

The Heart Work of Faith
Emotions in Religious community:
What people of faith need to know

Thandeka
ANTS

Darcia Narvaez
University of Notre Dame

Overview

Self-Authorship: We can retool ourselves through various practices.

Outline

- We will look at how the brain functions and how make it function more wisely
 - Stress and Protectionist Ethics
 - Engagement Ethic
 - Human Nature
 - Wisdom and

SESSION 1 Self-Authorship

Taking Charge of the Safety Ethic

- How do you recognize that you are stressed?
- Common features
 - Heart pounding
 - Breathing rate
 - Jaw tightens
 - Head aches
 - Muscles tighten
- Can be addictive (Type A personality)

STRESS
SYMPATHETIC

CALM
PARASYMPATHETIC

PUPILS EXPAND

PUPILS SHRINK

FAST & SHALLOW
BREATHS

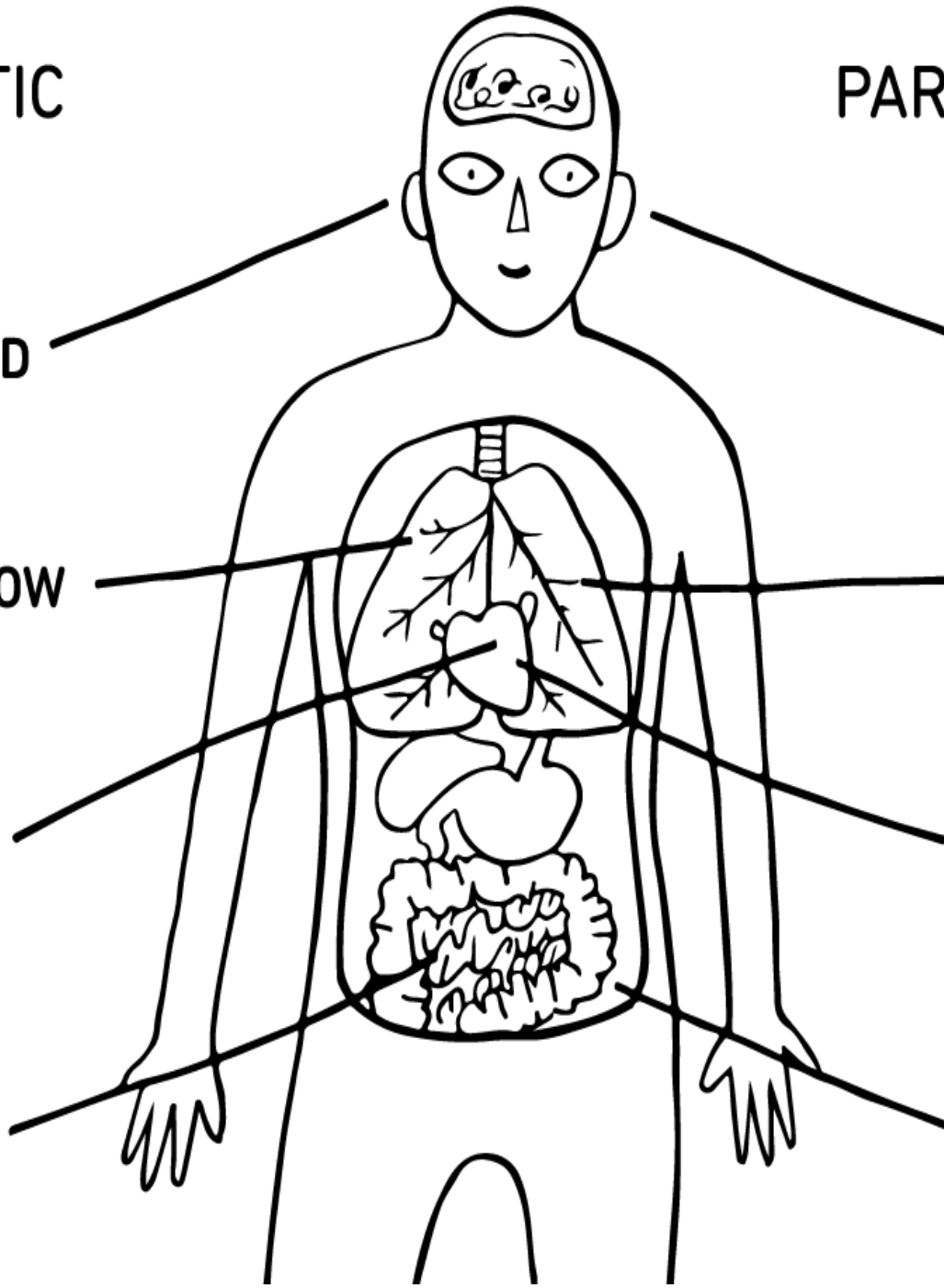
SLOW, DEEP
BREATHS

HEART PUMPS
FASTER

HEART SLOWS

GUT INACTIVE

GUT ACTIVE



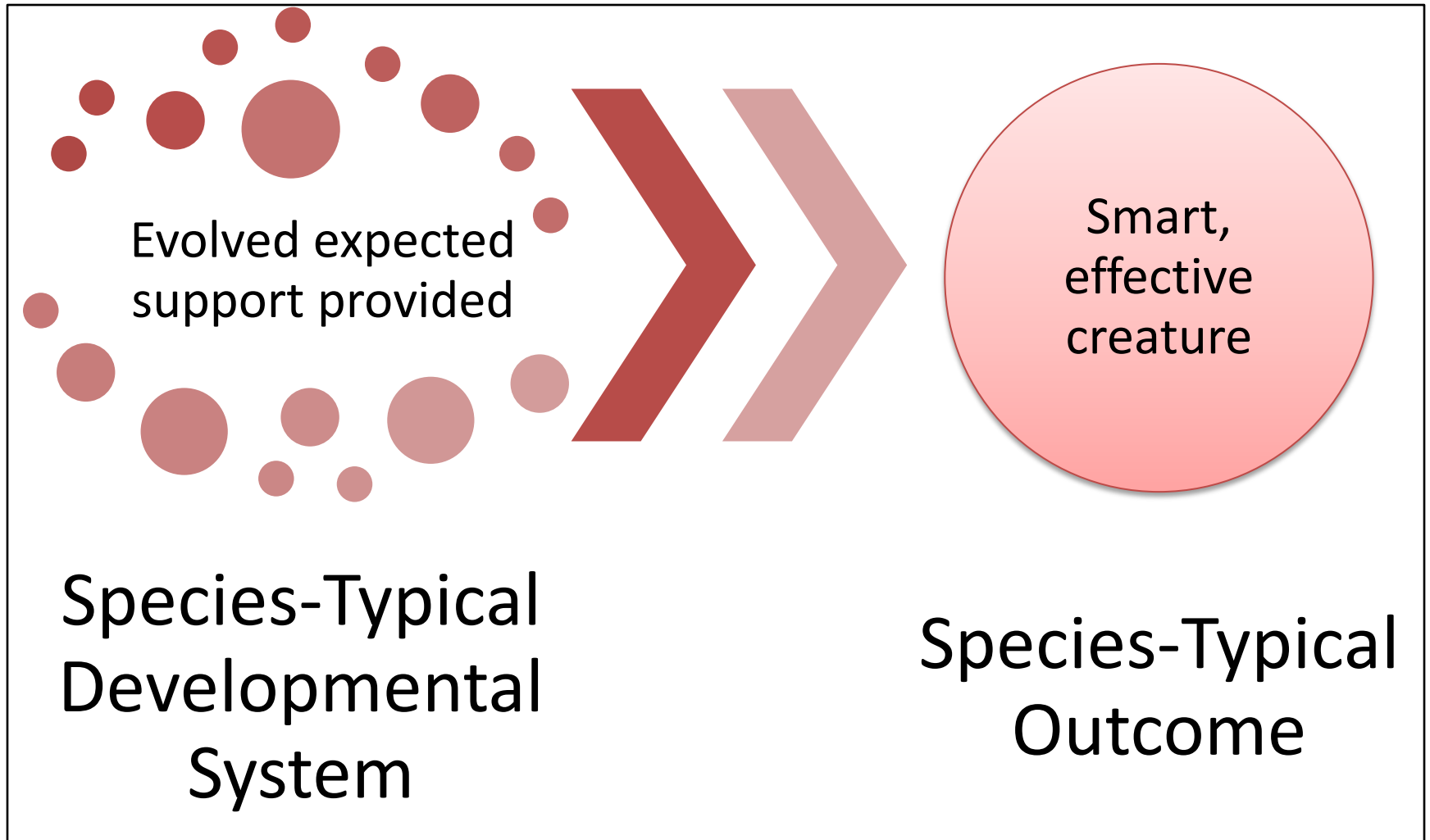
Human Evolved Developmental Niche

