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## Mindfulness and its Four Foundations in Therapy

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Buddhism and Psychotherapy Professional Training Course 6 Module 3

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2022

Day 2

# Contemplating heart-mind

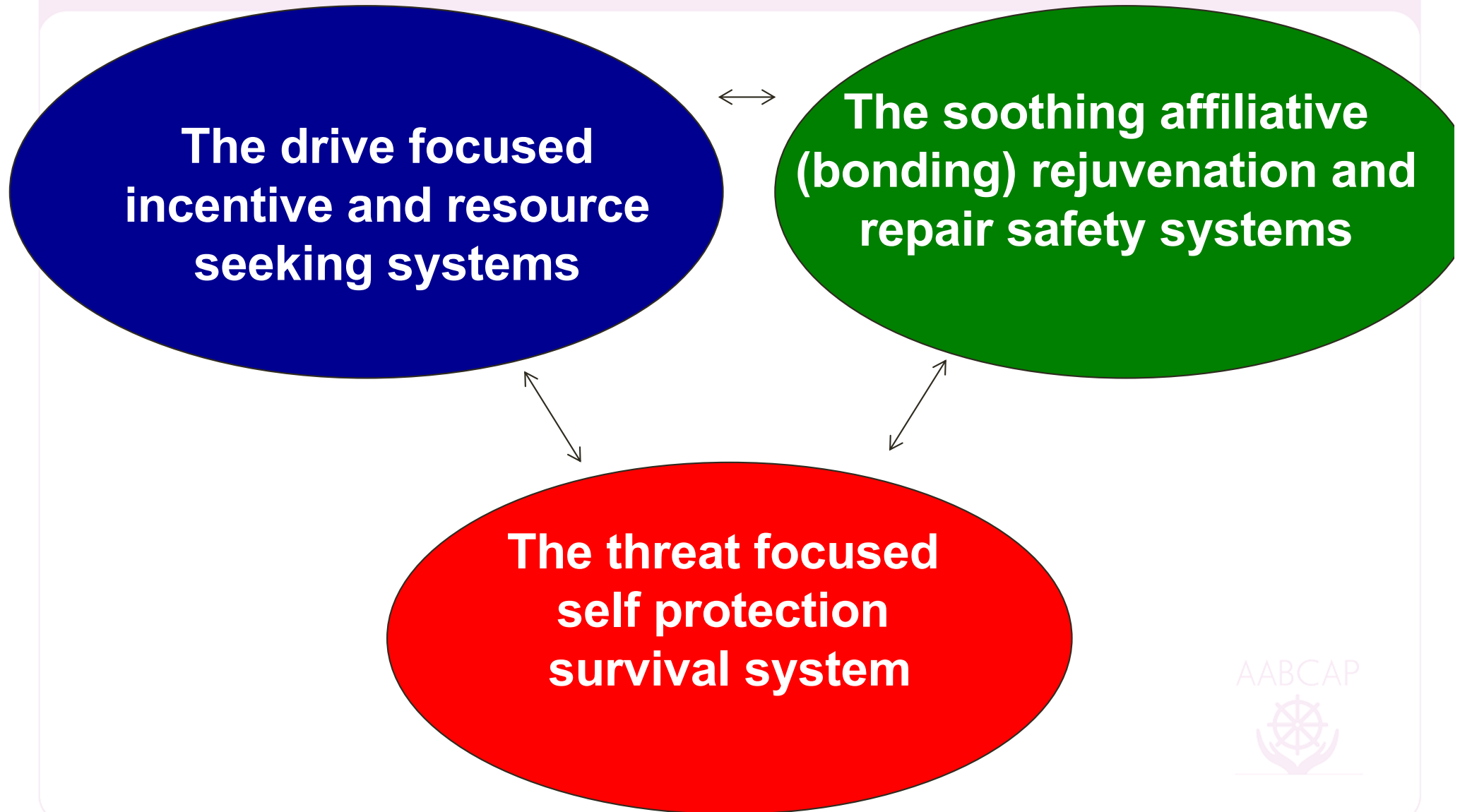
- Tuning into the frequency of the heart-mind.
- Exploring it with courageous energy.
- Seeing it from all angles (above, below and within).
- Tracking the experience.
- Being open, accepting and willing to let it be.

