



# Trauma Sensitive Forensic Practice

ST ANDREWS  
TRAUMA & NEURODIVERSE  
POPULATIONS EVIDENCE AND  
INNOVATIONS

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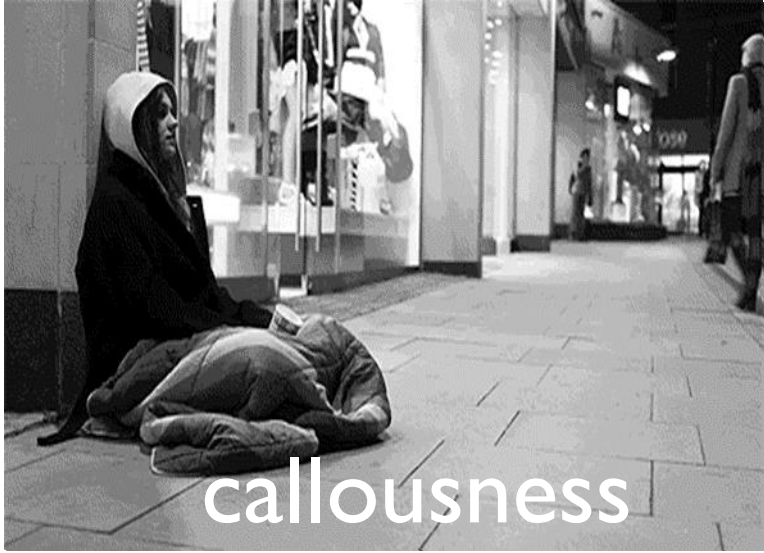
# TRAUMA AND ADVERSITY

		1	4+
Felitti et al (2009)	US citizens	52	6.2
Bellis et al (2014)	UK citizens	47	8
<p>People with Intellectual Disability are twice as likely to experience early life trauma and life time adversity.</p>			
Levenson et al (2014)	Men with sexual convictions	80/84	41/50
Taylor (2017)	Men with ID in secure hospital	100	80
Taylor (2021)	Men with ID in prison	100	83

People who cause harm to others are up to ten times more likely to have experienced early life trauma and life time adversity