(Most practices are 30-40 million years old)

- **TOUCH:** *Held or kept near others constantly*
- **RESPONSIVITY:** *Prompt responses to fusses and cries*
- **BREASTFEEDING:** *Nursed frequently (2-3 times/hr initially) for 2-5 years*
- **ALLOMOTHERS:** *Frequently cared for by responsive individuals other than mothers (fathers and grandmothers, in particular)*
- **POSITIVE SOCIAL SUPPORT:** High social embeddedness
- **PLAY:** *Enjoy free play in natural world with multiage playmates*
- **SOOTHING PERINATAL EXPERIENCES**

Hewlett & Lamb, 2005; Konner, 2010; Narvaez, Panksepp, Schore & Gleason, 2013

Every animal has a nest, humans too!



Brain system function with species-typical care

Protoreptilian

Survival systems: anger, fear, panic (fight, flight, freeze, faint)

Control

Mammalian

Social: care, play

Heart-centered imagination

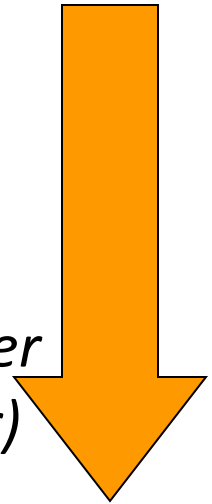
Executive functions and neocortex:
imagination interacts with survival and prosocial systems

