

Rejection Sensitivity & Perfectionism

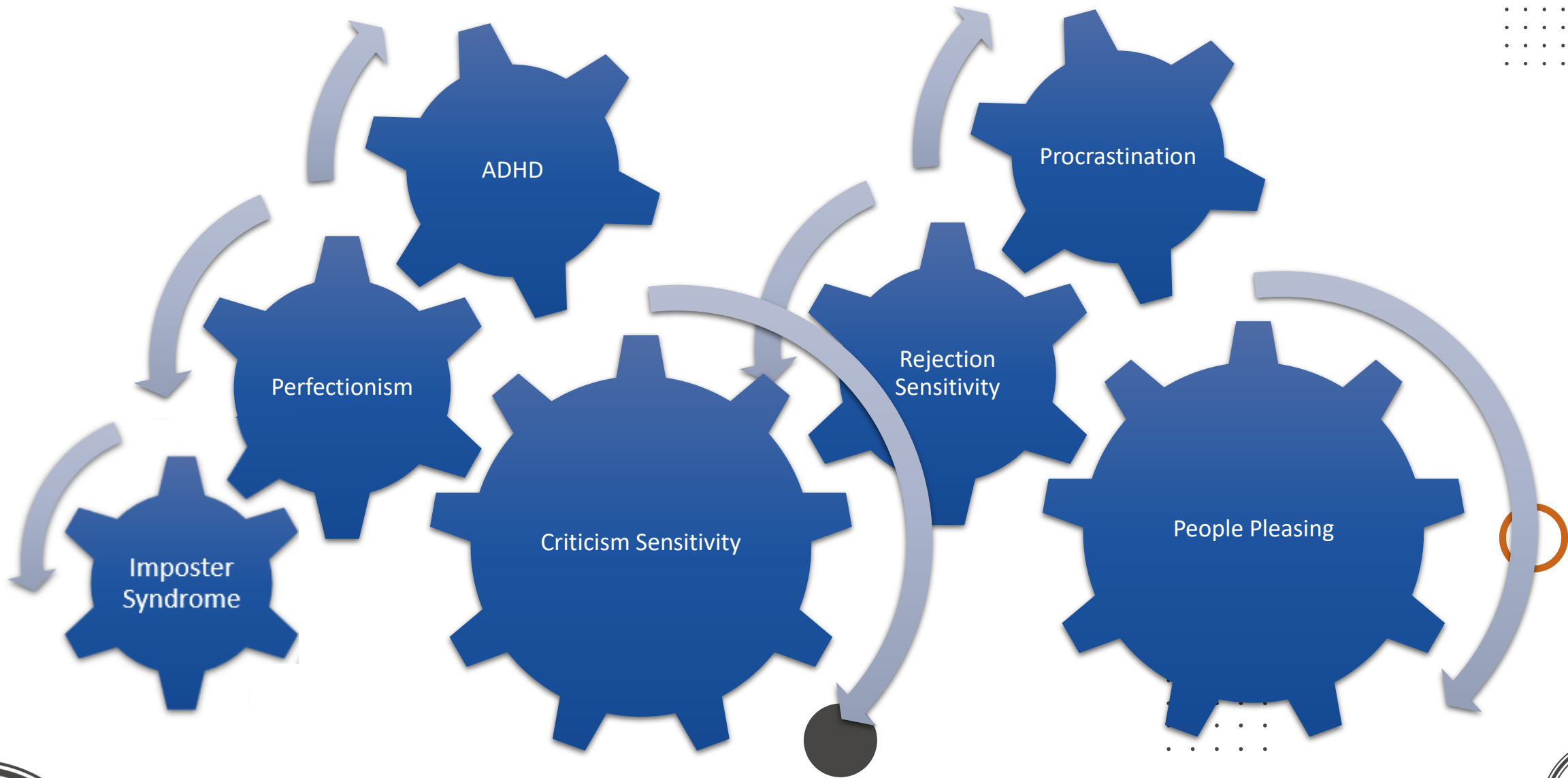


9th December 2025

Agenda

- ADHD
- Rejection Sensitivity *Dysphoria*
- Perfectionism
- Procrastination
- People Pleasing
- Imposter Syndrome
- Emotions