# : POPULATION VARIATIONS





callousness

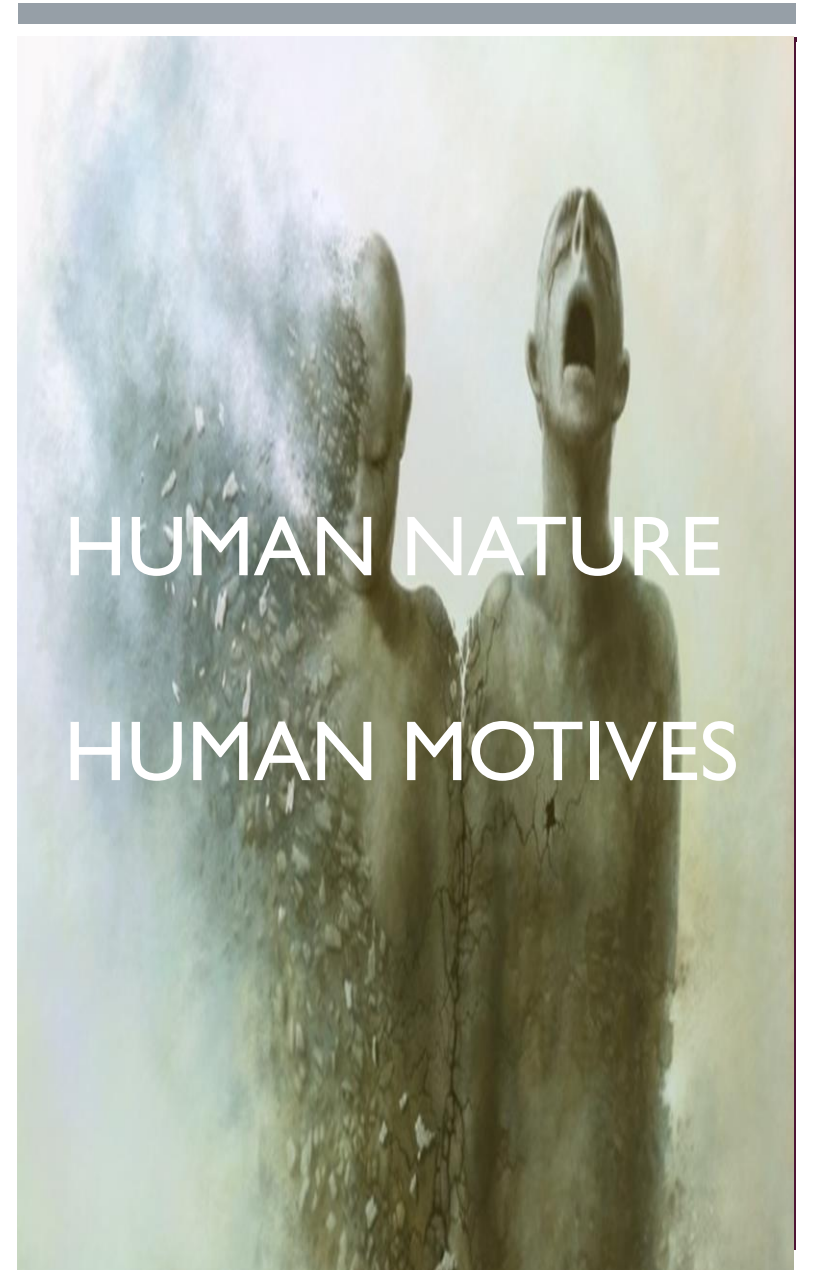


TNT #Legends

cruelty



compassion



HUMAN NATURE

HUMAN MOTIVES

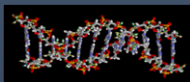
# Human Nature



Evolution



Genetics



Early life



Later life





Evolution operates very slowly



Evolution is not intentional



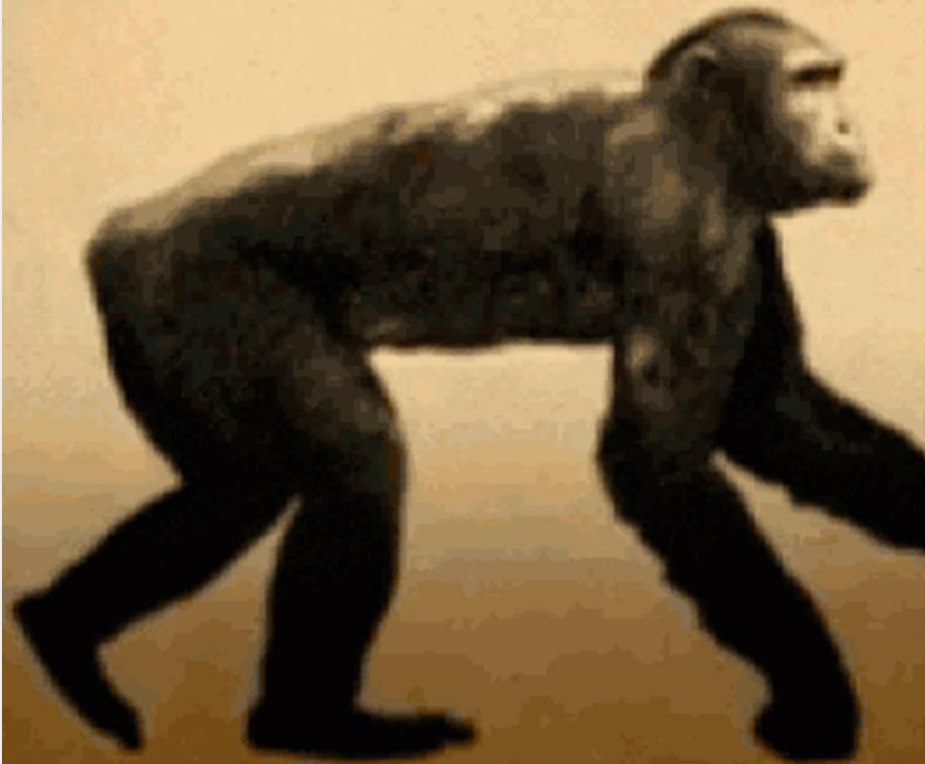
Characteristics that exist now were selected for in ancient ancestral environments.