Human Evolved Developmental Niche

Konner (2005): Hunter Gatherer Childhood Model

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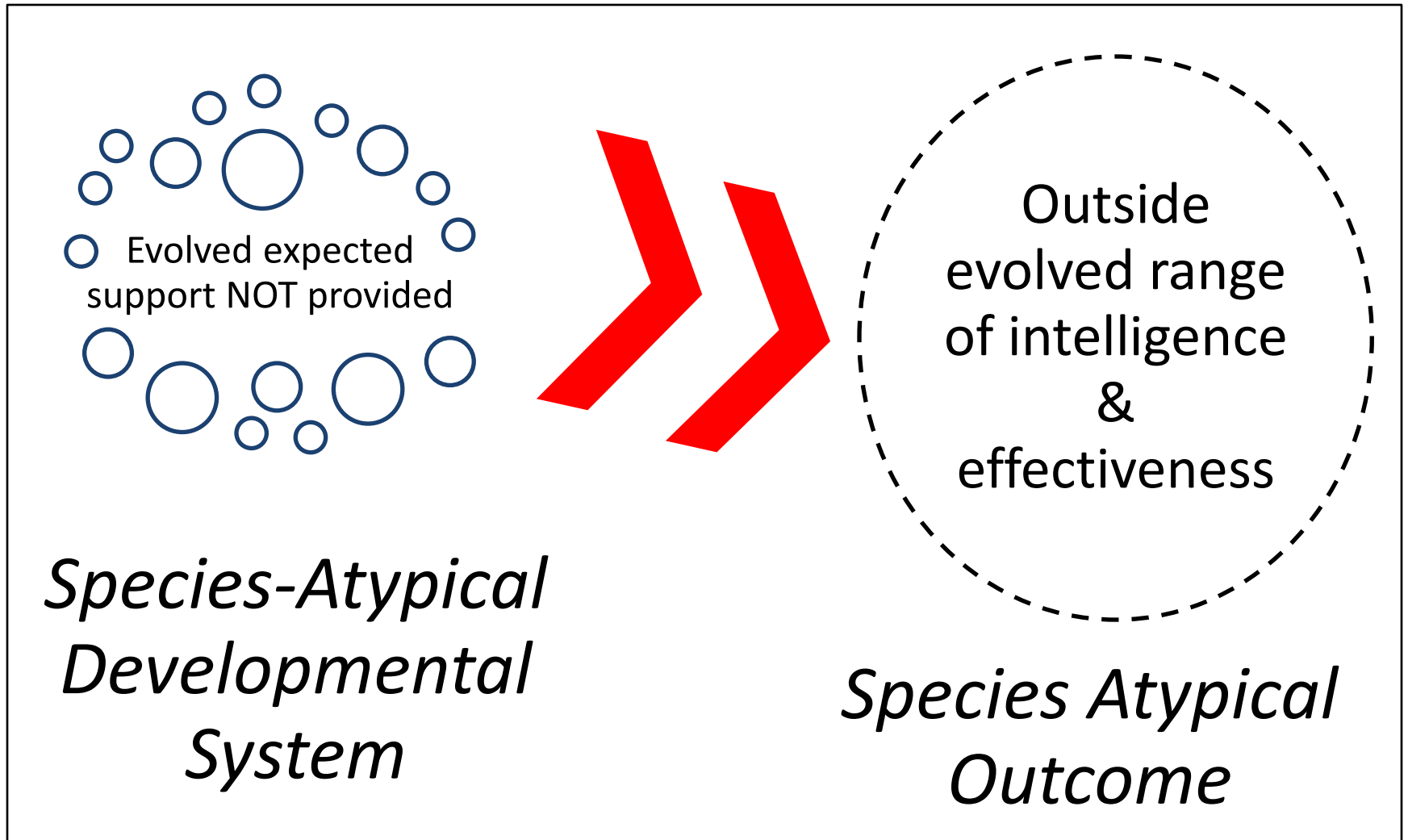


Hewlett & Lamb, 2005; Konner, 2010; Narvaez, Panksepp, Schore & Gleason, 2012)

What happens to a baby **physiologically** when needs are ignored?

Kang HJ, Voleti B, Hajszan T, Rajkowska G, Stockmeier CA, Licznanski P, Lepack A, Majik MS, Jeong LS, Banasr M, Son H, Duman RS (August 2012). Decreased expression of synapse-related genes and loss of synapses in major depressive disorder. *Nature Medicine* 18.

What happens when the nest is degraded?



The (Major) Stress Response takes over

- Attention shifts to self, lowers empathy
- Depletes resources for higher order processes
- “Fight” or “Flight”: Based in the sympathetic system
 - Defensive or reactive aggression Feels “good” and “right”
- “Freezing” or “Fainting”: Based in sympathetic system
 - protects body from death or psychological trauma
 - Submission, passivity, dissociation, compliance with an authority
- Useful for moments of physical threat; **if dispositional, it is pathological**

Power of Survival Systems from Early Undercare

Toxic Stress leads to self-protection disposition

Protoreptilian

- Survival systems: anger, fear, panic (fight, flight, freeze, fall)

Control
Stress Reactivity
controls

Executive functions and neocortex:
imagination interacts with survival and prosocial systems

Mammalian

- **Social:** care, play

Heart-centered
imagination

Brain Function and Morality

Protoreptilian

- **Survival systems:** anger, fear, panic (fight, flight, freeze, faint)

Safety Ethic

Mammalian

- **Social:** care, play

Engagement Ethic

Human

- **Executive controls** interact with survival and prosocial systems

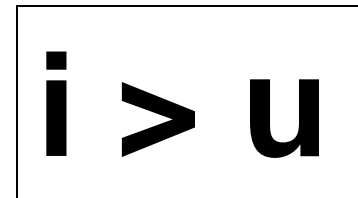
Imagination Ethic

Protectionist Ethics

- More dominant in a personality when early life does not conform with mammalian needs
 - Neglectful or harsh child rearing
- Cultures emphasizing fear or evil human nature foster this ethic
 - And allow child undercare to prevail

Protectionist imagination

- Impaired by emotion distortion, stress reactivity
- Adopts one or more “dangerous ideas” (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003) of
 - **Superiority**
 - Distrust
 - Vulnerability
 - Injustice
 - Helplessness
- Two types of self-protective imagination
 - Vicious (aggression)
 - Detached (withdrawal or numbness)



Taking Charge of the Safety Ethic

- Purposeful self-authorship
 - You can foster new habits, attitudes, behaviors in yourself—humanity’s greatest gift.
- Learn self-calming
 - What techniques can you use?
- Slow down, revamp and reframe
 - Note your hot buttons/triggers that make you stressed (and lead to an aggressive mode exhibited in blaming, attacking, one-uping or to a withdrawing mode of shutting off emotions, socially withdrawing)

SUMMARY OF SESSION I

- The stress response orients us to self (blood flow shifts to mobilize us for survival action). This shift can become dispositional based on undercare in early life or trauma.
- When the stress response is active, it changes our ethical mindset to self-protectionism.
- To avoid this mindset, one must learn to calm oneself, which sometimes requires uncovering and transforming our trigger points.

