsessive thoughts** need more
- ▶ *HeartMath* founder Doc Childre, colleague Deborah Rozman:
 - ▶ Stress is a malady of modern times
 - ▶ 75-90% visits to primary care docs stress-related
 - ▶ Harvard study: “people who live in a state of high anxiety” 4.5 times more likely to “suffer cardiac death than non anxious individuals”
 - ▶ International investigation: people unable to manage stress—40% higher death rate than non stressed individuals

THE HEART ORGAN IN SCIENCE & THE BIBLE (CONT'D)

- ▶ Stress as a mental, emotional, then physical **default** affects perceptions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, reactions

“The holistic applicability of *HeartMath* tools is just what a Christian would expect, given the centrality of the heart in Scripture.” —Moreland
Two notions of the heart there:

1. As **center of** emotional, intellectual, volitional (will), spiritual and moral **faculties**. Deepest, most hidden part
2. **Spiritual and soulish** aspect: intuitive perception, way of sensing right & wrong (conscience?), spiritual perception, emotional awareness of others (“emotional IQ”)

“I pray the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (Eph. 1:18)

Spiritual disciplines focus on awareness, centering (Rom. 6: 12-13,19)

THE “HEART-BRAIN”

- ▶ Childre & Rozman’s research:
- ▶ the heart brain —> head brain connection = more signals from heart than head sends back
- ▶ Intuitive info received first by the heart, sent then to brain
- ▶ The body, primarily the heart, exhibits intuitive emotional perception not always registered in our heads



HEART VS. BRAIN: THE STRONGER, MORE EMOTIONAL SIBLING

- ▶ Two major aspects of the heart regarding Anxiety:
- ▶ **Heart Rhythms: critical connection** to emotional states
 - ▶ Anxiety —> jagged, disordered heart rhythms
 - ▶ Goal: coherent waveforms to replace anxiety with positive emotions (love, care, safety, so on)
- ▶ **Electromagnetic Field:** measured 10 feet around a person. We send and receive “heart signals” at a distance
- ▶ *Stronger than brain:* 40-60X amplitude, 5,000X stronger!
- ▶ Varying stress levels trigger positive / negative messages to the brain

IMPLICATIONS OF THE “HEART–BRAIN”

- ▶ Heart has its own nervous system—it really can “know”
- ▶ Intuition:
just as valid as cognitive, logical thought as a way of knowing
- ▶ Presented to God as part of our bodily humanity, the heart can be an instrument of well-being
 - ▶ “Be anxious for nothing” & “Fear not” not empty words
- ▶ Since Scripture “got here first”, the Bible as a knowledge tradition (many don't believe that—even Jews & Christians) becomes even more plausible.
Skepticism need not be a default.



PRESSURE TO FIGURE LIFE OUT

.. ..

Depends on Assumptions, Not Just Conscious Thoughts



““

“Quantum physics, and neuroscience for that matter, do not provide ultimate answers; they are simply stepping stones in the development of our understanding of our Almighty God, another way of admiring God ...