Our brain has built on ancient architectures (old and new brain)



Which means that we can be organised by ancient motives and drives (rank, sexual competition, resources)



# Evolution

# Evolutionary gift I: A tricky brain

Old Brain Competencies:

Threat sensitivity and survival



**Tricky brain**



- **Motives:** harm-avoidance, food, sex, caring, status
- **Emotions:** anger, anxiety, sadness, joy
- **Behaviours:** fight, flight, shut down, courting, caring



## NEW BRAIN COMPETENCIES

Imagine | plan | anticipate |  
self-monitor | empathy |  
perspective-taking

Ruminate | predict | self-  
consciousness

Self-criticism | self-loathing |  
shame | humiliation



CREATING VIRTUAL CONTEXTS





**AGHGHGHGH !**

Everyone is looking at you

You idiot

OMG I'm so weird

Everybody else copes

**AGHGHGHGH!**



Evolutionary gift 2:

Group affiliation &  
need for  
connection



## Body and mind awareness



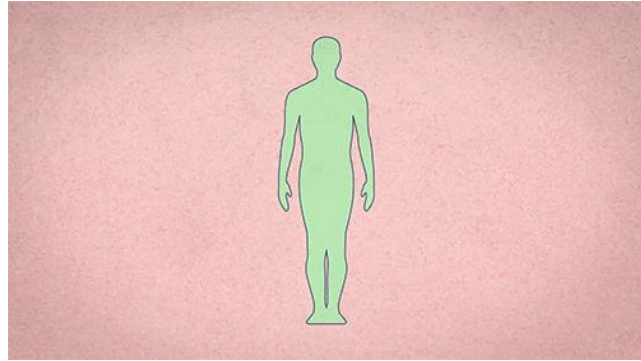
THE BODY  
KEEPS THE SCORE

Evolutionary gift 3:

Brain:body

connected and  
communicating

story follows state



# GENETICS

- We do not select the genes that build us.
- We are predisposed to certain characteristics
- We are not to blame for our predispositions
- Our early experiences may shape our phenotypic expression (epigenetics) which we then pass on to our own children (inherited trauma and adversity).





CHILDHOOD  
EXPERIENCES



ADULT EXPERIENCES

LIFE :WE LEARN WHAT WE LIVE (PHENOTYPIC SHAPERS)

# Our foundations for development



Secure early attachment:  
Secure relating:  
cooperation



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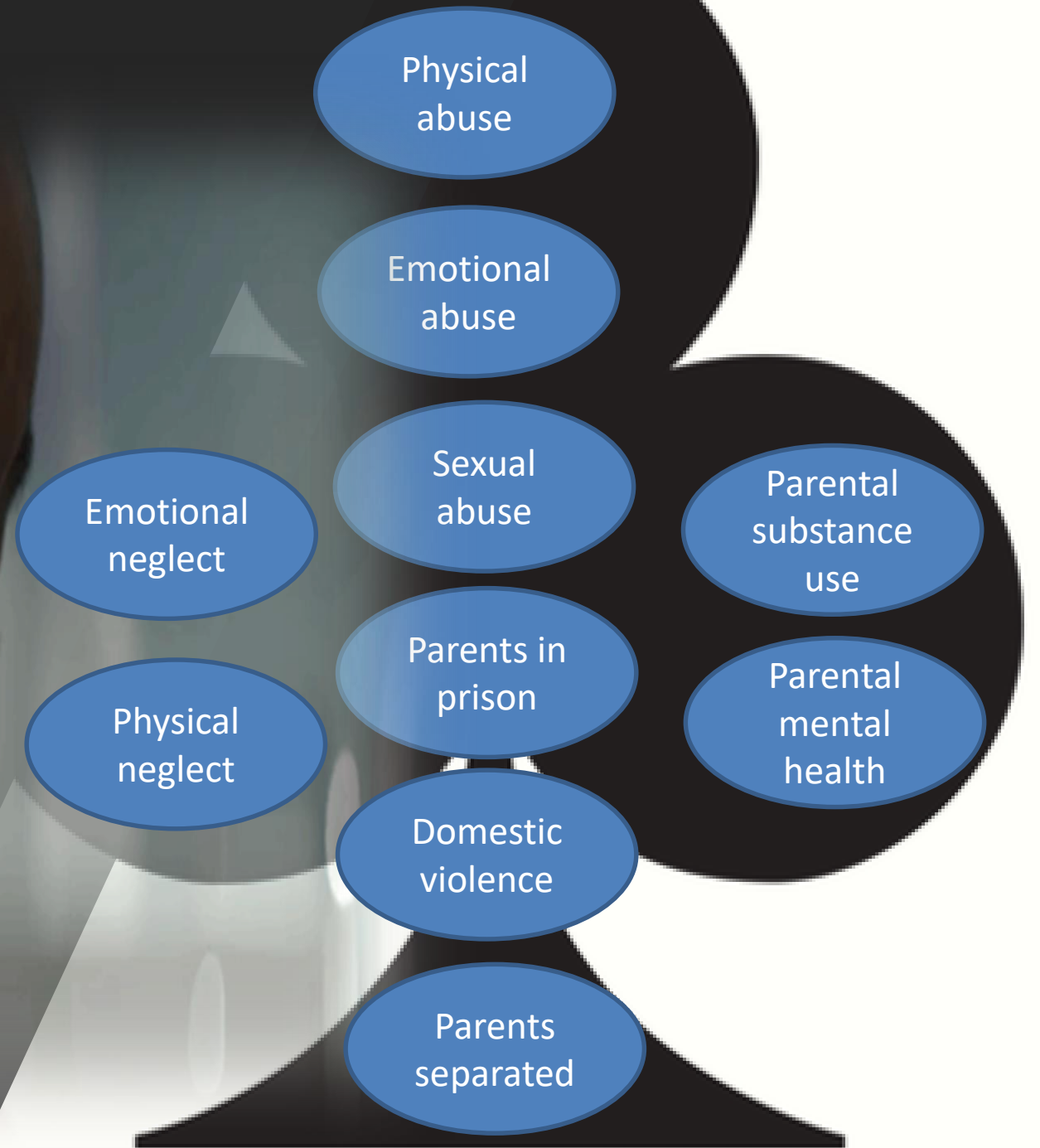
## TOXIC CARE EXPERIENCES

