

#AddictionAware

Understand the signs. Reduce the stigma.

In Partnership with:

Stop The Judgement Project

Pine Richland School District

October 2026

Ellen O'Brien Gaiser CENTER

Leading Recovery Since 1971

A Question We Will Revisit







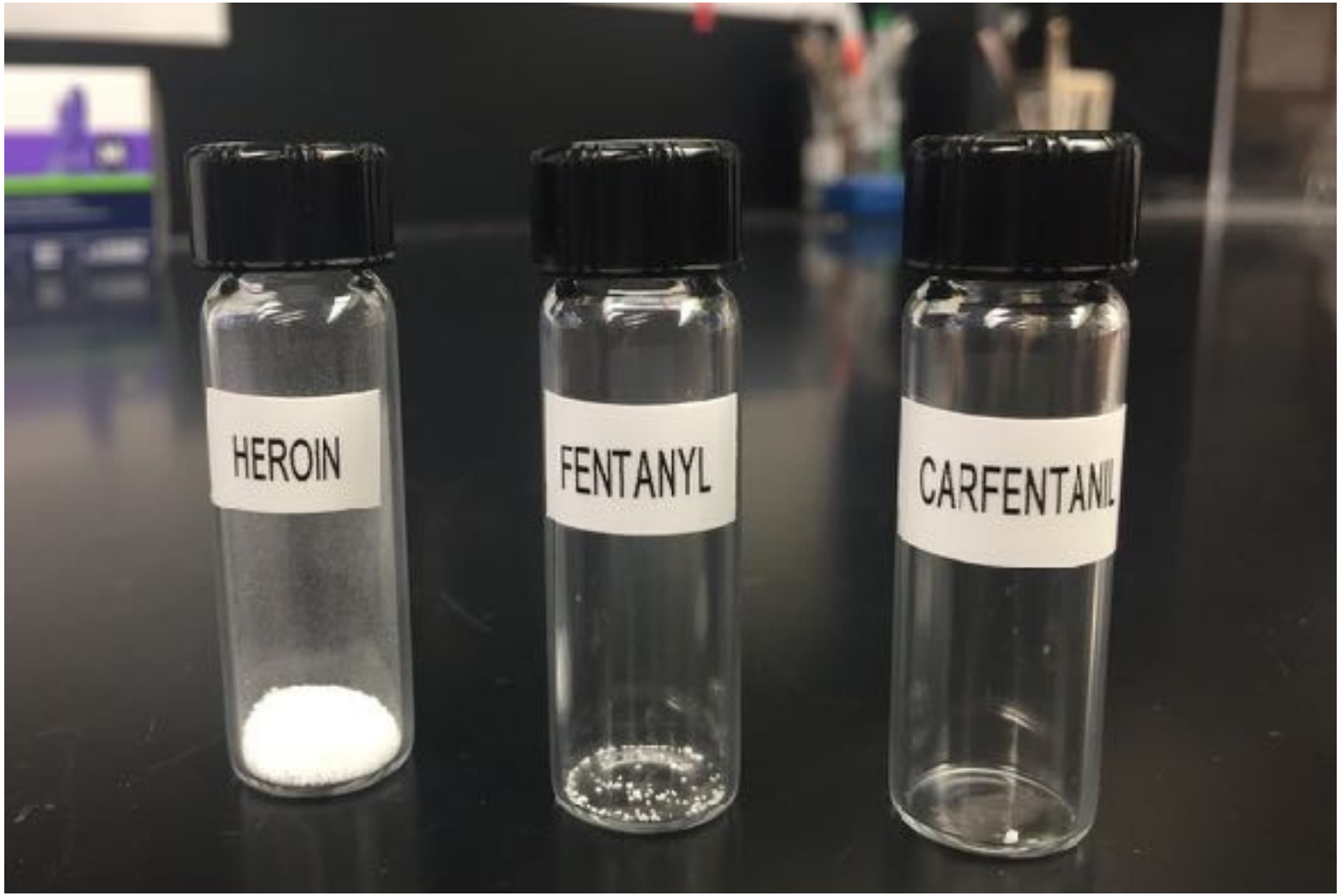
Addiction… Is it a **DISEASE** or is it a **CHOICE?**

- Codeine
- Hydrocodone
- Oxycodone
- Nubain
- Buprenorphine
- Methadone
- Morphine
- Demerol
- Dilaudid
- Heroin
- Fentanyl
- Carfentanil

Papaver Somniferum






HEROIN
FENTANYL
CARFENTANIL

Classic Opiate Toxidrome

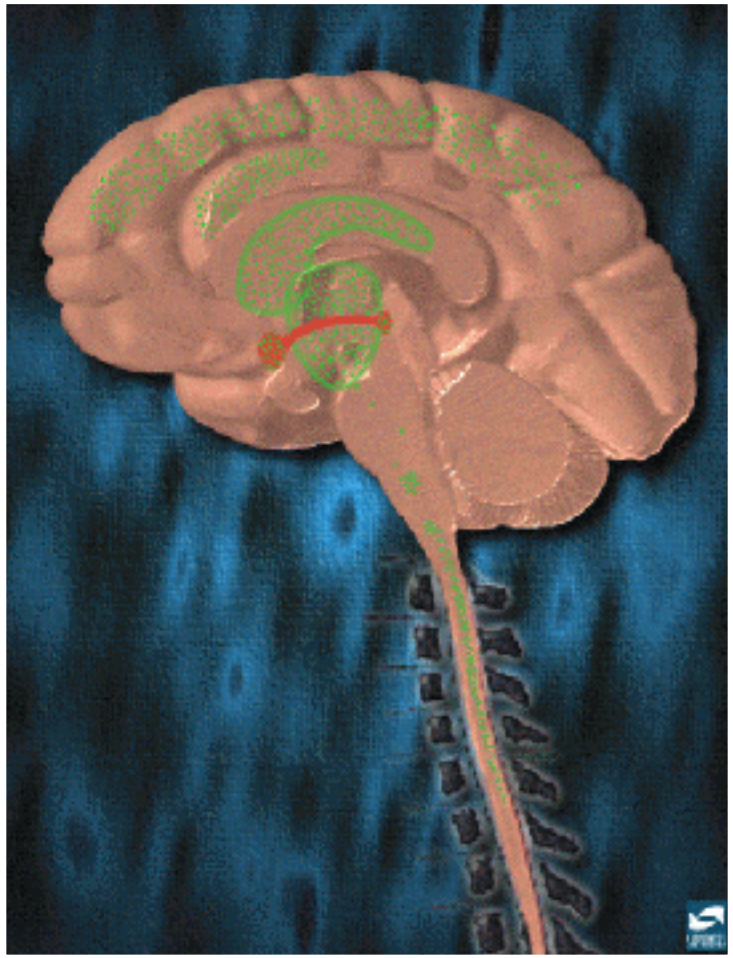
1. Pinpoint pupils
2. Decreased responsiveness
3. Depressed respirations*





Opiate use or overdose is one of the most common causes of **pinpoint pupils**.