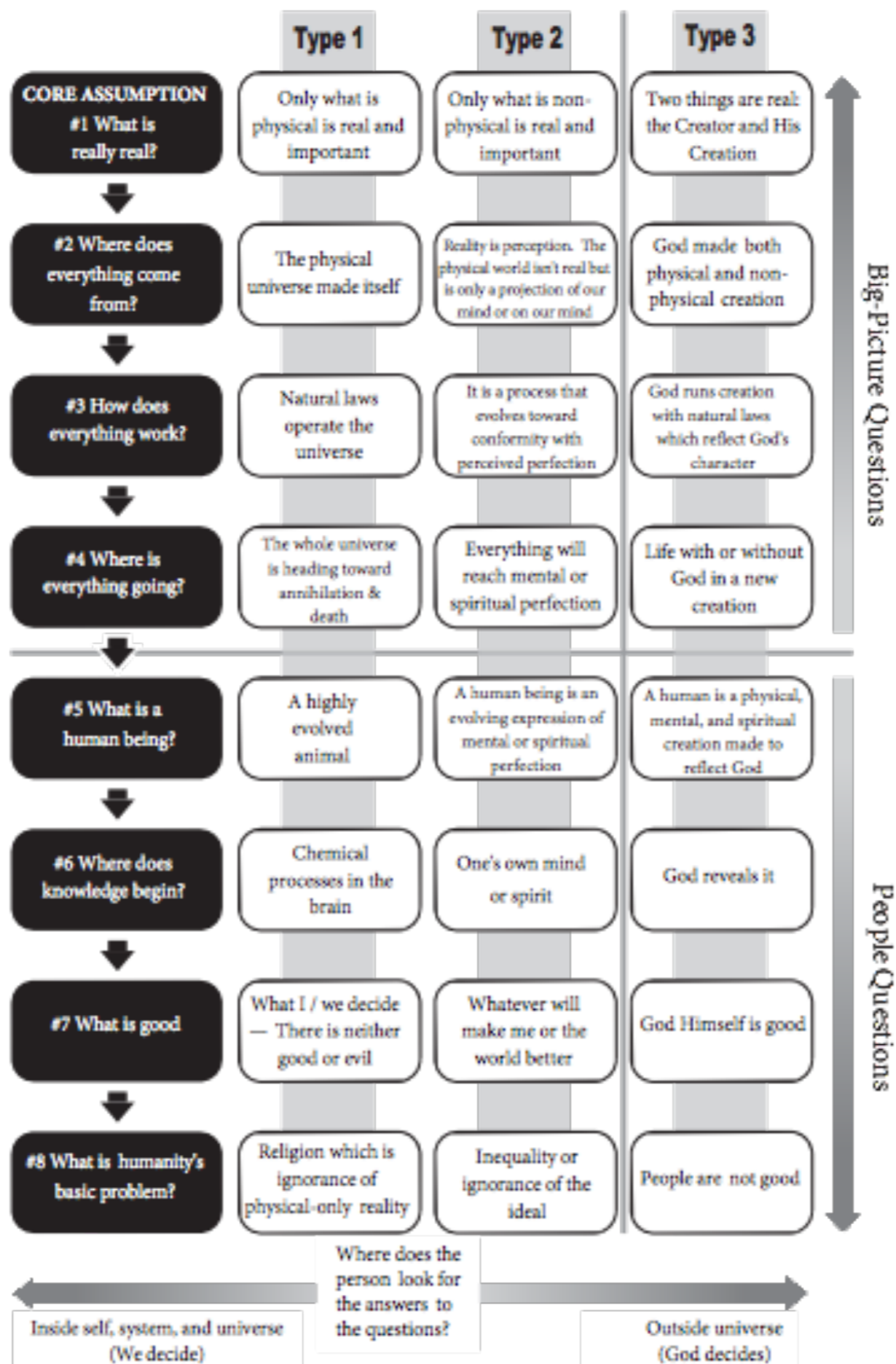
“ There are pervasive, subtle, almost subconscious patterns of ideas in our culture that imply there is no meaning to life. All that is left is addiction to happiness, the instant satisfaction of desire, and a literal plague of deep anxiety that is affecting tens of millions of Americans. As it turns out, our beliefs are the rails on which our lives (including most of our anxiety) run. We almost always live up to—or down to—our actual beliefs...

- J. P. Moreland

“...Our worldview—the set of things we actually believe about God, reality, meaning, value, what counts as success, what constitutes a good person and whether or not we are one, what we can and cannot know, and other significant topics—is the most important factor about our life. It’s more important than having a flat stomach, being healthy, or fulfilling the American Dream.”

-J.P. Moreland

Critical Assumptions Test





LIFE WITHOUT LACK

.. ..
Beyond Temporary Life Hacks



HAPPINESS RATIOS—WHAT HELPS DETERMINE IT?

- ▶ Psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, it's determined by:
 - ▶ 50% inherited biological set points (born happy or not)
 - ▶ 10% life circumstances
 - ▶ 40% intentional free choices (see a pattern here?)

“You have it in your power to begin a regimen of choices, assuming you would choose the right things and form a habit of this, that can substantially improve your happiness and decrease or get rid of anxiety There really is hope.”