- Proximity seeking fails to secure care.
- Proximity seeking elicits cruelty.
- Experienced an insecure base.
- Experienced an unsafe haven.





# Developmental disruptions: Adverse Childhood Experiences



deprivation



threat



## Dimensional model of childhood adversity.

(Sheridan & Mclaughlin 2020)

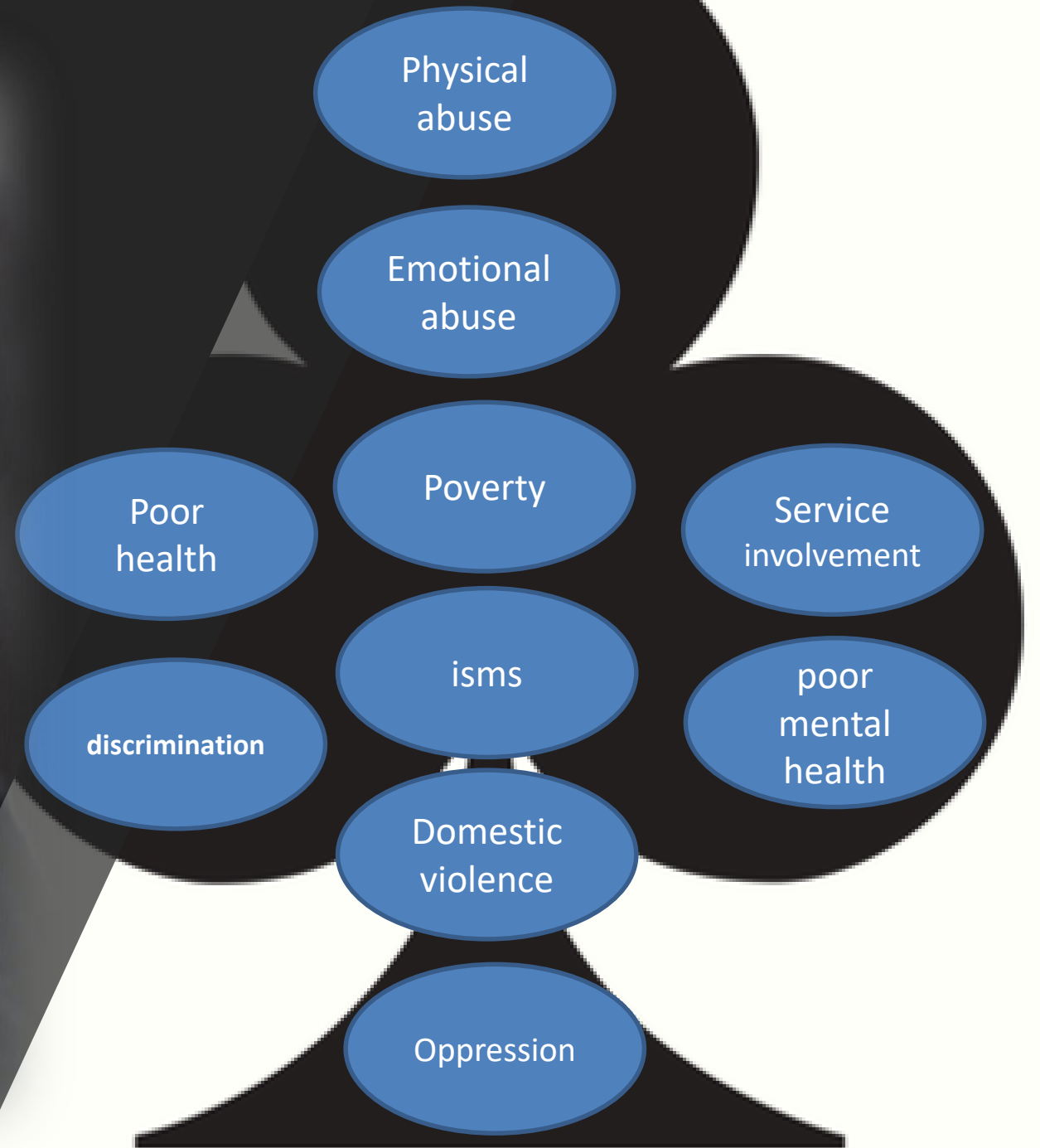
## Neuroimmune Network Hypothesis

(Nusslock & Miller 2016)

Disruptions in:

- Neurobiological
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Sensitised threat responses