*In the world of ADHD,
ignorance remains public
enemy number one.*

Dr Edward Hallowell



Executive Function
'disorder'

DMN & TPN 'switch'

ADHD

Dopamine
'Deficiency'

Cognitive processing
'errors'



A neurotypical



EF's
Deficit



Dopamine
Deficiency



DMN/TPN switch
'problem'



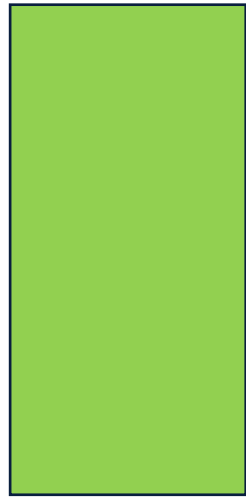
Cognitive Skill
Deficiency



ADHD person 1



EF's
Deficit



Dopamine
Deficiency



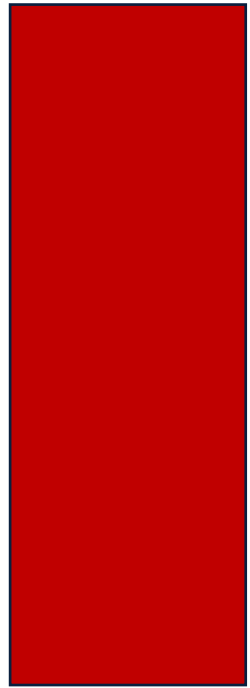
DMN/TPN switch
'problem'



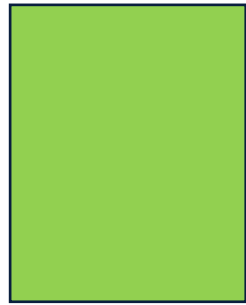
Cognitive Skill
Deficiency



ADHD person 2



EF's
Deficit



Dopamine
Deficiency



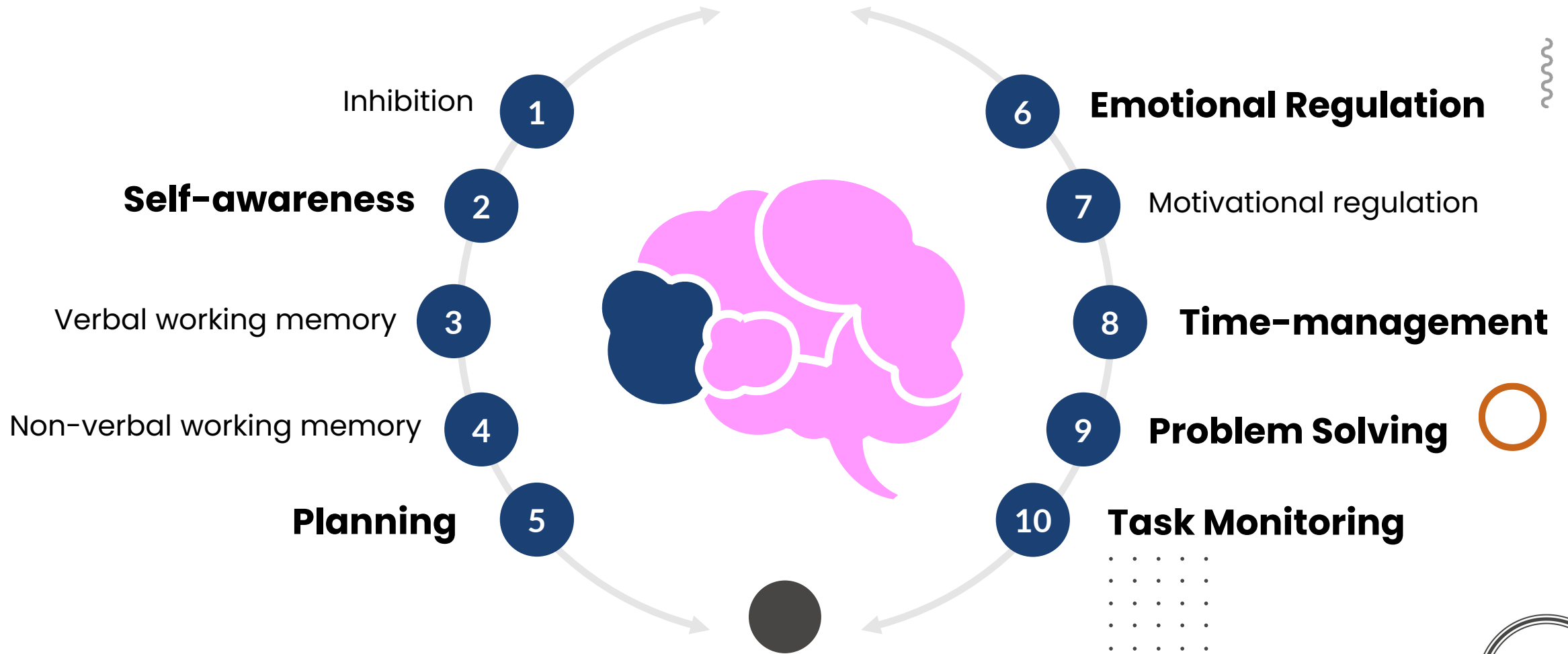
DMN/TPN switch
'problem'