—Moreland

PURSUING HAPPINESS: THE “INALIENABLE RIGHT”

- ▶ **Happiness:** It’s what we’re after, right?
- ▶ **God OK with that:** “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desired fulfilled is a tree of life” —Proverbs 13:12
- ▶ **Happiness Defined:** Ancient views had at a heartier view than just “to have a good time”:
 - ▶ **Epicureanism:** Pleasure, moreso friendship, tranquility
 - ▶ **Stoicism:** Goal of life: human flourishing. Emphasized virtue and fortitude in uncontrollable situations
 - ▶ **Neo-Platonism:** everything emanates from “the One”. To realize our oneness with One = happiness

AUGUSTINIAN VIEW OF HAPPINESS—A CHRISTIAN TAKE

- ▶ Only God can make us happy—self-driven effort doomed to fail
- ▶ Ellen Charry: Augustine defined “happiness [as] knowing, loving, and enjoying God securely”
- ▶ Realized fulfilled desires at root of happiness—
- ▶ *What we all really want is the best there is—forever! If dead, can't last*
- ▶ Since God is the greatest good, what all search for—whether aware of it or not—is God
- ▶ That is, the free gift Jesus Christ: eternal communion with Love, goodness Himself
 - ▶ “Taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8) to get:
 - ▶ Joy in His presence, “eternal pleasures” as His right hand (Ps. 16:11)

WAIT, WHAT ABOUT NON-BELIEVERS, OTHER RELIGIONS?

- ▶ Non-Christian researchers & thinkers see benefits of spirituality:

“For some people, a lack of purpose and meaning in life can provide fertile ground for the development of panic attacks and phobias . . . Not only may spirituality provide life with greater meaning, but it can help overcome anxiety directly because it leads to qualities such as inner peace, serenity, faith, and unconditional love” —Edmund J. Bourne, *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*

- ▶ Buddhism, Hindu and New Age meditation and other practices. Benefits discussed already.
- ▶ Back to Augustine: What about the afterlife? Eternal happiness? Even lasting, lifelong “life without lack”? (Jn. 10:10, Ps. 23)

PSALM 23: PICTURE OF A “LIFE WITHOUT LACK”

Univ. of Southern Calif. Prof. of Philosophy, author of
Life Without Lack: Living in the Fullness of Psalm 23:

Three conditions required to experience the fullness of the wisdom,
power, and love of God:

1. faith
2. death to self
3. agape (unconditional) love

“Every day can be a grace-infused masterpiece” (!)

Psalm 23:

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...I will fear no evil...for
you are with me...surely goodness and mercy will follow me”

“Fear and worry are worthless—indeed, vain—emotions. If you are frightened or afraid, there is no use feeling guilty about it. What you need to do is fix your mind upon God and ask him to fill your mind with himself. And as your mind is transformed, your whole personality will be transformed, including your body and your feelings. The transformation of the self away from a life of fear and insufficiency takes place as we fix our mind upon God *as he truly is.*”

-Dallas Willard

TYING TOGETHER THE SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

- ▶ Thoughts: real, physical things. We are changing our own brain structure moment by moment—this very moment
- ▶ Hope—a choice to do this in a “positive and normal direction”
- ▶ Hebrews 11:1 = biblical definition of faith:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Faith = substance of hoped-for things, **evidence** of unseen yet real things.

- ▶ NOT a blind leap.
- ▶ Warranted belief. Tested conclusion. Settled thoughts

AURELIUS & THE BIBLE: WE ARE WHAT WE THINK

- ▶ Proverbs 23: 7 says:
“For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”—
 - ▶ deepest part of the mind (Moreland).
 - ▶ Could be translated:
“For as he thinks in the core of his mind, so is he”
- ▶ In a scandalous way (we don’t want to admit it), we really do decide on our life experience and eternity
- ▶ Note: context of Proverb a seemingly unrelated thing (don’t take favors from double-minded rich guy). Still, axiomatic

TYING TOGETHER THE SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

“Let the peace of Christ [the inner calm of one who walks daily with Him] be the controlling factor in your hearts [deciding and settling questions that arise]. To this peace indeed you were called as members in one body [of believers]. And be thankful [to God always].”