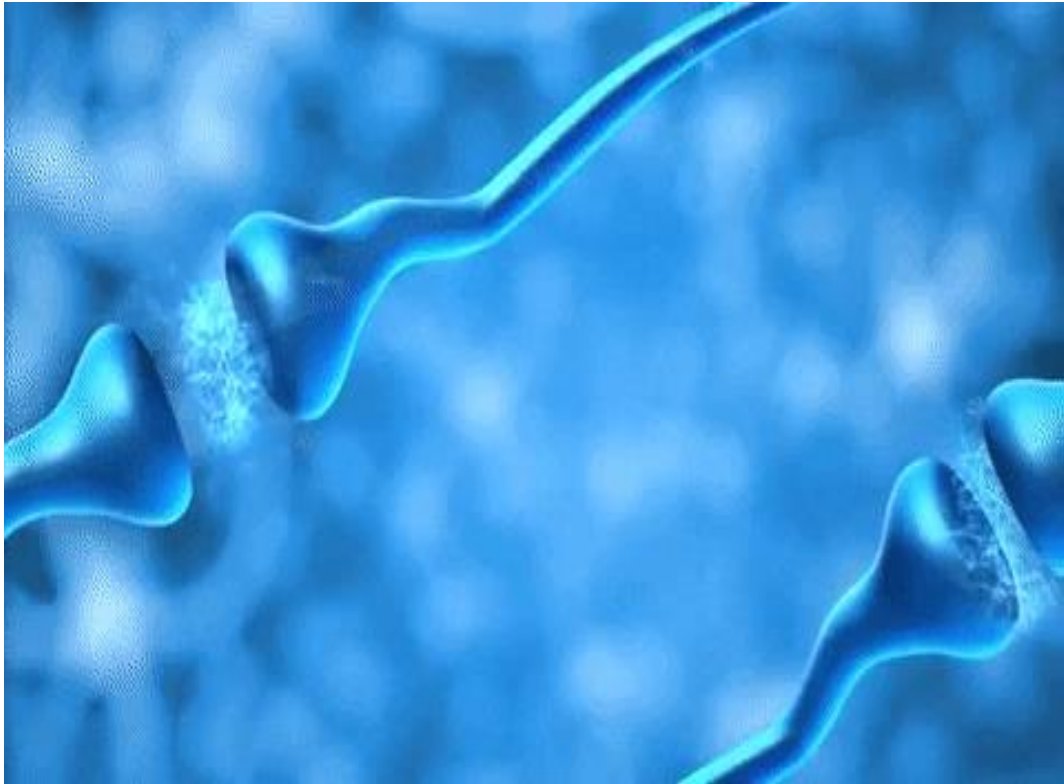
# Adverse Adult Experiences





OPPRESSION | DISCRIMINATION

# SYNAPTIC PRUNING



- Efficient neural pathways are preserved across development.
- Inefficient neural pathways are pruned away.
- Efficiency depends on the environment.
  
- The neural system that emerges is designed to be maximally efficient within the environment in which it developed.
- In the context of trauma this includes system one responses (intuitive, automatic, unconscious and effortless).