Session II: Self Transformation Fostering an Engagement Ethic

Western Culture

- Emphasis on detached rationality
- Psychology is shifting away from this view towards the importance of emotion and implicit (subconscious) systems for our everyday functioning
- Affective neuroscience shows us how emotion systems are shaped in early life (Panksepp, 1998)

Emotions are Foundational to Adaptive Functioning

- Emotional systems placed centrally interact with
 - more evolved cognitive structures and
 - lower-level physiological and motor outputs
- Genetically ingrained psychobehavioral potentials
 - that help an animal behave adaptively
 - And are shaped by experience

(Panksepp, 1998)

Emotion and Cognition Built Together

- General cognitive structures "*emerge* from recurrent patterns of sensorimotor activity"¹
- Experience influences functioning of subcortical and neocortical structures that regulate sociality

¹Varela, 1992/1999, p. 16

- Emotional circuitry established early in life is related to the brain's architecture of morality & ethical expression

**Moll, Zahn, de Oliveira-Souza,
Drueger, & Grafman, 2005**

Ethic of Engagement: Relational Presence

- Capacities for present-ism, being emotionally and flexibly attuned to others in the present moment
- Mammalian emotional systems drive us towards intimacy
 - Social and sexual instincts, empathy and parental care, play (*Darwin, 1891; Loye, 2002*)
 - Emotion systems underlying Darwin's "moral sense"
- Primed by supportive, caring relationships and environments (resulting in Secure attachment)

Emotion systems: upper limbic: CARE, PLAY

Behaviors: compassionate response, egalitarian social play, acceptance, social non-self

Ethic of Engagement is not innate

- Dependent on proper care during sensitive periods (e.g., infancy and childhood)
 - Epigenetic (genes turned on or off by experience)
- The right hemisphere learns from experience (left hemisphere draws its categories and knowledge systems from this collection of experience)
 - governs brain circuitries necessary for social engagement: control of negative emotion; awareness of oneness; awareness of realms beyond what the intellect can apprehend.

What does the Right Hemisphere govern?

- Self-regulation
- Intersubjectivity (capacity to share embodied social space with another)
- Social pleasure
- Emotional intelligence (e.g., emotional self-awareness and self-expression; emotional reading of others; communication through eye gaze)
- Empathy
- Beingness
- Self transcendence and Higher consciousness (e.g., sense of oneness with the Whole)

(See work of Allan Schore and Ian McGilchrist)

Luckily, the right brain can grow throughout life!

Retooling oneself and others in adulthood

- Humans are self-organizing complex systems
- Humans can self-author—revamp themselves throughout life (though it gets harder with age)
- Remember that epigenetics is ongoing
 - Immediate gene expression
 - Behavioral state-related gene expression
 - Experience or activity dependent gene expression

Growing the Right Hemisphere in Adulthood

- Build comfort level with social pleasure
 - Join support groups
 - Make a close friend
 - Learn to play (sledding, belly laugh club)
 - Get deeply in touch with natural world

Fostering an Engagement Ethic

- Expand your social self
 - Connect with others even briefly
 - Enjoy others
 - Practice *presence*
- 2. Nonviolent communication (Rosenfield)
 - Focus on conveying needs, listening to needs (people need help figuring this out) and negotiating getting everyone's needs met. (in contrast to making demands and coercing others)

*Developmental Ethical Ecological
Practice (DEEP), Narvaez 2014*

SESSION II SUMMARY

- Social capacities require good experience, especially during sensitive periods of their development.
- Appropriate care fosters the neurobiology that underlies social and moral functioning, including right hemisphere development.
- The right hemisphere governs many systems fundamental to our sociality.
- The right hemisphere grows throughout life by presence-fostering experiences like silly free playing, dancing and the arts.

SESSION III: Wisdom

To be wise, we
need to know what
a human being is
and what is needed
for good
development.