Col. 3:15, Amplified Bible

“PEACEFUL, EASY FEELING, I KNOW YOU WON’T LET ME DOWN”

- ▶ Habit of mindfulness works best with God as the focus
- ▶ “The **impact** that mindfulness exerts on our brain is **borne from routine**: a slow, steady, and consistent reckoning of our realities, and the ability to take a step back, become more aware, more accepting, less judgmental, and less reactive. **Just as playing the piano over and over again** over time strengthens and supports brain networks involved”
- ▶ “You [God] keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” (Isaiah 26:3)
- ▶ Not wishful thinking—if Jesus is the Good Shepherd, we “shall not want” and have peace as we follow him (Ps. 23)

TYING TOGETHER THE SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

- ▶ Proteins you create as you hear me and read this create proteins copied through genetic expression: making memories
- ▶ DNA instructions dictate the anatomy of our bodies—and “we control up to 90% of this process through our thinking”
 - ▶ “creb gene” switches when we choose to think
- ▶ Simply: toxic thoughts look, act differently than healthy ones
- ▶ AIDS patients: belief that “God loves me” biggest success diff
- ▶ **Myth:** Genes for every addiction and human behavior are scientifically and spiritually false. (e.g., “music” gene)

WE ARE NOT VICTIMS BUT CO-CREATORS OF OUR LIVES

“We are not victims of our biology. We are co-creators of our destiny alongside God. God leads, but we have to choose to let God lead. We have been designed to create thoughts, and from these we live out our lives (Proverbs 23:7)” —Leaf

Hebrews 11: “faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (though we’re seeing more and more evidence via science—common grace).

“Whatever you believe in and hope for becomes substance on a physical level” —Leaf

TYING TOGETHER THE SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

- ▶ Science shows how we can capture and police rogue thoughts (recall mindfulness section, imaging of thought patterns)
- ▶ New circuitry emerges as negative connections melt away

“We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5)

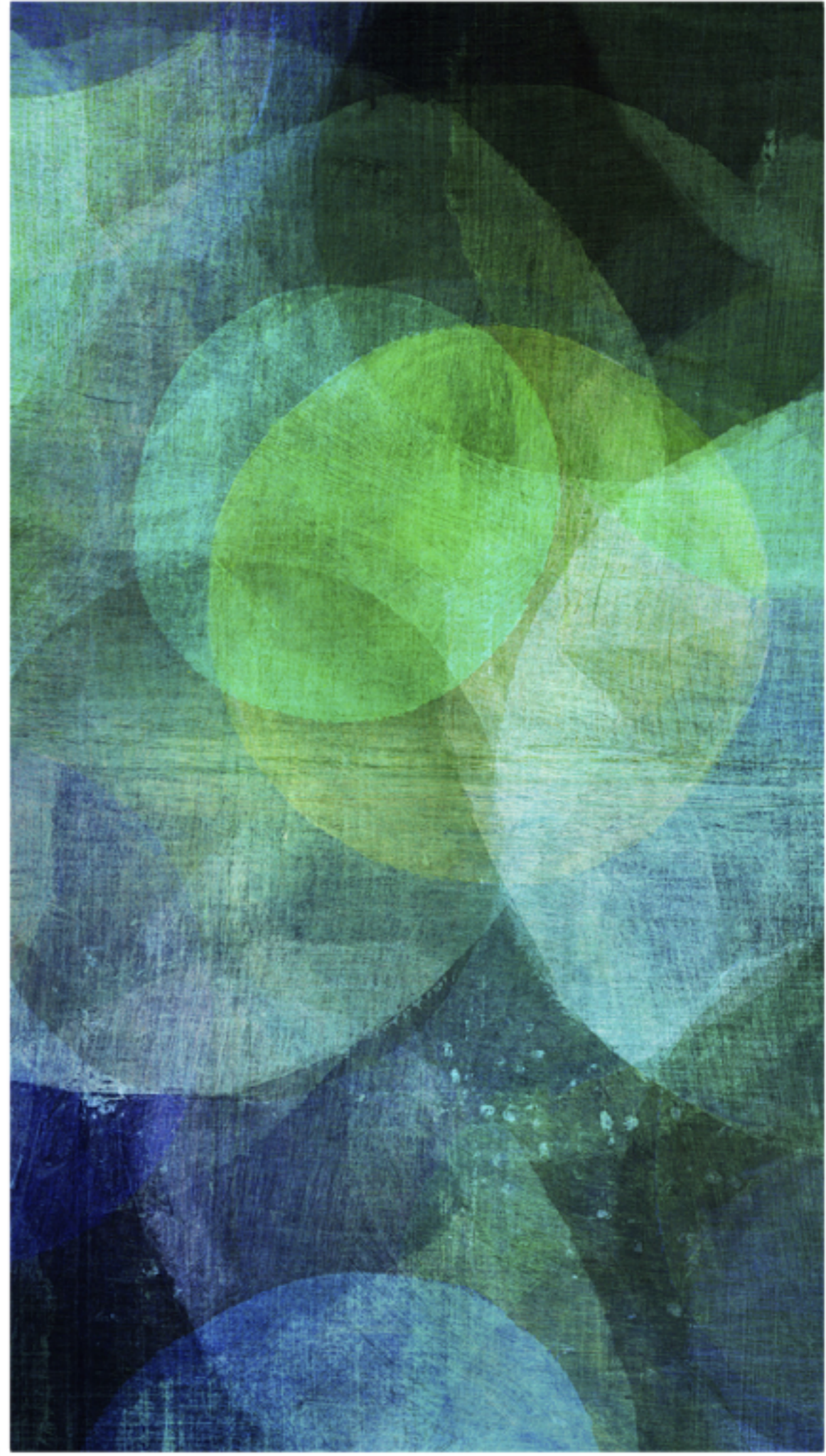
This has a community context—arguments in the world (cosmos)—but it applies to every person individually too