Cognitive Skill
Deficiency

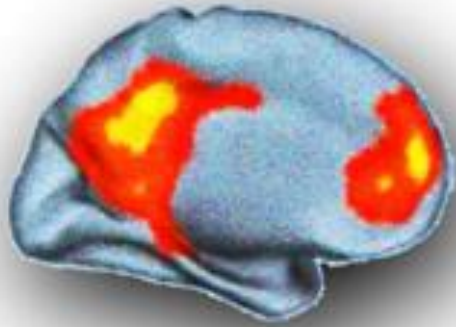


Executive Functions



The DMN and TPN

Default Mode Network
more active at rest (task-negative)
mind wandering



Attention Network
more active during tasks (task-positive)
engaged attention



The ADHD brain is meant to be multi-directional



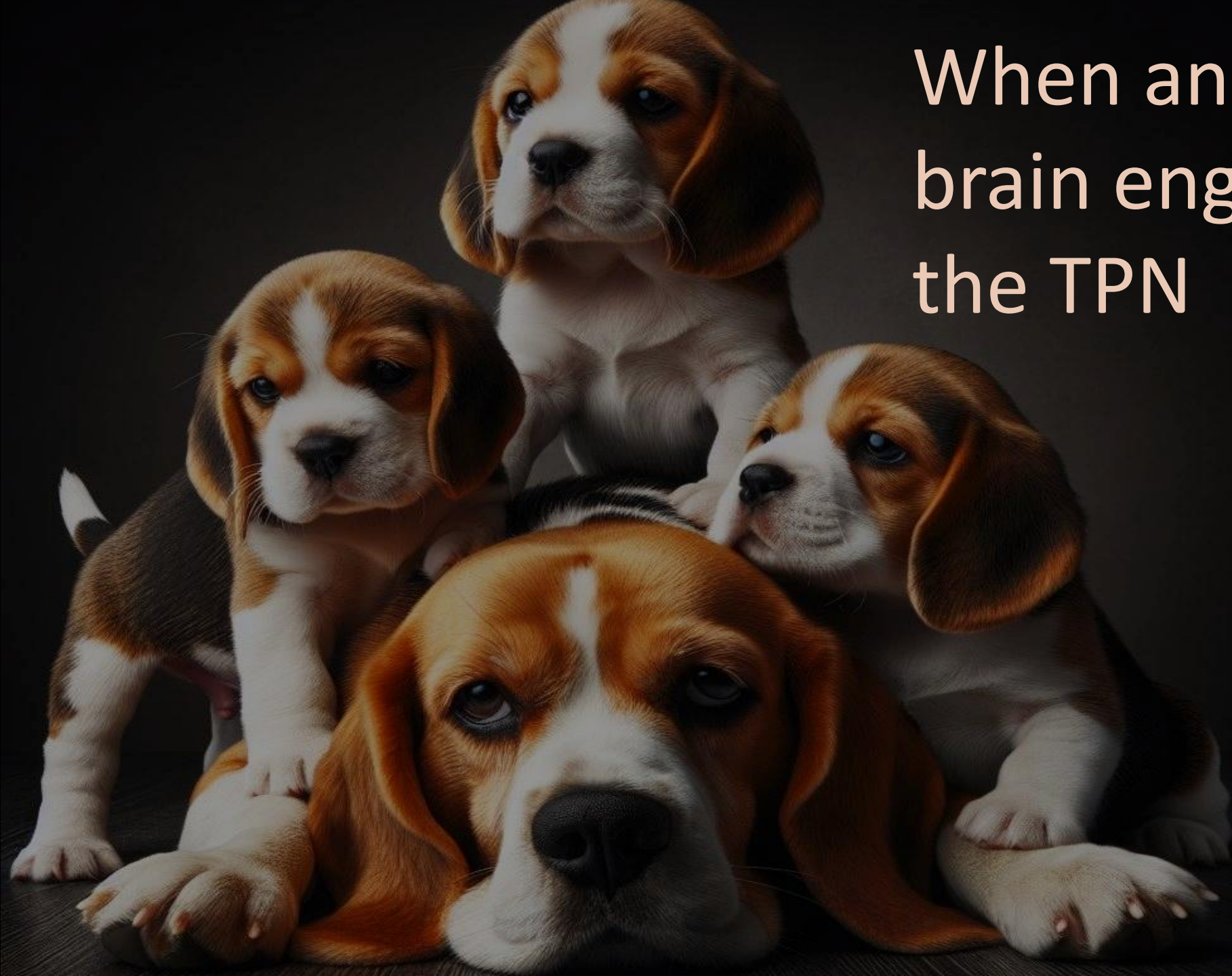
The default mode network (DMN)

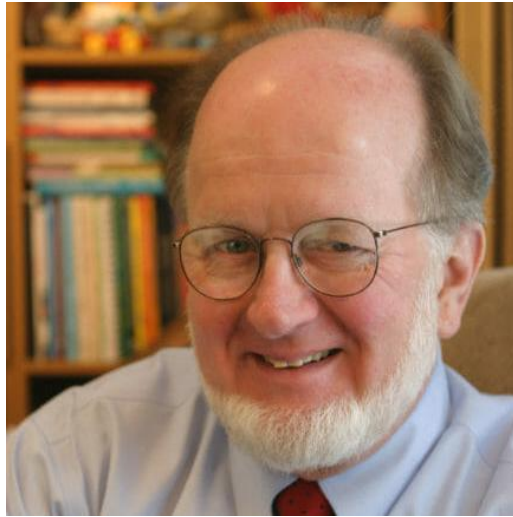
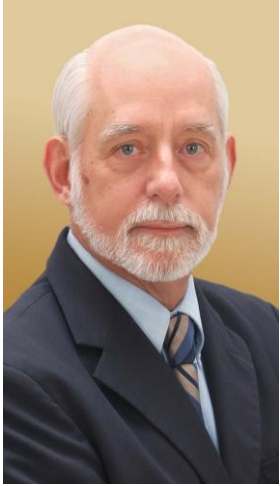




What happens when
a neurotypical
engages the TPN

When an ADHD
brain engages
the TPN





Dr William Dodson




Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria

RSD is an informal label used by Dr William Dodson

From ADDitude Magazine

Heightened emotional response associated with ADHD related sensitivity to rejection, criticism, teasing, or own perception of failure or falling short.