Substances of abuse effect…



Limbic System = The Caveman Brain

- Food
- Water
- Sex
- Safety
- Shelter



Pleasure, Reward, Happiness



Prefrontal cortex vs limbic system

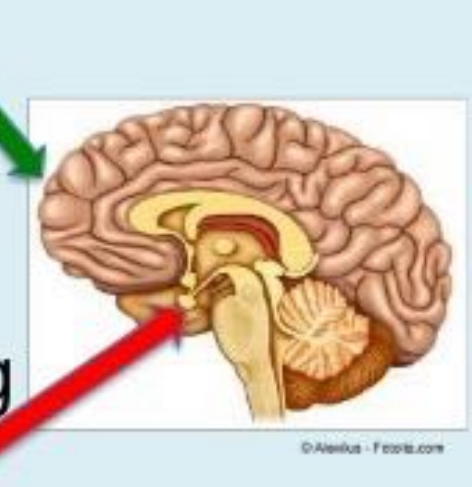
Prefrontal cortex:

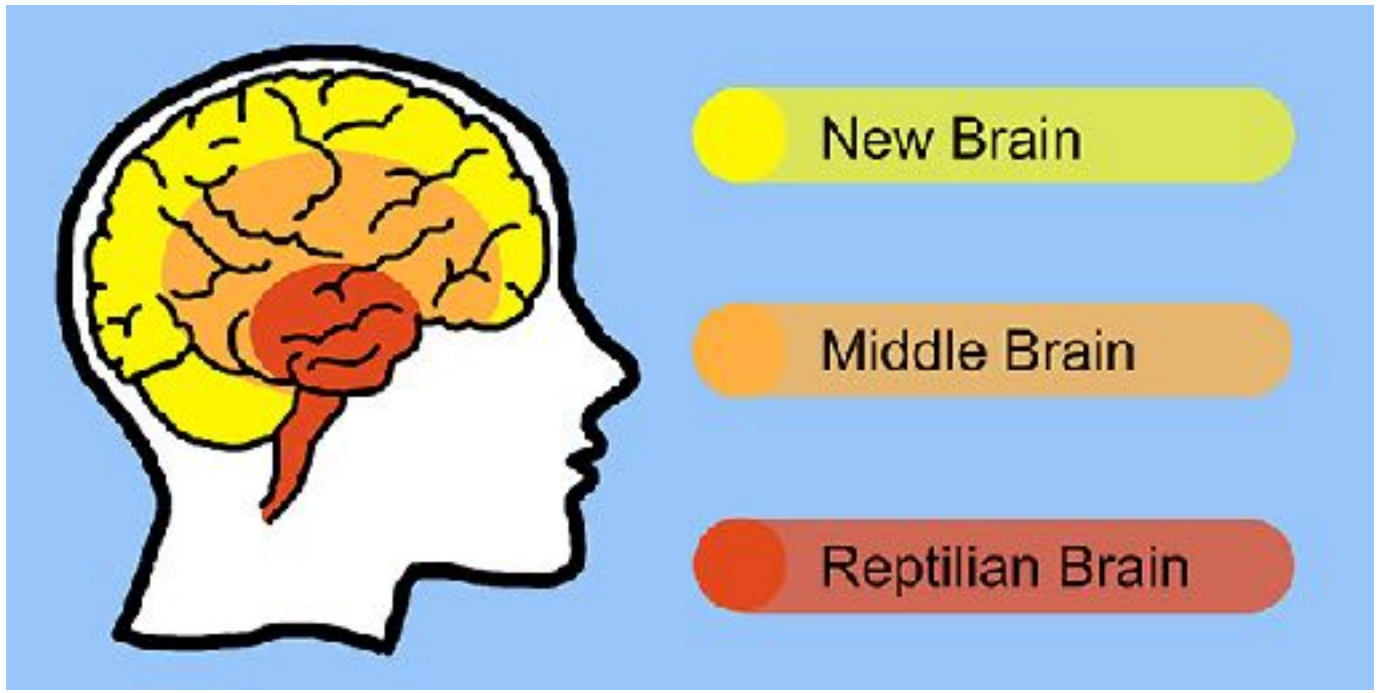
- Control: reason, logic, prediction, analysis, impulse control, moral values, decisions

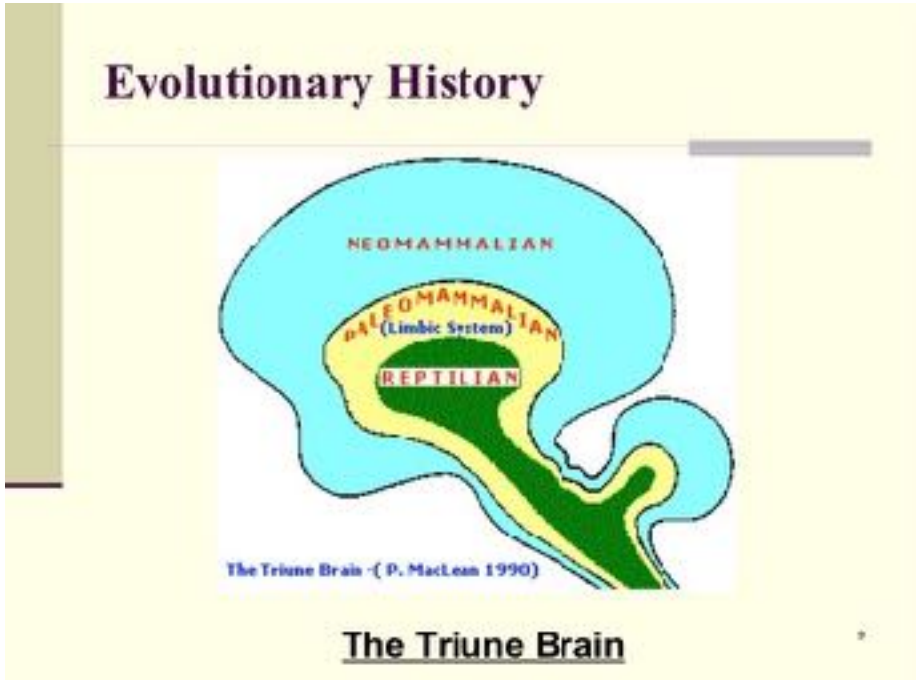
Limbic system (inc amygdala):