TYING TOGETHER THE SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

- ▶ **Science Concept:** When we enter into **directed rest thru:**
 - ▶ introspection, self-reflection, prayer
 - ▶ catching our thoughts (“bringing every thought captive”)
 - ▶ memorizing Scripture (“you shall meditate on it day and night”) — lock into memory
 - ▶ nonconscious mind chew on even sleeping via metacognitive (nonconscious)—90-99% of thinking!
 - ▶ confession: bring “into the light” (cognitive) deal with
- ▶ Psalm 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God”
Note: this is a command “to know”. Trust, like a child

GETTING PRACTICAL

... ..
Habits for Happiness



HABIT OF THANKSGIVING — EVIDENCE-BASED VIEW

- ▶ Positive Psychology school of thought: Dr. Robt. Emmons:
“Gratitude has one of the strongest links to mental health and satisfaction with life of any personality trait—more than even optimism, hope, or compassion. Grateful people experience higher levels of positive emotions such as joy, enthusiasm, love, happiness, and optimism, and gratitude as a discipline protects us from the destructive impulses of envy, resentment, greed and bitterness”
- ▶ Requires me to acknowledge:
 - ▶ I received a good gift
 - ▶ That gift is valuable
 - ▶ It came from outside myself (God or other people, not self)

BENEFITS OF THANKFULNESS / GRATITUDE

- ▶ Dozens of studies—we can do something about our anxiety and happiness (opposite of depression) via thanksgiving:
 - ▶ increased feelings of energy, alertness, enthusiasm, vigor
 - ▶ success in achieving personal goals
 - ▶ *better coping with stress*
 - ▶ *a sense of closure in traumatic memories*
 - ▶ bolstered feelings of self-worth and self-confidence
 - ▶ solidified and secure social relationships
 - ▶ generosity and helpfulness
 - ▶ prolonged enjoyment of pleasurable experiences
 - ▶ improved cardiac health through increased vagal tone
 - ▶ greater sense of purpose and resilience

REALITY CHECK: WE ALL HAVE REASONS TO COMPLAIN

- ▶ But life is tough and sometimes scary—anxiety isn't a quickly fixable thing
- ▶ Obstacles to gratitude (no pretending):
 - ▶ Habitual tendency to be negative (to “neg out”)
 - ▶ Inability to admit or be dependent on others
 - ▶ Internal psych conflicts
 - ▶ Comparing with others “more fortunate” or gifted
 - ▶ Victim mentality
 - ▶ History of suffering and trauma

YEP, THE BIBLE BEAT SCIENCE TO IT AGAIN

- ▶ Get impression we were designed to give thanks!
- ▶ Didn't need psych studies to know this
- ▶ Bible replete with commands, teachings on thanksgiving:
 - ▶ “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving” (1 Tim. 4:4)
 - ▶ “Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song” (Psalm 95:2)
 - ▶ On and on and on, even the famous ridiculous peace verse:
“in everything, through prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving...[ask]...peace of God will guard hearts and minds

CREATING A HABIT OF THANKFULNESS

“Forming a new habit requires doing things you may not want to do in the early stages of formation” —Moreland, (coaches too!)