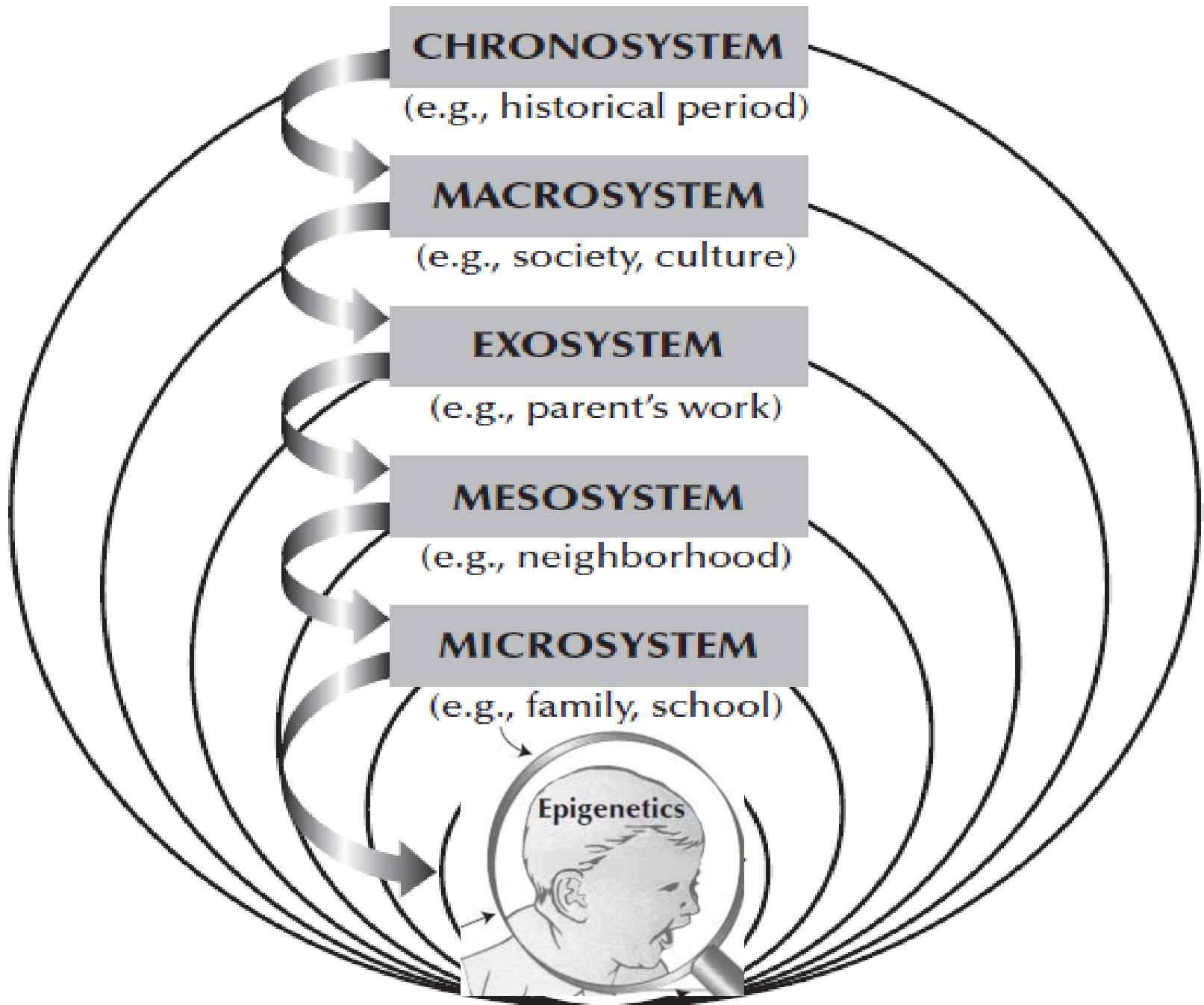
Who are human beings and what do they need?

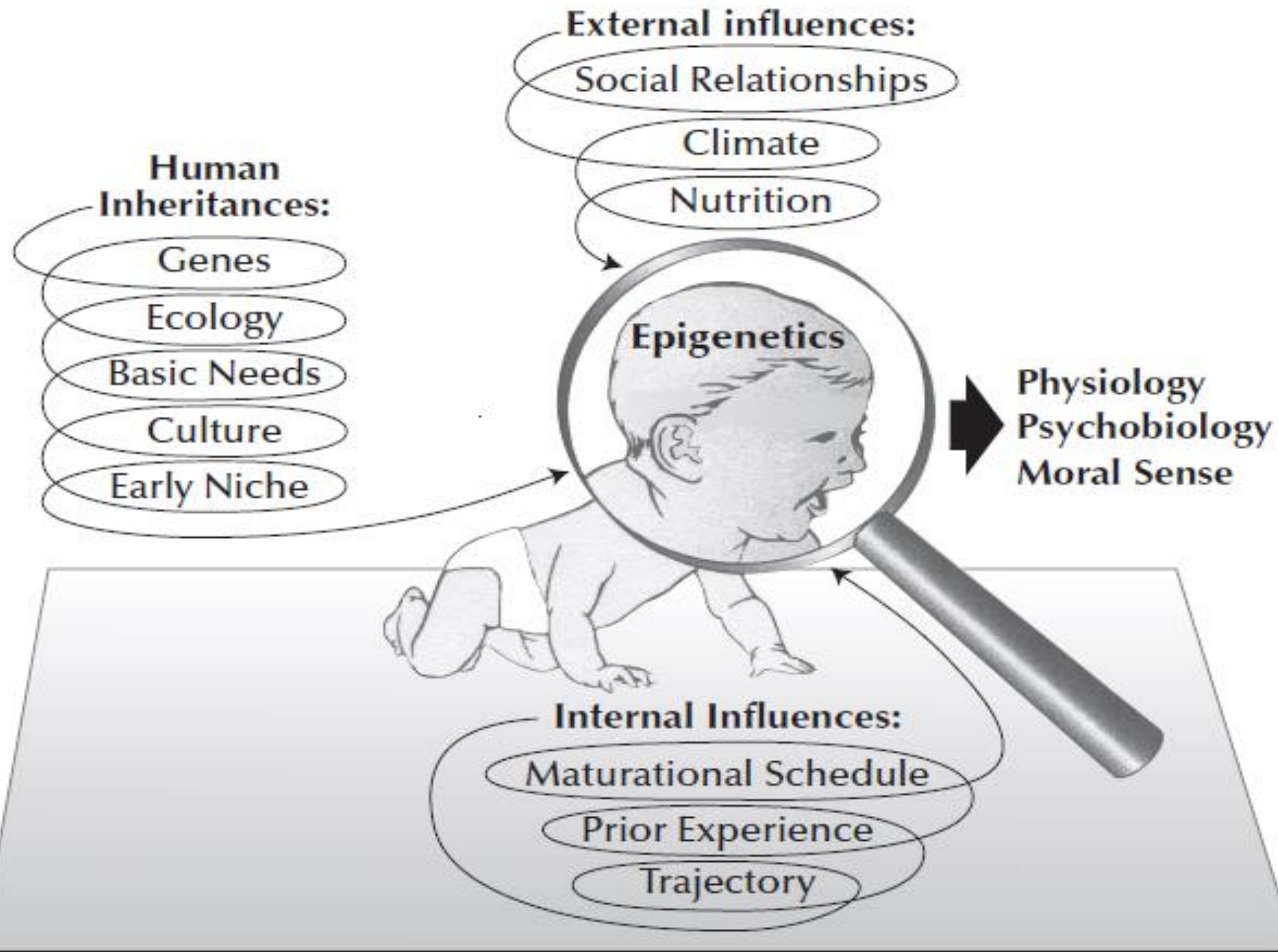
- **Animal** needs for nourishment and warmth
- **Mammalian** needs for affection and play
- **Social mammalian** needs for extensive bonding, and community support
- **Human** needs for
 - Intersubjectivity with multiple adults
 - Immersion in communal rituals
 - Apprenticeship in adult activities