- Emotions + instinct:

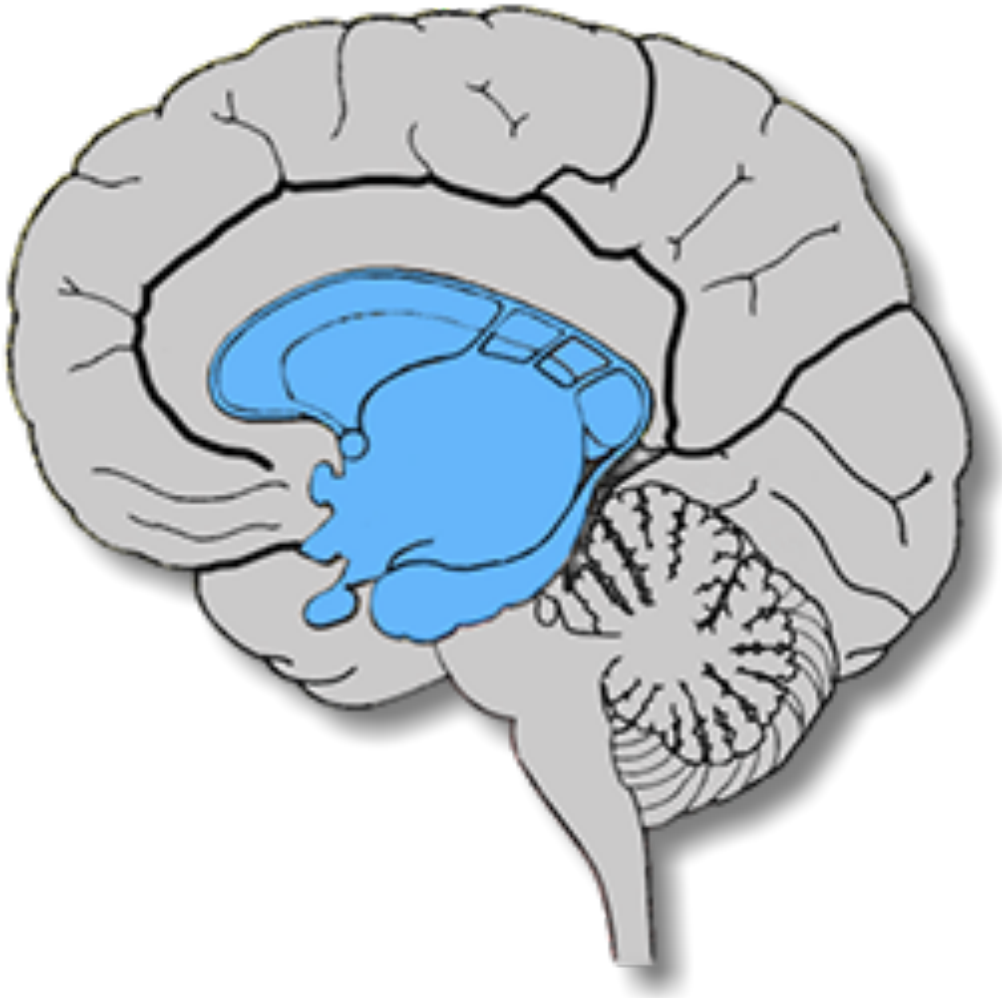
Reactive, impulsive, motivating



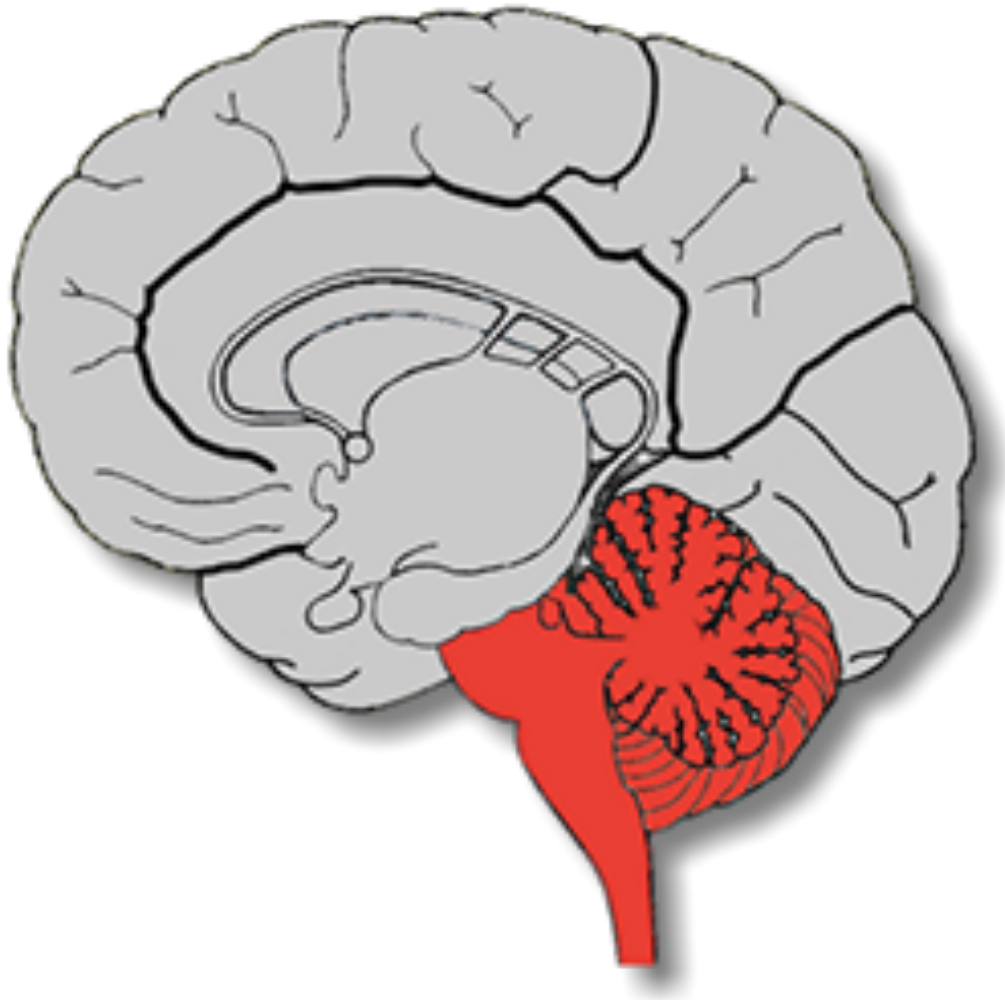

New Brain
Middle Brain
Reptilian Brain


Evolutionary History
NEOMAMMALIAN
PALEOMAMMALIAN
(Limbic System)
REPTILIAN
The Triune Brain -(P. MacLean 1990)
The Triune Brain