1. Express (think, say, pray) gratitude for specific things daily
 - Objection: hypocritical if I don't mean it
 - Muster at least “I want to want to”—not hypocritical!
2. Write a gratitude journal
3. Write regular thank you notes—and deliver them if possible
 - Theory followed by application or it's head knowledge only. May lead to more isolation, anxiety, depression

4-STEP SOLUTION: RETRAINING THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

- ▶ UCLA researchers Schwartz & Gladding addresses default (habitual nonconscious thoughts) that drive anxiety (the negative self-talk or “pooh” we rehearse automatically):
 - ▶ I’m vulnerable (when I’m not)
 - ▶ I’ll be in real trouble
 - ▶ What if X happens next week?
 - ▶ I’ll probably fail that exam

“...It’s what we say to ourselves in response to any particular situation that mainly determines our mood and feelings”

—psychologists Edmund Bourne and Lorna Garano

4-STEP SOLUTION: RETRAINING THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

1. **Relabeling:** call them out as having no (necessary) connection with reality: deceptive, destructive, bogus
2. **Reframing:** take the power out of the thoughts. Reset your perception of the deceptive message by:
 1. being mindful of the fact of it, its content, and how you are now feeling
 2. categorizing the distorted message correctly:
 1. all or nothing thinking (“total failure”)
 2. overgeneralizing
 3. singling out one thing to focus on
 4. catastrophizing (exaggerating effects)
 5. Discounting the positive (“Meh, I sucked really...”)

4-STEP SOLUTION: RETRAINING THOUGHTS & FEELINGS

3. Refocusing:

- ▶ Set your mind on anything else—distract from negative thoughts
- ▶ Get into “the flow”—when you lose track of time, focus well
- ▶ Key: don’t ruminate about the message—analyzing it will deepen the brain grooves. Shooting self in the foot!

4. Revaluating:

- ▶ after a safe amount of time, **reflect** on how you did Steps 1-3
- ▶ **recommit to repeat** steps throughout the day!

HEART MATH SOLUTION QUICK VERSION

1. **Freeze-Frame:** stop it like a video midway as it loops
“Cease striving and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)
2. **Refocus:** shift focus from racing thoughts to physical heart muscle—window to the spiritual heart
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3: 5-6)
3. **Wait for the Emotion:** using acrostic CFAN
(Compassion/Care, Forgiveness, Appreciation, Nonjudgmentalism) recall an appropriate memory and stay with it. Good memory.
Goal: bring a new positive emotion, *not* to think about it.
4. **Melt the Anxious Thought:** while holding the good memory take apart the anxious thought. **Coach** it for better response.

21-DAY BRAIN DETOX: STEP 1—GATHER

- ▶ Sensory information flows into brain through the five senses
- ▶ Existing memories in the nonconscious mind are activated
- ▶ Attitudes invoked as memories move from non- to conscious
- ▶ Hypothalamus responds to attitude chemically—to build memories and emotions
- ▶ Amygdala activated to recall linked emotional perceptions, start building in new emotional perceptions (recreating)
- ▶ All this info enters the hippocampus—involved in converting short-term memory to long-term memory (embedding)
- ▶ All this electromagnetic, chemical, quantum physics activity move to front of brain

21-DAY BRAIN DETOX: STEP 2—FOCUSED REFLECTION

- ▶ Focused thinking = specifically focusing on one thought with its interconnections (turn off smartphone & Netflix)
- ▶ Deep, disciplined, intellectual process entailing:
 - ▶ Attention regulation
 - ▶ Controlling rage
 - ▶ Preventing chaotic thoughts from moving through your mind
 - ▶ Body awareness, emotion regulation, sense of self that brings positive brain change. “Fruit of the Spirit...self-control...”
- ▶ **Neuroplasticity dominant now—focus fixes brain for redesign**

21-DAY BRAIN DETOX: STEP 3—WRITE

- ▶ Like putting your brain on paper (or the digital domain)
- ▶ Actual process of writing consolidates thought (memory)
- ▶ Writing adds clarity to what you've been thinking about
- ▶ Identifies visually areas that need detoxing by bringing nonconscious into the conscious
- ▶ Thought journal—just write
- ▶ Pour your thoughts out and only sort them in the next step. No self-editing yet. And what out for the “pooh”!