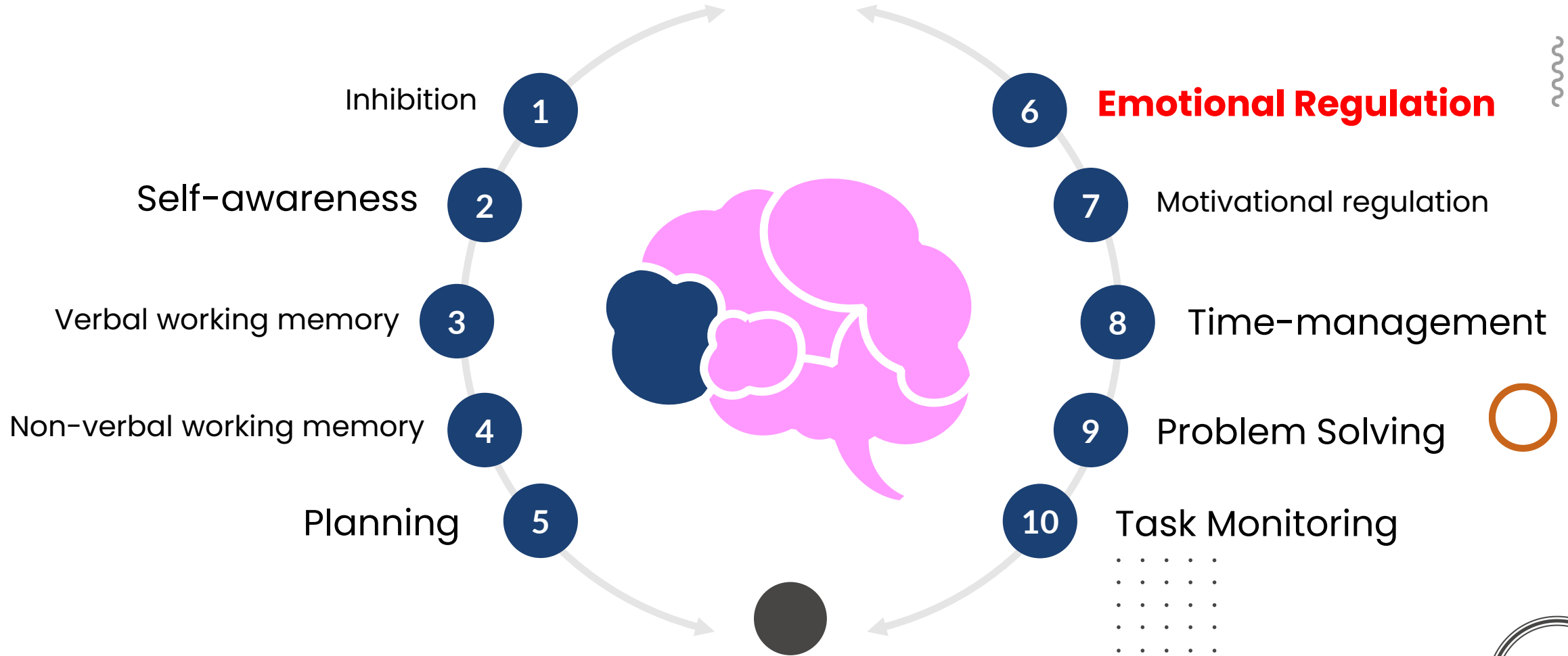
Rejection Sensitivity Dysphoria

Dr. William Dodson ~

If a patient does not benefit from medication, **they have little control over an episode of RSD** once it begins. The incidents have to run their course. Some people with ADHD, however, report that getting interested in something new and fascinating can help to end an RSD episode more quickly than it would otherwise. In my clinical experience, neither coaching nor traditional psychological or behavioural therapies offer any prevention or relief from impairments.