# CONTEXT : CONTEXT : CONTEXT



- If we can't tell what is a normal response to custody or long-term detention, then we could misconstrue normal behaviour as offence related, challenging or symptomatic
- Grief response (for liberty and family connection)
- Shame response (for behavior and impact on others)
- Impact on self-identity (patient, offender, challenging)

# ARE TRAUMA RESPONSES FIXED ACTION PATTERNS?



- Post Traumatic Stress **response**
- Cross cultural
- Cross species
- Ordered survival responses to high threat?
- Shaming social response to name as disordered...?

# Evolution, motives and the human mind



## Old motives

- Feeding
- Harm avoidance
- Resource acquisition
- Sexual competition
- caring



## New brain competencies

- Knowing awareness
- Knowing empathy
- Knowing intentionality

Adverse childhood/life experiences



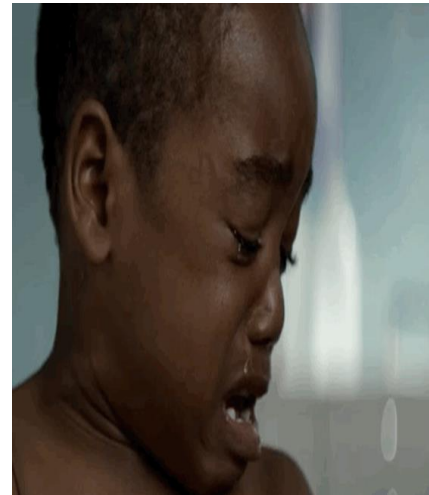
## outcomes

- Prosocial
- Neutral
- Antisocial

# Human capacities







# COMPASSION FOCUSED AND TRAUMA SENSITIVE FORENSIC PRACTICE:

Building interventions  
that incorporate  
human nature, early  
attachment  
experiences and  
adversity



## Forensic - Compassion Focused Therapy

Trauma sensitive working with  
people who have caused harm  
to others.

Jon Taylor & Kerensa Hocken

Psychoeducation: Human nature & evolved minds

Compassionate mind training

Autobiographical formulations

Adversity and trauma as facilitators of criminogenic capacities

Reconceptualising criminogenic need

Facilitating guiltcul tivating good lives & developing valid social roles

Therapeutic Alliance

COMPASSION  
FOCUSED  
FORENSIC  
PRACTICE: KEY  
POINTS

# CONTENT | PROCESS



- What are we working on?
- How are we going to work on it?
- What comes up in the room?
- What happens in the transference?
- How does this help us to understand our work together?

<b>N = 35</b>	<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Full Scale IQ</b>	<b>Sentence/tariff f (mth)</b>	<b>Served (mth)</b>	<b>Over-tariff (mth)</b>	<b>pre- convictions</b>	<b>ACEs</b>
<b>Mean (range)</b>	47.7 (26-60)	62.4 (53-75)	71.0 (18-180)	117.2 (25-282)	88.7 (47-168)	5.4 (0-20)	6.5 (2–10)

Tricky brain provides a de-shaming understanding of problematic behaviours

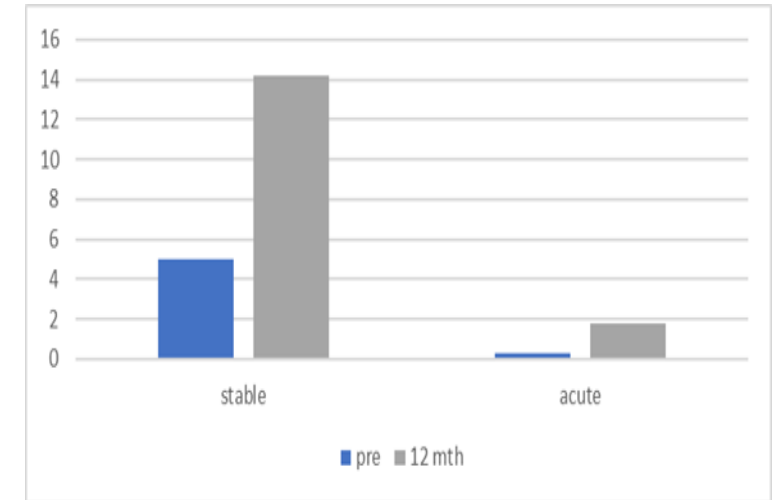
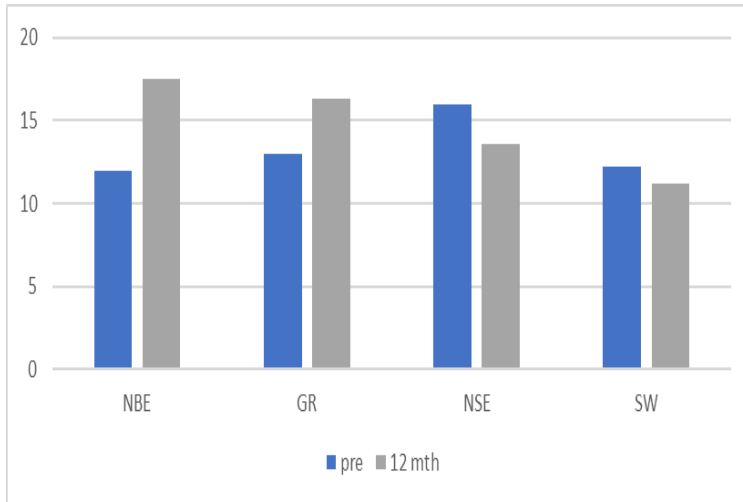
Non risk focused aspects of the group provided a broader understanding (we talk about all of me rather than “risky me”).