21-DAY BRAIN DETOX: STEP 4—REVISIT

- ▶ Moving forward to work out solutions, ways to overcome
- ▶ Evaluate where you came from and where you're going
- ▶ Opportunity to think through:
 - ▶ Reactions
 - ▶ Toxicity levels
 - ▶ Reorganizing, redesigning (mind-molding), retranscribing (attaching new emotions, perceptions, rewriting thoughts in conscious mind)
- ▶ Heart acts as the “checking station”—then you decide

21-DAY BRAIN DETOX: STEP 5—ACTIVE REACH

- ▶ This is the doing part—exercises to “unglue” branches of your thought trees and rebuild.
- ▶ Use the new healthy thought until it’s automatized (natural)
- ▶ Steps 1-4 loosened, weakened branches, Step 5 destroys them
 - ▶ Overwhelm toxic branches w/stronger electromagnetic, quantum signals
 - ▶ Happy chemicals flow:
 - ▶ Dopamine: motivation and focus
 - ▶ Serotonin: feels good
- ▶ Feel the Truth—activate faith



TAKEAWAYS

NEED FOR REGULARITY / HABIT / DISCIPLINE

- ▶ **Stable memories** formed by **repeated** updating—**rethinking** through information—in a sequenced way
- ▶ Over **21 days** “newly formed neural network” will decay in less than a month: *thought trees die or get stronger with use*
- ▶ Unused memories:
 - ▶ proteins that make it will denature
 - ▶ memory will disassemble
- ▶ **Wiring happens with use:** thinking stimulates genetic expression needed to make proteins (thought meat)
- ▶ *Works in both positive and negative directions*

MIND & BRAIN ARE SUPER MALLEABLE—YOU DETERMINE SHAPE

- ▶ You change:
 - ▶ DNA for yourself and future generations
 - ▶ Mindset and mood
 - ▶ Momentum toward powerful outcomes
 - ▶ Your own faith (given as a gift from God, you believe)
- ▶ Neuroplasticity is a gift! Commaned to use it cause we need it
 - ▶ All can participate, believers have “the mind of Christ” & peace
 - ▶ We really can transform & renew our minds, hearts & souls

FREEWILL VS. DETERMINISM: MAKE UP YOUR MIND

- ▶ See changes wrought by our thinking in real time (imaging)
- ▶ Thankful, upbeat people do better, live longer and so on
- ▶ Biblical Narrative: Old Testament stream of choices:
 - ▶ Only true God or idols
 - ▶ Obedience or wandering
 - ▶ “life and death, blessing and cursing”
- ▶ New Testament:
 - ▶ “Reckon yourselves dead to sin, alive to Christ”
 - ▶ “Follow me” (Jesus, with all his promises)

THERE IS GREAT REASON FOR HOPE FOR THE ANXIOUS!

- ▶ Scripture and science seem to agree: healthy change is feasible
- ▶ The malleability of the mind can change things quickly
- ▶ There seems to be little limit for those with:
 - ▶ physical handicaps and disease (for
 - ▶ trauma and bad experiences
- ▶ And for:
 - ▶ people of every belief to get real help and happiness for this life
 - ▶ people of biblical faith to live secure, happy lives here and especially into eternity

“ God pulls us along in exciting suspense in this enjoyable discovery of his creation. He is trying to show us that ‘glory belongs to God, whose power is at work in us. By his power we can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine’.”

- Dr. Caroline Leaf

GO GET IT!

Go get your shalom!

Your peace, your hope. Ask for it.

Will it. Work it.

Enjoy it eternally with God.



| **Hope for the Heart**



OCTOBER 25-26
BIBLICAL COUNSELING INTENSIVE
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