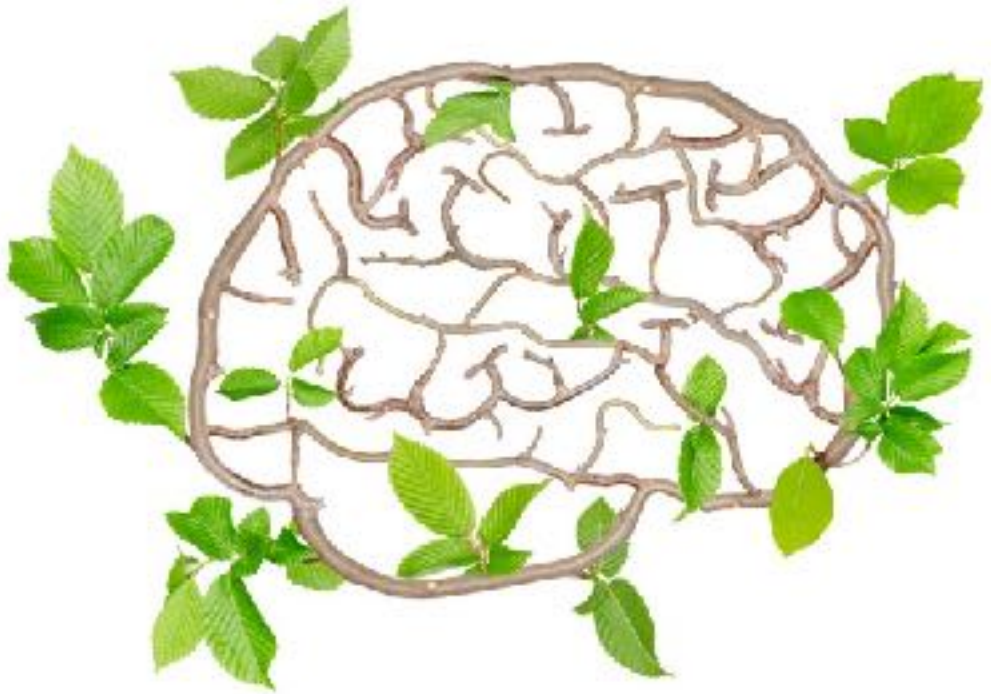








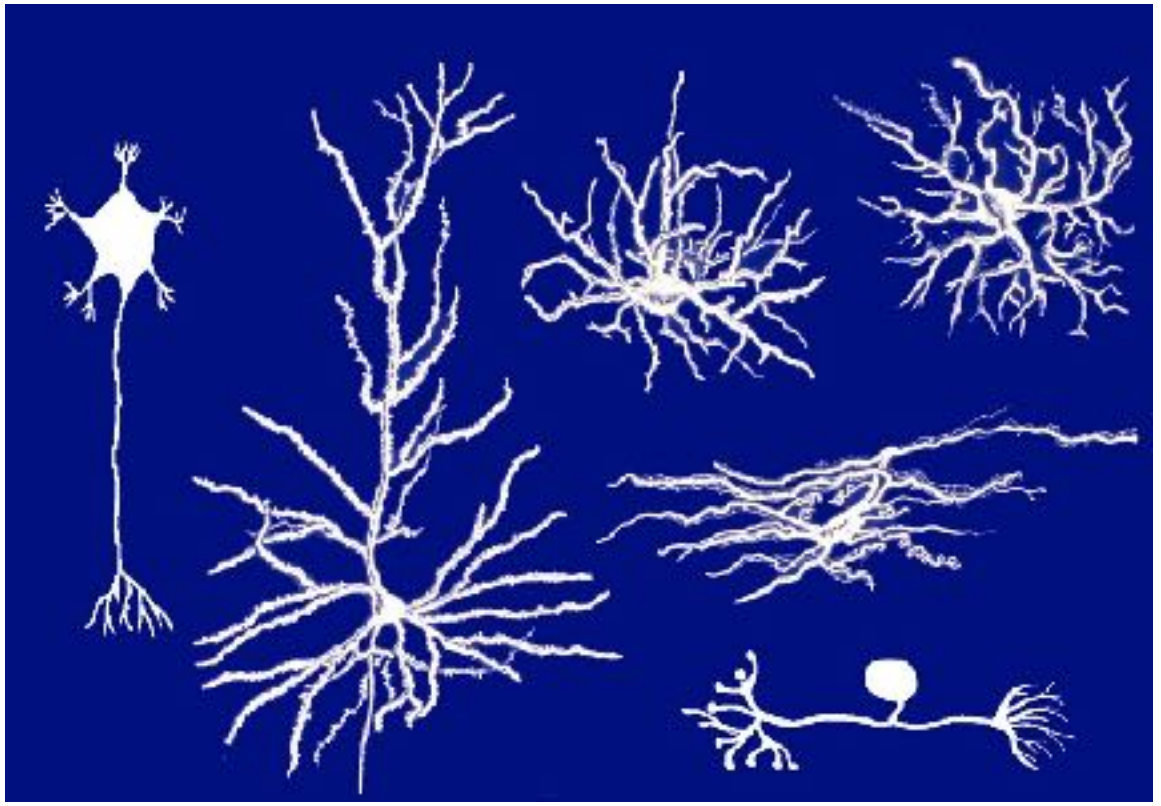
Neuroplasticity





Neurons





Functional Neurochemistry






JUUL
SMOKING EVOLVED



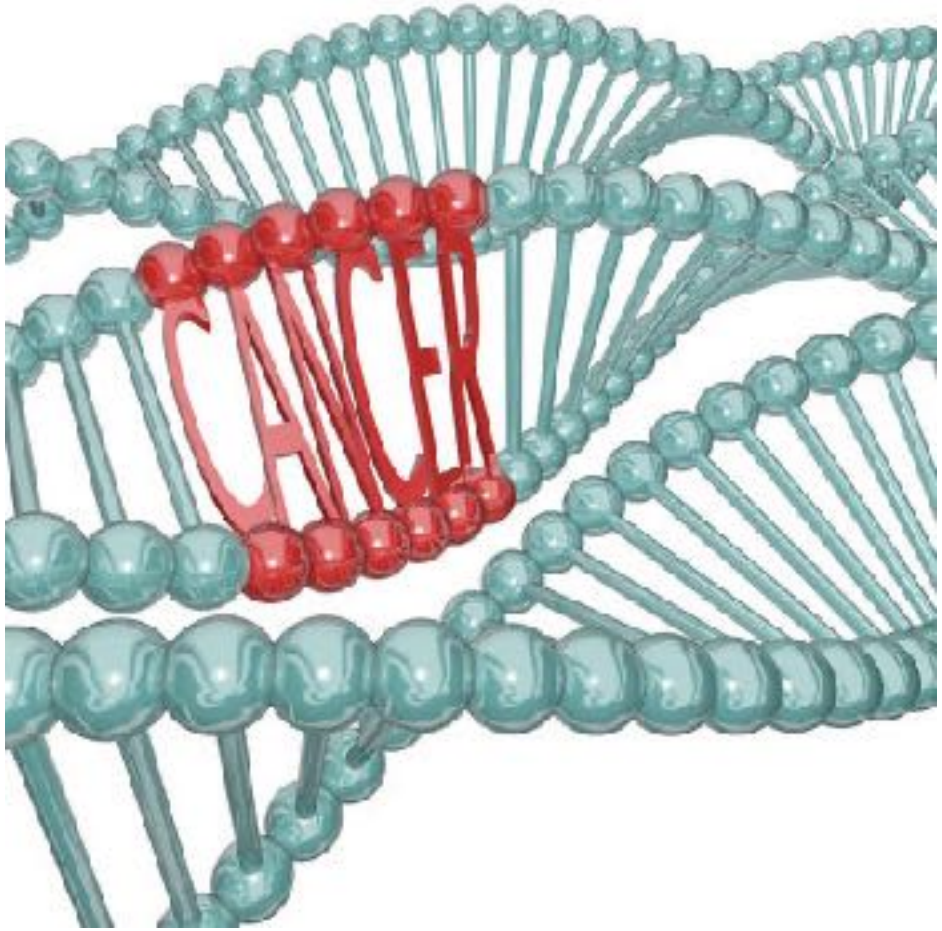


False Advertising?



Vape Atomizer Carcinogens

- Acrylonitrile
- Acrolein
- Propylene Oxide
- Benzoic Acid
- Acrylamide
- Crotonaldehyde






TYLENOL
NyQuil
HALLS
Breezers
SUDAFED PE
PRESSURE+PAIN
Rexall
Chest Rub

Vs



People

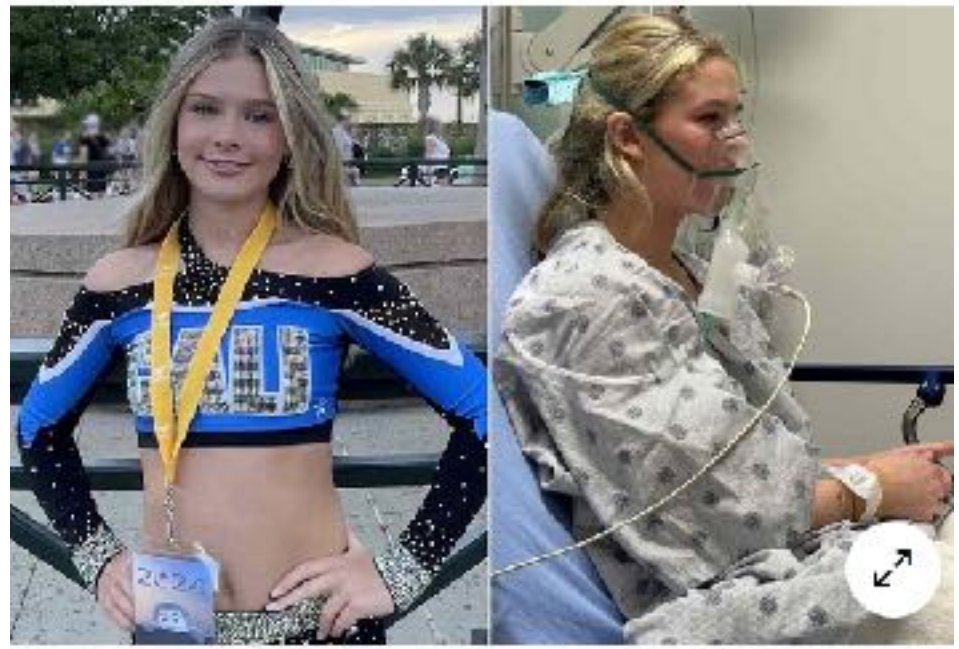
High School Cheerleader Left with 'Deadly Diagnosis' After Secretly Vaping for 3 Years

Brianne Cullen, 17, landed in the hospital with "popcorn lung," a chronic, irreversible condition

Cara Lynn Shultz

Wed, April 9, 2025 at 4:10 PM EDT
3 min read

1.2k



Kennedy News & Media

Brianne Cullen, 17, landed in the hospital with an... ...More

What about mental health?

- Why do we discuss addiction and mental health together?
- How does one impact the other and vice versa?
- Is it a coincidence that BOTH are on the rise?