# Emotions

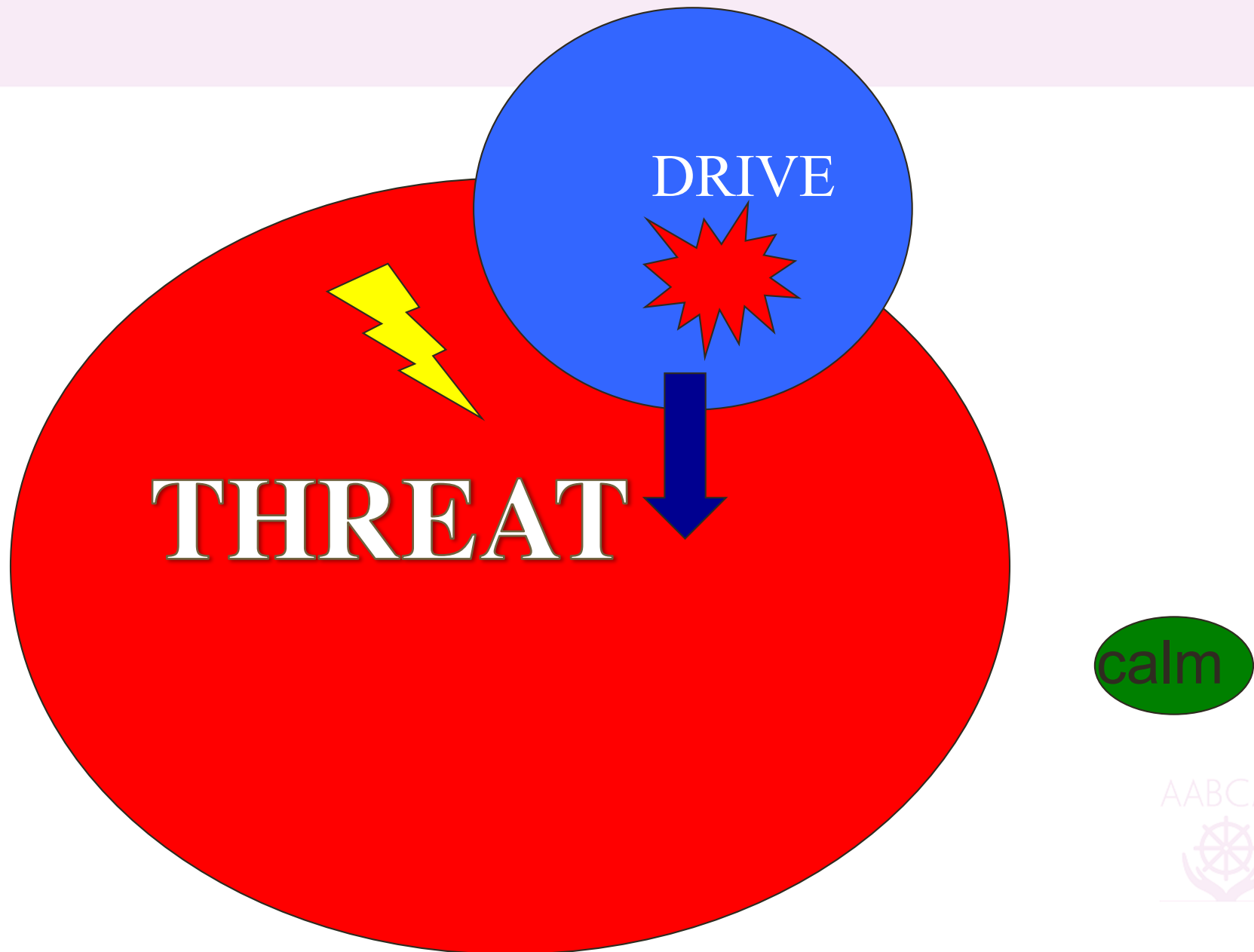
- Emotions serve a purpose
- At times they may not serve a positive function or may be destructive
- Destructive emotions can be distressing and lead to more suffering
- It is possible to allow destructive emotions to extinguish.
- It is possible to cultivate emotions that serve our purpose



# Three emotional regulation systems



# The system out of balance



# Balancing the system

One way to balance the system is by:

1. being mindful and seeing with insight then,
2. increasing and cultivating calm as well as the heart qualities: e.g. gratitude, peace, joy, loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity.





In Balance

Satisfaction/Contentment

Connection/Soothing

Safety/Security

# Working with painful emotions (1)

- Label them
- Let them be
- Surf reactive urges
- Avoid fuelling their story
- Shift attention to a different perspective e.g., the felt sense of emotions.
- Step back without disassociation
- Get unstuck





# Working with painful emotions (2)

- Experience them as waves
- Don't suppress, don't deny
- Embrace the emotion and practice willingness
- Bring kindness and compassion to the experience.
- Remember you are not your emotions
- See emotions from a perspective of “knowing” or “awareness”

# MSC-Name them, feel them then soften, sooth & allow-MSC

- Name the experience
- Feel it in the body
- Soften-relax into the experience and let go of resistance.
- Sooth-bring kindness and gentleness to the experience.
- Allow-bring openness and peace to the experience-let go of struggle.