Narvaez, 2014

Biosocial constructions

- **Dynamic system** –initial conditions matter for trajectory and subsequent [moral] behavior
 - Developmentally plastic ‘**constructive interactionism**’ (Oyama); a constant interaction between “nature” & “nurture” (Timing, duration, intensity matter)
- Epigenetic effects of early experience for all systems
 - Emotion systems, pleasure focus and social worldview (*Tomkins*);
 - Self (social and moral) (*Schore; Stern; Trevarthen*)
- Humans developmentally born 9-18 months early
 - 25% of adult brain volume at full-term birth (40-42 weeks) (80% by age 3)
 - Humans require a supportive childhood (e.g., “**exerogestation,**” external womb) (Montagu, 1978)





Understand our heritages from proper development and mentoring:

- Naturally cooperative
- Receptively intelligent
- Ecologically attached
- Individualism AND collectivism
- Small egos, large selves
- Sense of eternity now
- **How do we know humans are like this?**
 - **Nomadic forager societies (99% of human genus history)**

Our 99%: Nomadic Foragers

1. Common set of practices for **child raising (the evolved nest)**
2. Common **worldview**—**all** things are alive with agency and purpose: Commonself.
3. Common **adult personality** –generosity, happiness, calmness and high intelligence.

Humanity's Moral Sense: More powerful than natural selection (Darwin's notebooks)

- Social pleasure
 - Empathy
 - Memory function
 - Social concern
 - Habit control
- **Nomadic foraging peoples display these characteristics**

These appear to be diminishing in the USA

Wisdom Practices Promote an Engagement Moral Sense

- What practices do you use to get reconnected?
- Wisdom development practices used by others
 - Meditation
 - Mindfulness

Think of a favorite place in the natural world

What wisdom is conveyed by that place?

	Primal Wisdom	Traditional Wisdom
Shared Properties	Wisdom exists beyond intellect Wisdom accesses other realms Humans have special responsibilities (co-creation)	
	Practice involves surrender to the energy realm Practice involves ego detachment	
	Wisdom is state-dependent Oneness in love Fear must be overcome	
Compassion	Towards all of natural world	Towards other people
Focus	All forms of life	Humanity
What is feared	Alienation from animal nature	Animal nature
Key behavior	Gift sharing is not optional	Hospitality (as a choice)

Wisdom Practices Retool Us

- Maintain hormonal systems of connection (e.g., oxytocin, the cuddle hormone)
- Grow the “right brain” and integrate it with higher order cognitive understandings
 - I-Thou relationships
 - Hospitality
 - Agape love
- Action-based support of individual and communal flourishing