Prefrontal cortex vs limbic system

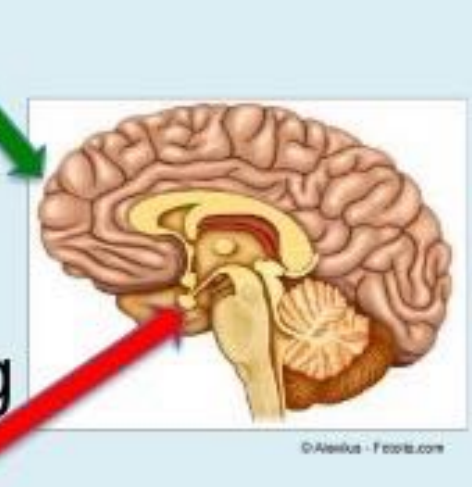
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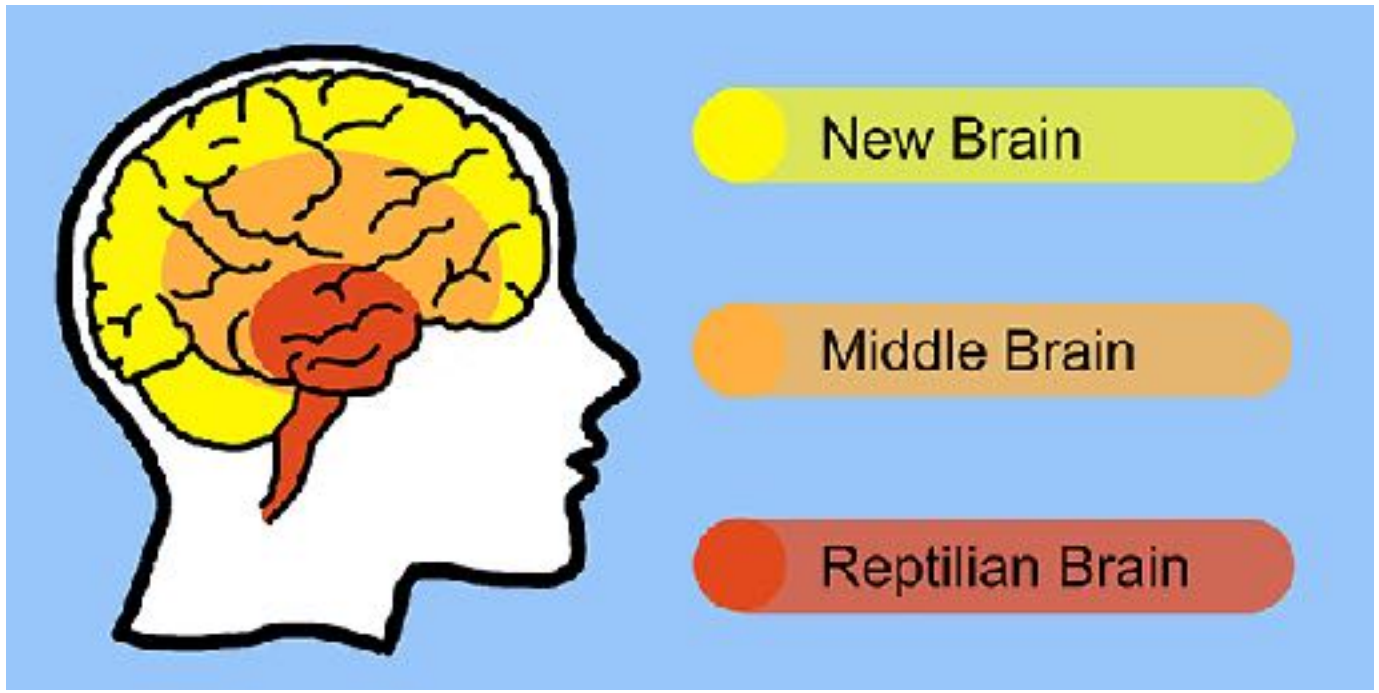
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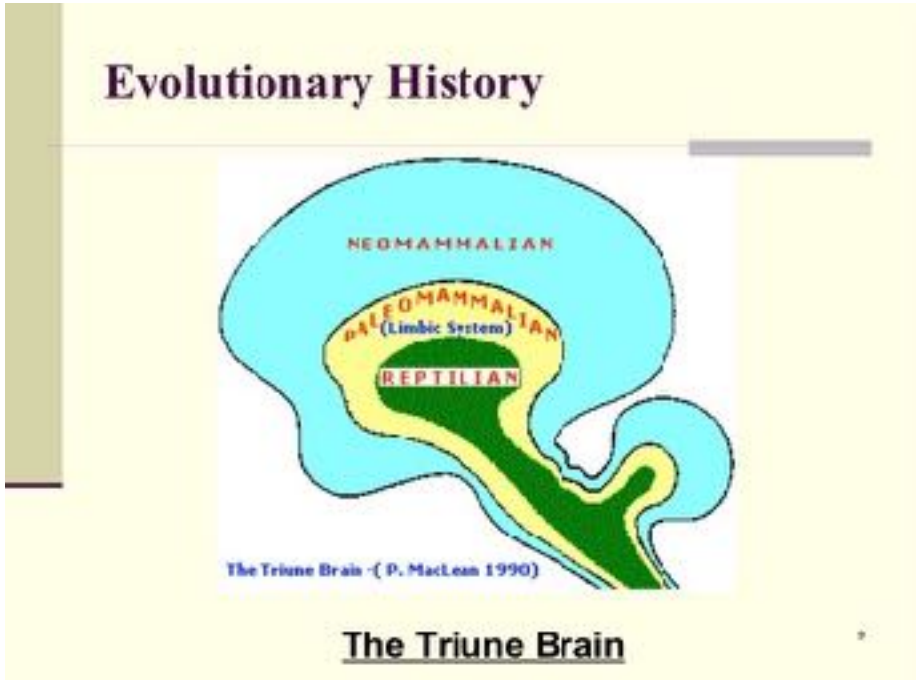
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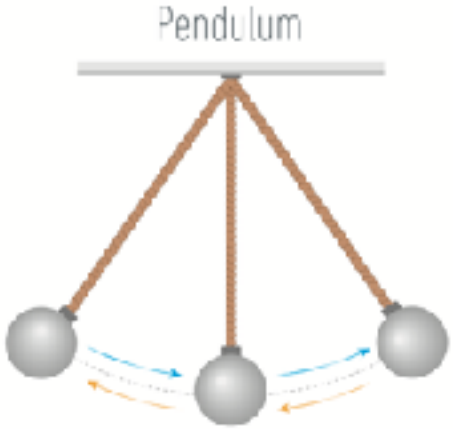


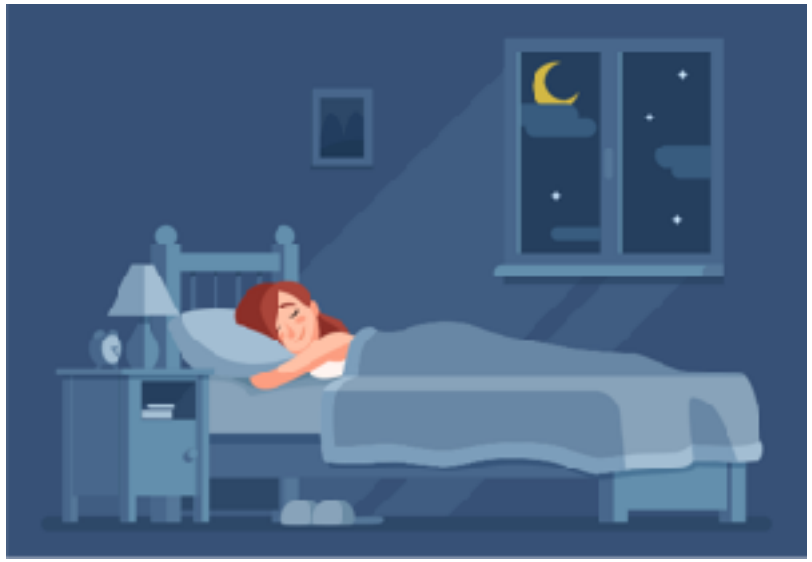

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Sympathetic Vs Parasympathetic