# Altering one's perspective

- Be like a solid mountain in a storm
- Like the depth of a still lake
- See the emotion like a visitor to your home
- Understand the totality of the experience. Be with the spaciousness of your mind rather than identify with the distress.



# Wisdom

According to Thanissaro Bhikkhu:

- “the Buddha had a simple test for measuring wisdom. You're wise, he said, to the extent that you can get yourself to do things you don't like doing but know will result in happiness, and to refrain from things you like doing but know will result in pain and harm.”



# The fourth foundation (1): Dharma

A dharma can refer to an experience of something

*Dharma* can also refer to nature and to the over-all context of experience. How can we find meaning in life? How can we “read” our experience?

Understanding comes through an appreciation of context. Seeing the broad patterns in experience, we can understand how our lives can transform.



# The fourth foundation (2): Dharmas

- Phenomena that block well-being (five hindrances).
- Phenomena that aid well-being (seven factors of awakening).
- Phenomena from which we construct an identity-within-a-world, based on cognition (five aggregates) and affect (six sense fields).
- The four truths – seeing which indicates “awakening” (*bodhi*) itself.



# Contemplating phenomena (1)

- Noticing the interactions, what triggers what?
- How do thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and behaviours interact?
- When this is, how is that?



# Contemplating phenomena (2)

- Like working with schema:  
understanding the arising and passing,  
also understanding the possible  
causative and maintaining factors.
- Knowing how to respond in a way the  
abandons the unhelpful and cultivates  
the helpful.





# The five hindrances

1. Obsessive desire (*kāma-chanda*)
2. Aversion (*vyāpāda*)
3. Stiffness-&-dullness (*thīna-middha*)
4. Restlessness-&-worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*)
5. Paralysing doubt (*vicikiccha*)

Showing patterns of imbalances regarding *affect* (desire/aversion), *energy* (stiffness-&-dullness/restlessness-&-worry) and *will* (paralytic doubt).



# The seven factors of awakening

1. Mindfulness (*sati*)
2. Investigation of phenomena (*dhamma-vicaya*)
3. Energy (*vīriya*)
4. Rapture (*pīti*)
5. Tranquillity (*passaddhi*)
6. Unification (*samādhi*)
7. Equanimity (*upekkhā*)

Slide credit to Patrick Kearney  
PK 2011

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# Cultivating the factors

- *Mindfulness* gives rise to investigation.
- *Investigation* gives rise to sustained effort.
- *Energy* gives rise to rapture.
- *Rapture* tranquillises body and mind.
- *Tranquillity* of body and mind give rise to *unification*.
- All the previous nourish *equanimity*, which in turn nourishes all the others.

# Equanimity

With Theravada Buddhism- based on understanding that actions have consequences, and each individual is the owner of their own actions.

Understands that individuals are responsible for their own decisions and subsequent thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

With Mahayana - treating all beings as equally deserving of kindness and compassion, without being swayed by attraction or aversion, is emphasized.