Opportunities to explore personal adversity facilitated trust

Opportunities to explore personal experiences facilitated risk focused work

Flexibility of the programme content created a more responsive and engaging context.

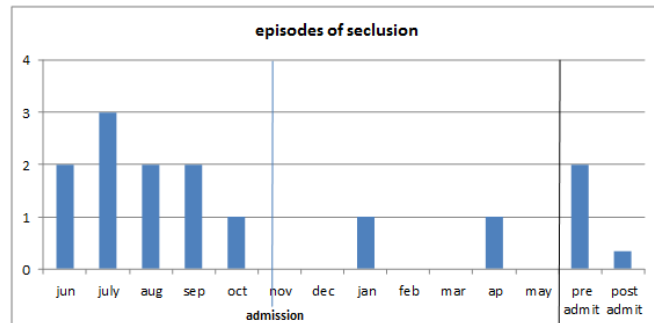
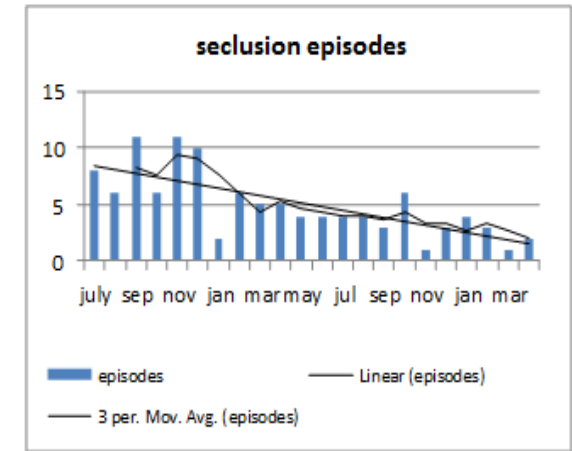
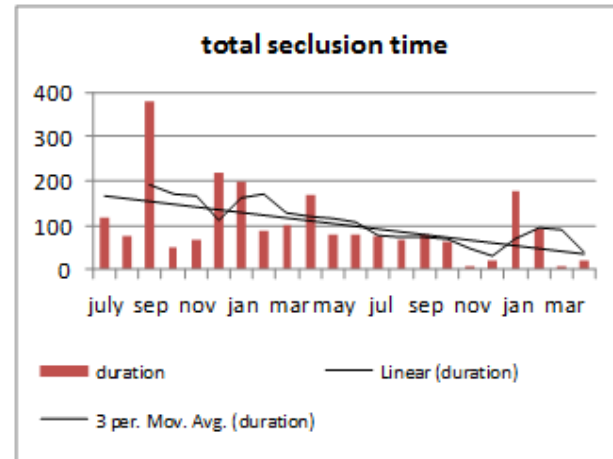
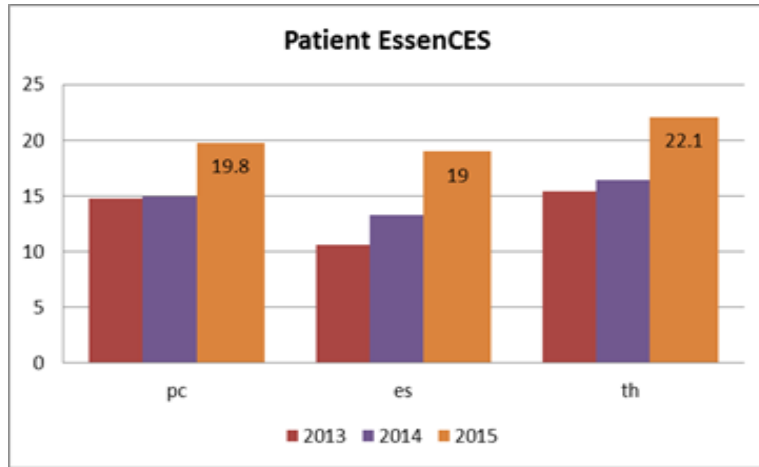
Willingness to explore the therapeutic relationship created a containing relationship.



## COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPY GROUP FOR MEN SERVING LIFE SENTENCES FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES

Taylor (2021); Hocken & Taylor (2021)

- Increased guilt
- Reduced shame
- Prepared to face the dark side (accept the presence of risk)

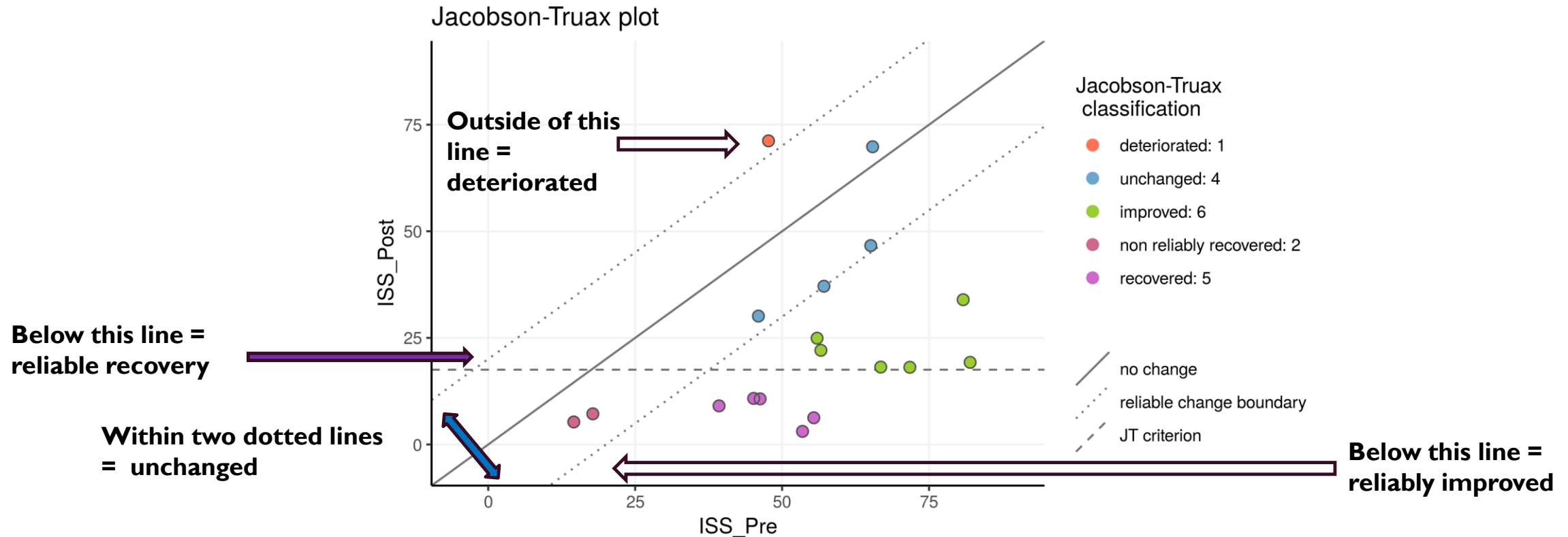


## AN EVALUATION OF A COMPASSION FOCUSED THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY FOR MEN WHO USE VIOLENCE TO MANAGE THEIR LIVES

(Taylor 2017; Taylor & Akerman 2022)

- Medium Secure Service
- Young adult men (av 24) with mild/ borderline Intellectual abilities.
- High levels of trauma histories, chronic adversity and multiple care placements

# THE AURORA PROJECT (Clayton, Hocken & Blagden 2022)



Jacobson-Truax criterion A: 17.5  
this value represents two sd from the dysfunctional norm mean

NB 1 participants scored below the recovery criterion at the pre-measurement - interpret their Jacobson-Truax classification with caution



**Forensic special interest  
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