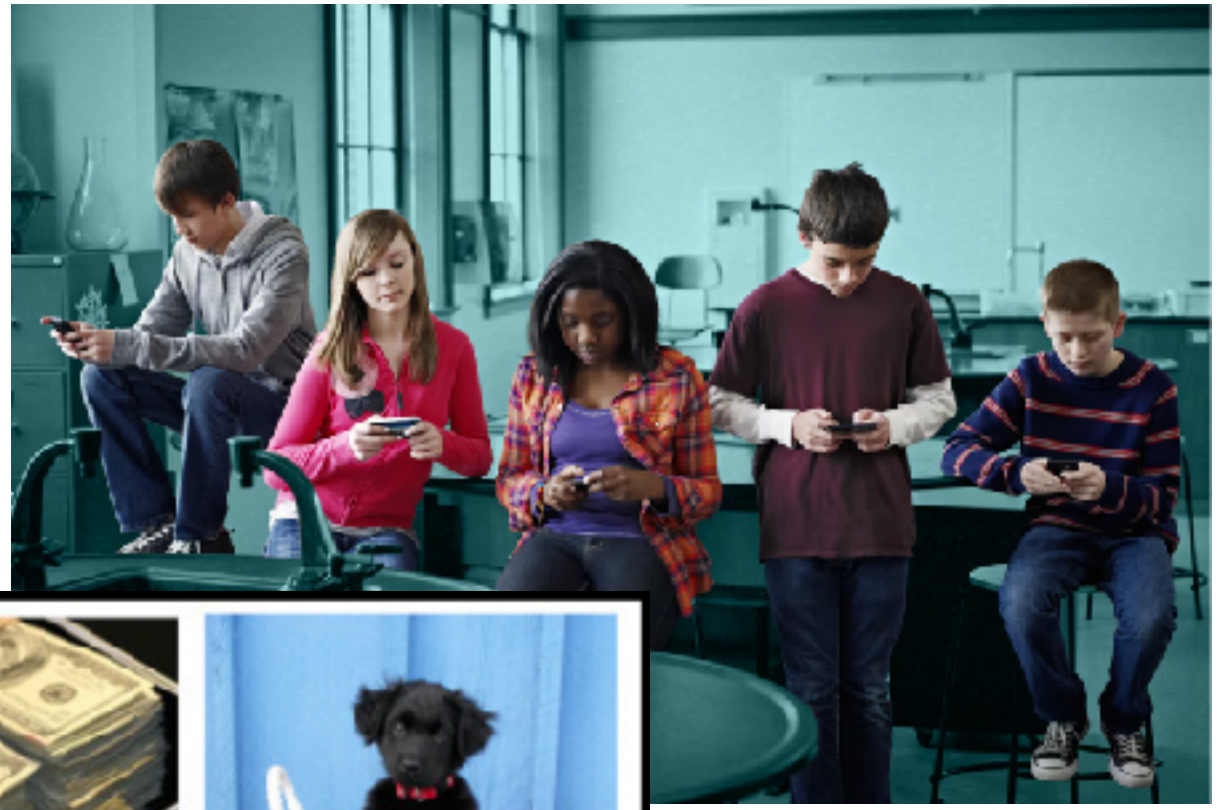


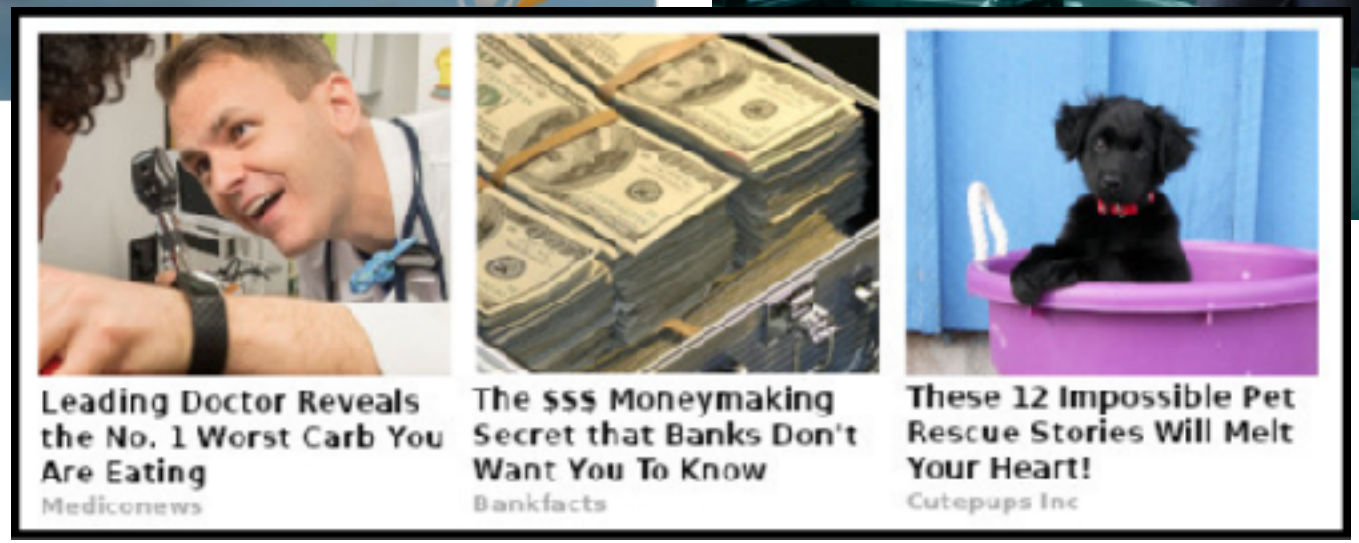




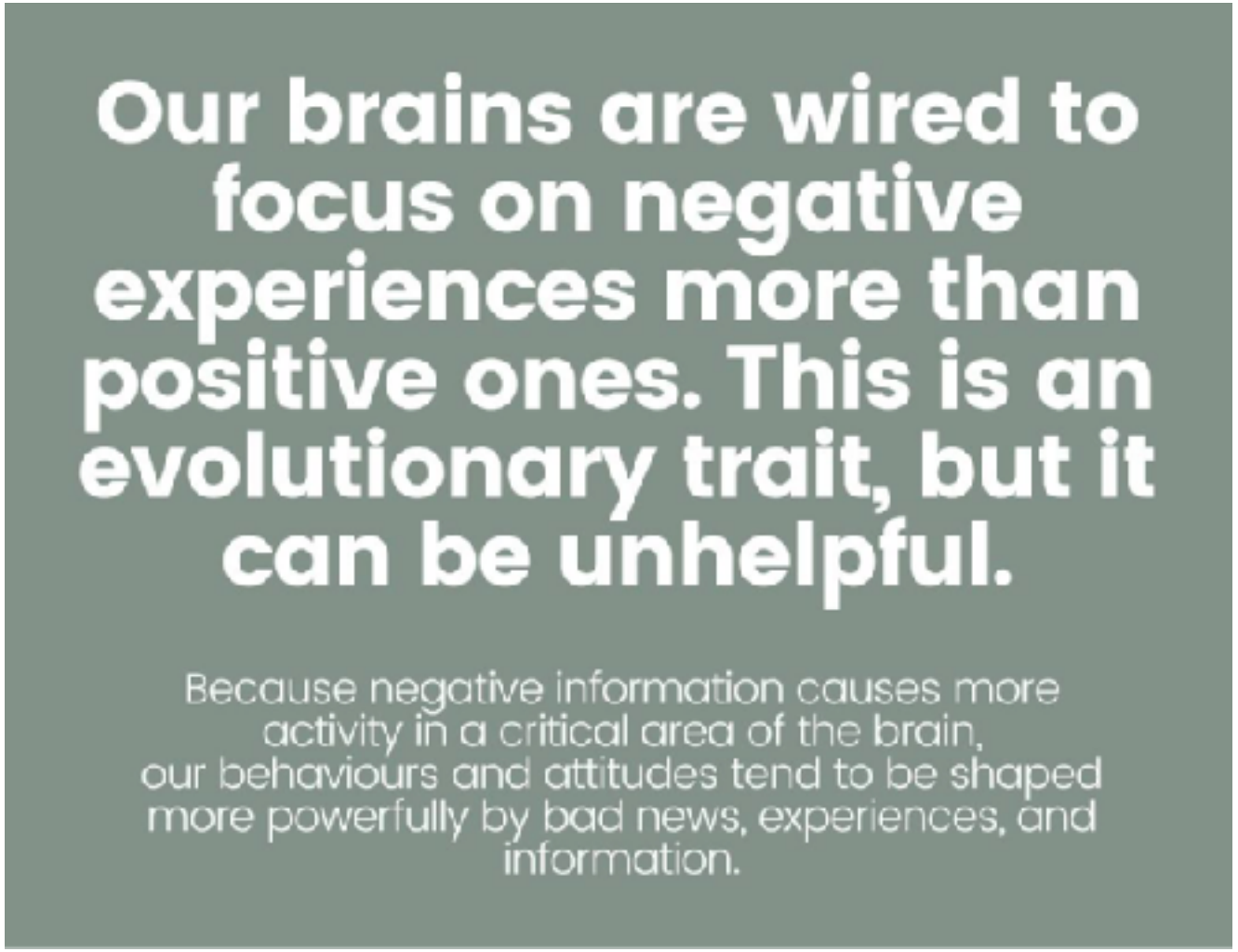
Sympathetic Stimulation?







Negativity Bias



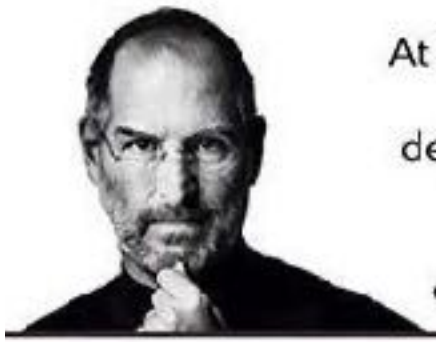
Regulating our Nervous System

- Sleep
- Healthy diet
- Movement
- Music
- Writing
- Art
- Interact with others
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Deep breathing
- Positive Self-talk
- Practice Compassion

USE these concepts to your Advantage



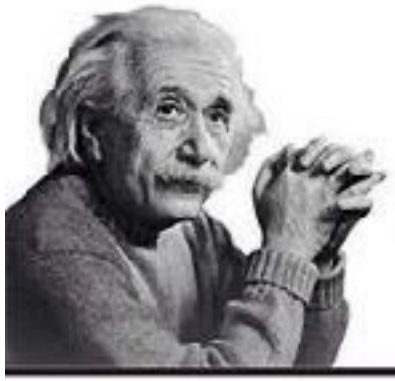
FAMOUS FAILURES



STEVE JOBS
At 30-years-old he was left devastated and depressed after being unceremoniously removed from the company he started.

WALT DISNEY
Fired from a newspaper for "lacking imagination" and "having no original ideas."





ALBERT EINSTEIN
He wasn't able to speak until he was almost 4-years-old and his teachers said he would "never amount to much."

OPRAH WINFREY
Was demoted from her job as a news anchor because she "wasn't fit for television."





MICHAEL JORDAN
After being cut from his high school basketball team, he went home, locked himself in his room, and cried.

THE BEATLES
Rejected by Decca Recording Studios, who said "We don't like their sound - they have no future in show business.



CLICHE, ANCIENT WISDOM, or NEUROSCIENCE?

- What does not kill you makes you stronger
- Show me your 5 best friends and I will tell you your future
- Practice makes perfect
- Do not react when emotional, come back with cool head

Neuroplasticity; The Key Point

- Your brain is constantly changing
- These changes are based on both;
    - external (what you feed it)