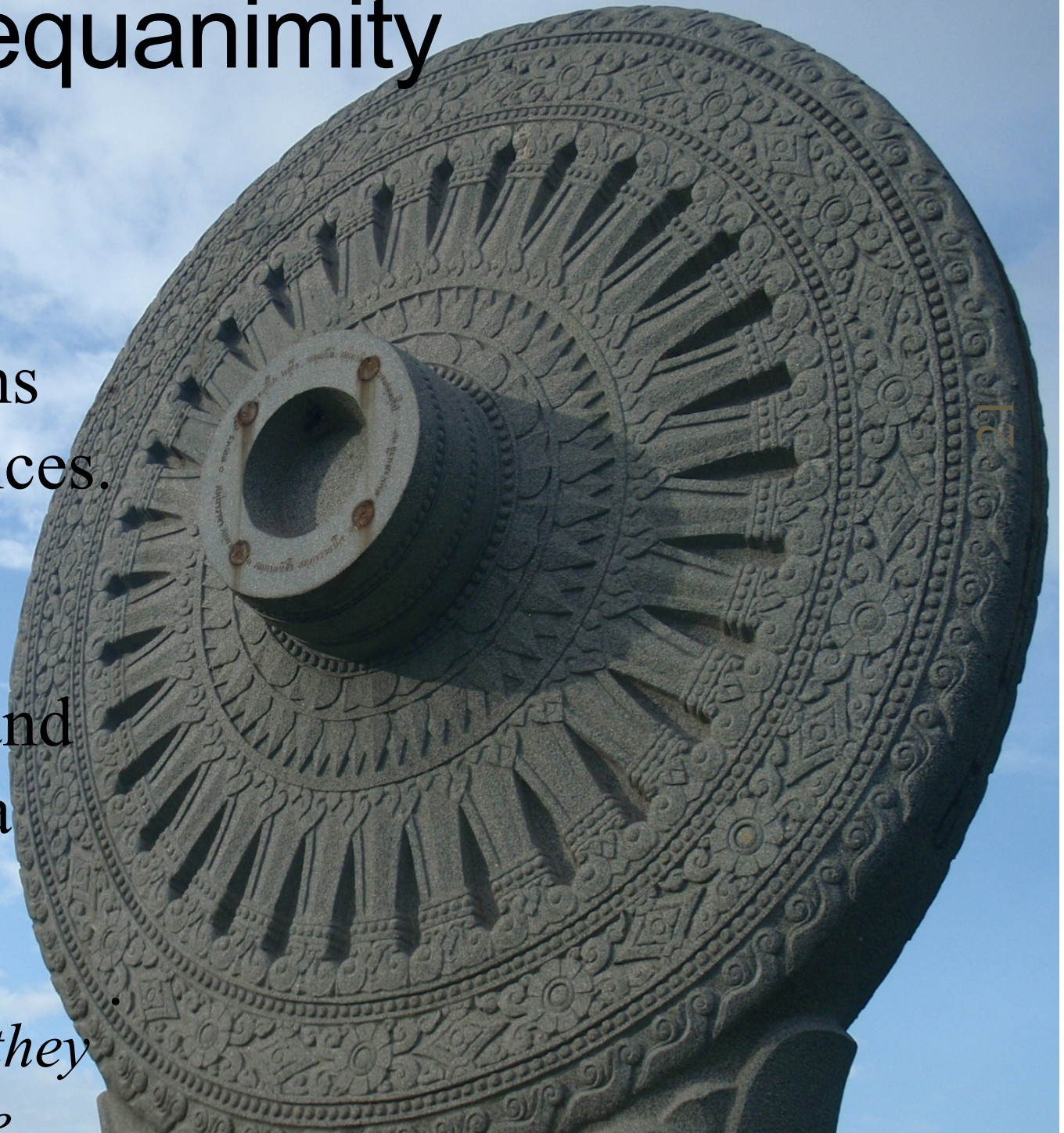


# Cultivating equanimity

- Reflect on the relationship between actions and consequences.
- Practice mindfulness
- Use *samadhi* and cultivate it as a divine abode

*Things are the way they*  
are

Malcolm Huxter 2019





# Focused attention

- With continued focused attention very pleasant joy can arise.
- When we focus on the bubbly joy it can develop into a more subtle happiness.
- When we focus on happiness, a more refined feeling of contentment can arise.
- When we focus on contentment, a deep sense of peace with equanimity can arise.



# Factors of neuronal development

- Duration-how many times and how long
- Intensity-engaging the senses
- Novelty-something new and different
- Salience-how it is relevant to you
- Interest – rewarding- pleasant



# Cultivating the positive-HEAL (Rick Hanson)

- H-Having, noticing or imagining or remembering a positive experience
- E-Enriching it with words, reminders, images and imagination.
- A-Absorbing into it. Like relaxing, sinking, and marinating into the experience
- L-Link or Learn. Linking it with a negative experience (only when the time is right)





# Negative bias

- Mistaking a coiled vine as a snake is a safer mistake than mistaking a snake as a coiled vine.
- HEAL can increase positive bias with positive associations



# Abiding in equanimity

- Apply the HEA (of HEA-L) principle with peacefulness.
- Enrich memories, associations, imagination, reminders, use images, reflect on wise beings, hear wise words, feel connection with something deeply peaceful and wise---e.g. compassionate friend exercise.
- Absorb into, marinate in, soak in centred, still and calm and quiet peacefulness.
- Link with an MILDLY unpleasant event



A photograph of a Buddha statue, likely made of stone or wood, with a white cloth draped over its arm. The statue is surrounded by green leaves, possibly from a tree. The text "Thank you" is overlaid in white.

Thank you

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Dedication of merits