Acceptance and attunement



Defensive

Compliant but withdrawn

FALL: Self-disowning

Imbalance

Balanced Centered Self

FALL: Relationship disowning

Imbalance

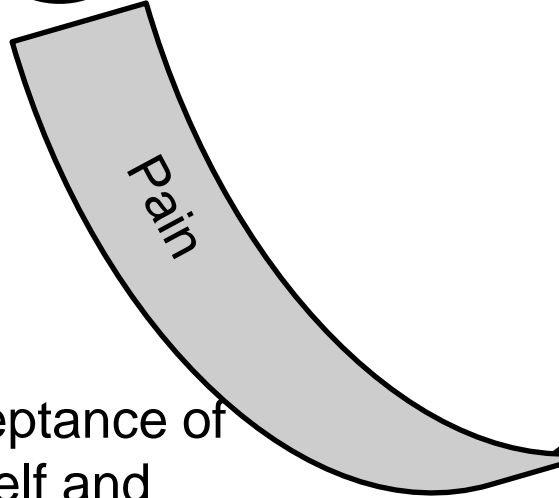


Defensive

Combative and/or Controlling

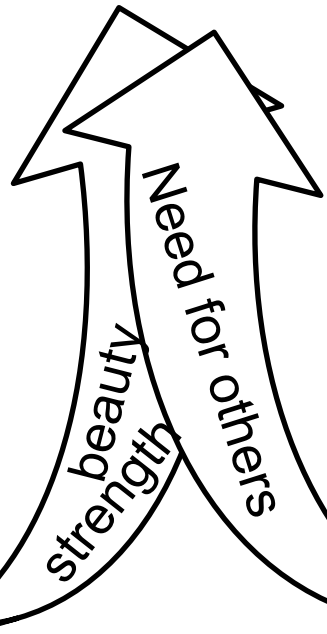
I am inferior

I am superior



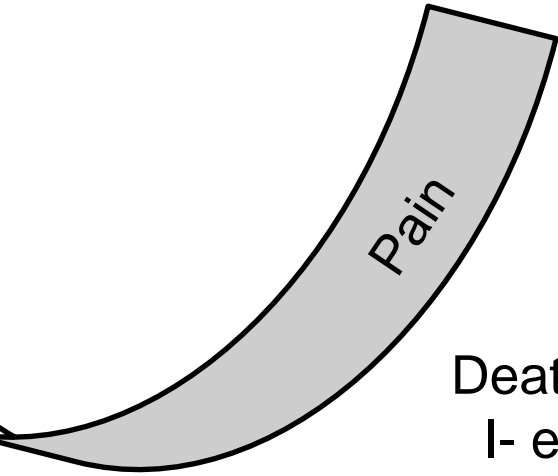
Pain

Acceptance of self and responsibility



beauty strength
Need for others

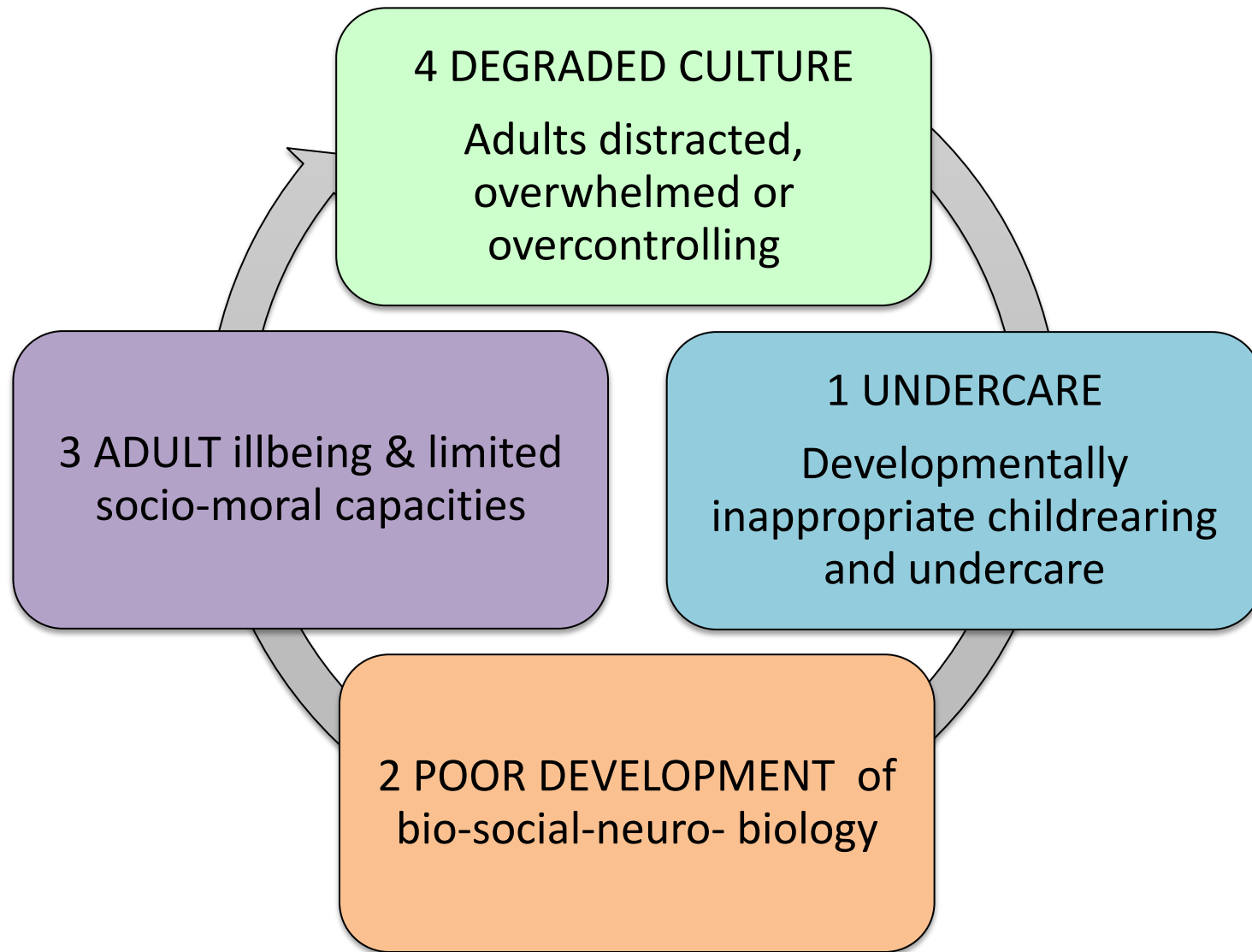
Embrace one's humanity with humility



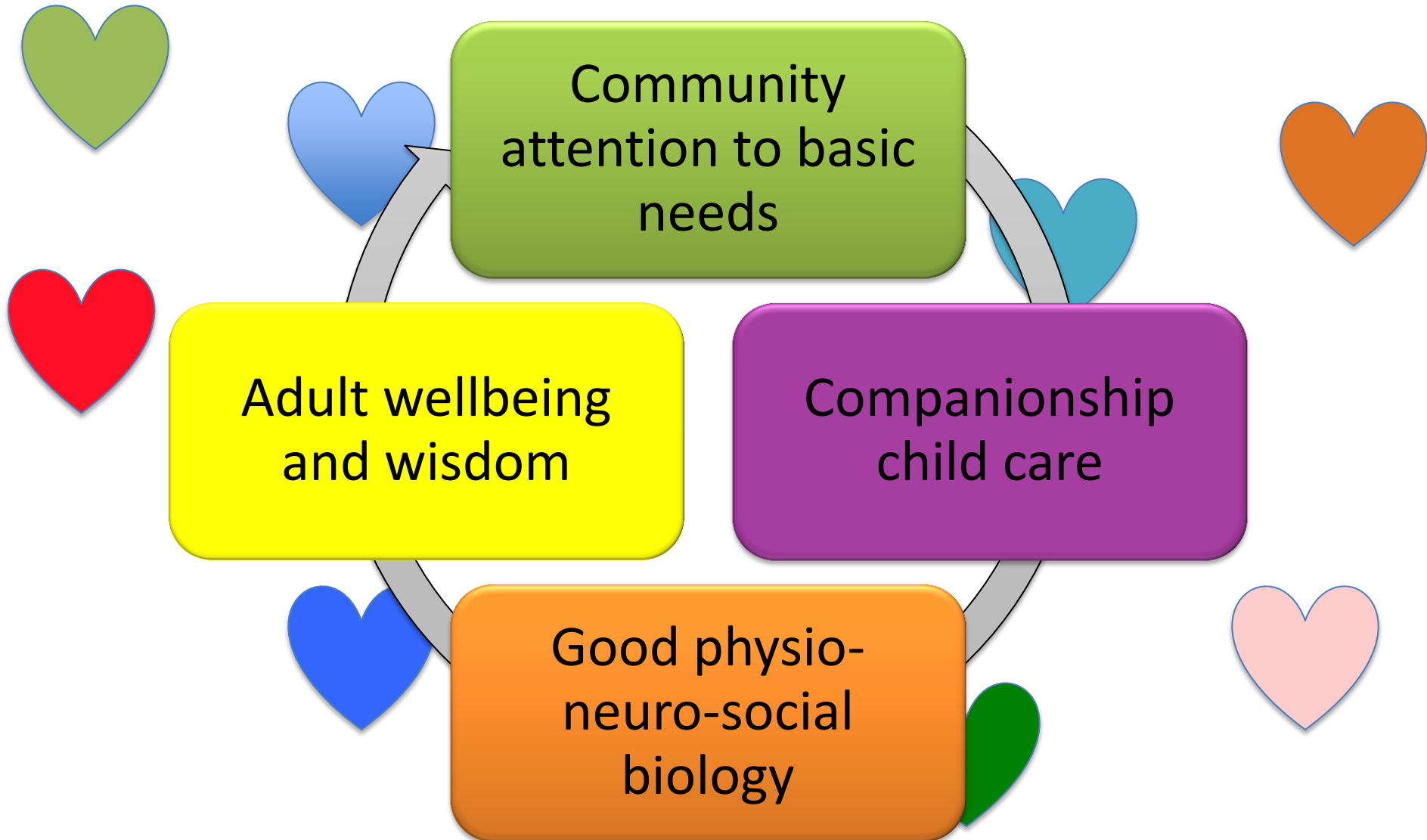
Pain

Death of I- ego

Wisdom can move us away from the *Cycle of Competitive Detachment*



Wisdom practices can move us toward a Culture of Cooperative Companionship



Session IV: Wise Clergy Practice

- Parish life can shift our consciousness to enwebbedness
- Emphasize and nourish our heritages :
 - Naturally cooperative
 - Small egos, large selves
 - Sense of eternity now
(instead of apocalypse now)

Cultural Climates Matter

- Cultures can be calming and communal or numbing, or oriented to fear and crisis
- Calming cultures foster High Engagement Ethic, Low Safety Ethic and use imagination for communal purposes
- These are growth communities

Primal Parish Wisdom

- Expand the circle of concern to include the flourishing of other-than-human life
- Partnership with Nature
- Communers with and supporters of Life, as partners and companions.
 - Care for all life
 - Maintaining biodiversity
 - Live sustainably
 - Small I-egos and large selves

Opposite of:

- Restlessness
- Placelessness
- Ever searching “hungry ghosts”
- “Place” ful-ness
- Humility, truth and love (plus surrender)

Self-author and foster in others

Self-Calming

- Deep breathing
- Mindfulness
- Meditation

Communal Imagination

- Group attachment
- Us and Us
- Ecological attachment

Social Pleasure

- Play with peers
- Silly humor
- Social dance, song, art

Self-author and foster in others

Relationships (trust, support and connection)

Apprenticeship (mentors for different needs and skills)

Virtuous models (focus on those with the virtues sought rather than filling the mind with vice; we act on where we habitually put our attention; Murdoch)

Ethical skills (in ethical sensitivity, judgment, motivation, action)

Self authorship (self-developmental practice)

RAVES, Narvaez & Bock

For more information

- Darcia Narvaez (dnarvaez@nd.edu)
- Webpage (download papers):
<http://www.nd.edu/~dnarvaez/>
- My blog at Psychology Today: Moral Landscapes
<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/moral-landscapes>