    - internal stimuli (how you talk to yourself)
- Therefore… **CHOOSE WISELY**

Is it a DISEASE or is it a CHOICE?







Does that matter?

Main Take-Home Points

- Addiction behaviors results from abnormal brain chemistry and physiology
- Your brain is constantly changing, feed it well!
- Once the first dose starts, brain changes BEGIN
- Prevention / Education should be a primary focus
- Neuroplasticity; can help/hurt… be wise; use it to accomplish YOUR goals!
- Mental Health plays key role; do the work to manage it well
- If we reduce addiction, everyone's life improves

Resources

Online

Internal Resources

- Safe 2 Say
  Text 723-2729 | safe2saypa.org/for-students
- Staff members (guidance counselors, teachers, paraprofessionals & others)
- Glade Run therapists

Mental Health/Drug & Alcohol Resources

- Glade Run Lutheran Services 724.452.4453 | gladerun.org
- The Care Center/SPHS - Provides individual therapy for drug and alcohol 724.234.1370 | sphs.org
- Gateway Counseling Center - Provides drug and alcohol and mental health services 1.800.472.1177 | gatewayrehab.org/services/adolescent-programs
- Charlie Health - Provides mental health and substance use telehealth services
  1.866.491.5196 | charliehealth.com
- Butler Crisis Hotline (for 24/7 help) 1.800.292.3866 or text 63288
- 211 Pennsylvania Get Connected. Get Help.™ (for 24/7 help) pa211.org

If you are struggling to find help or seek help, please call the Gaiser Center. We will work to help you get connected with the type of help you are seeking.
Call 724.287.8205 x122

Ellen O'Brien Gaiser CENTER

Leading Recovery Since 1971

gaisercenter.com

Thank You!