Executive Functions



8 unhealthy Emotions

Anxiety

Anger

Depression

Guilt

Envy

Jealousy

Hurt

> Rejection by others > shut down or people please

Shame

> Our own view of ourselves

} Overestimate

Rejection Sensitivity

Linked to Emotional regulation

A problem that interferes with your ability to regulate your emotional responses to feelings of failure, criticism and rejection.

CAN be treated with psychotherapy



Rejection Sensitivity

William Dodson and others, estimate a 10-year-old with ADHD has received an extra 20,000 negative comments.

This programs us. We believe the comments.

Why can't you sit still like everyone else?

What's wrong with you?

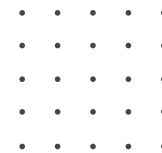
You're too sensitive

You're a daydreamer

You don't pay attention

You don't put in any effort

You need to be like the other children!



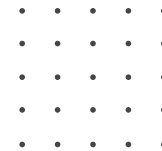
4 stages of Cognition

Stage 1 – Facts

Stage 2 – Start to add to the facts / may not be facts / no emotion yet

Stage 3 – Add further to the story / Unlikely to be facts / partial emotion

Stage 4 – Conclusion / very likely false / full emotion



4 stages of Cognition

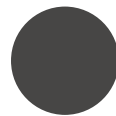
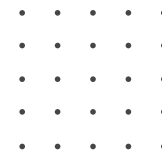
Stage 1 – My teacher shouted at me saying I need to be like the other children

Stage 2 – My teacher shouted at me saying I need to be like the other children which means I'm the worst child in the class.

Stage 3 – My teacher shouted at me saying I need to be like the other children which means I'm the worst child in the class. I have no hope.

Stage 4 – My teacher shouted at me saying I need to be like the other children which means I'm the worst child in the class. I have no hope. I'm a failure who will never succeed.

DMN!



The default mode network (DMN)



Exercise

Think of a time you were rejected/criticised

Write it down

What did being rejected/criticised mean?

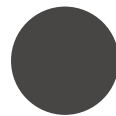
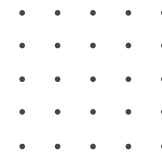
How can you ensure you protect yourself against the above? >> [New Belief](#)

Is that meaning true?

Where's your evidence?

Is it helpful to have that belief?

Is there a healthier alternative belief?



Rejection Demands

I must not be rejected

I must be accepted

I must not make a mistake

I must produce perfection

I must impress

I must be liked

I must be loved

I must be approved of

People pleasing

Perfectionism

“refusal to accept any standard short of perfection”

Demand unrealistically high standards

Focus on results

Feel depressed by *unmet* goals

Unproductive

Fear of failure and/or judgment

Critical self-evaluation

Self-worth based on results

Can lead to procrastination



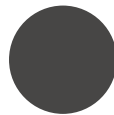
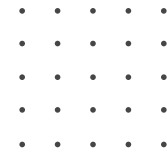
Perfectionist Demands

I must achieve perfection

I must not make a mistake

I must impress

My work must be flawless



Procrastination

“The action (art) of delaying or postponing something”

Think of a time you procrastinated. What were you avoiding?

Why were you avoiding it?

If you had done it there and then how do you think you would have felt?

What did you do to avoid it?



Procrastination
IS NOT the
avoidance of a
hard task



Procrastination
is the
avoidance of
EMOTION of
the task



Procrastination

“I don’t know what to do”

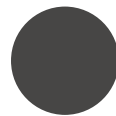
I should know what to do. It’s awful that I don’t. I can’t stand it. It means I am stupid etc.

“I don’t know how to do it”

I should know how to do it. It’s awful that I don’t. I can’t stand it. It means I am worthless.

“I’ll do it when I’m ready” – TEMPORARY relief.

“I just need to do ‘Y’ first” – TEMPORARY relief. I don’t feel stupid now, but I will again soon. More procrastination, more relief





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Slides etc –

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