

# Intelligent Compassion and the Science of Persuasion

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# Unintended Consequences?

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A 2009 study found that death warnings trigger stress and fear in heavy smokers—exactly what public health officials hope for. Unfortunately, this anxiety then triggers smokers' default stress-relief strategy: smoking.

# Conservatives Are Purposely Making Their Cars Spew Black Smoke To Protest Obama and Environmentalists

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“To get a single stack on my truck—that’s my way of giving them the finger,” he added. “You want clean air and a tiny carbon footprint? Well, screw you.”

“coal rollers” use their toxic exhaust as revenge against “nature nuffies” who drive environmentally friendly cars.



# Bold Statement

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The fundamental neuroses of our time involve  
**FRAGMENTATION**

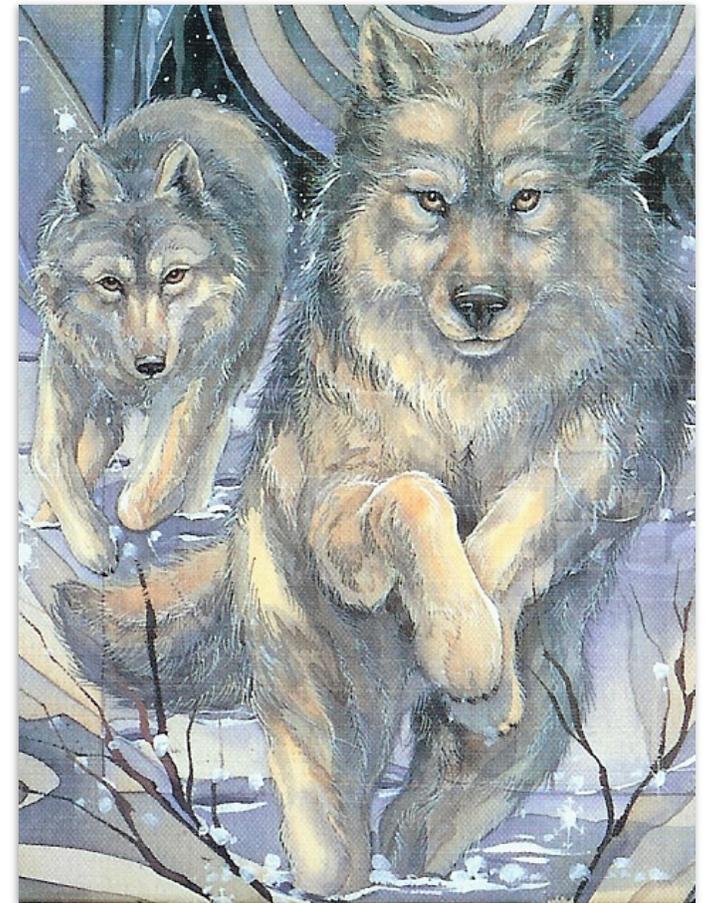
- In our relationships with ourselves, others and the environment
- Works against change by creating certainty and fear

**Intelligent Compassion is the antidote**

# Two Wolves

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A First Nations grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said 'I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is the frightened and reactive one. The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one.' The grandson asked him, 'Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?' The grandfather answered: 'The one I feed.'





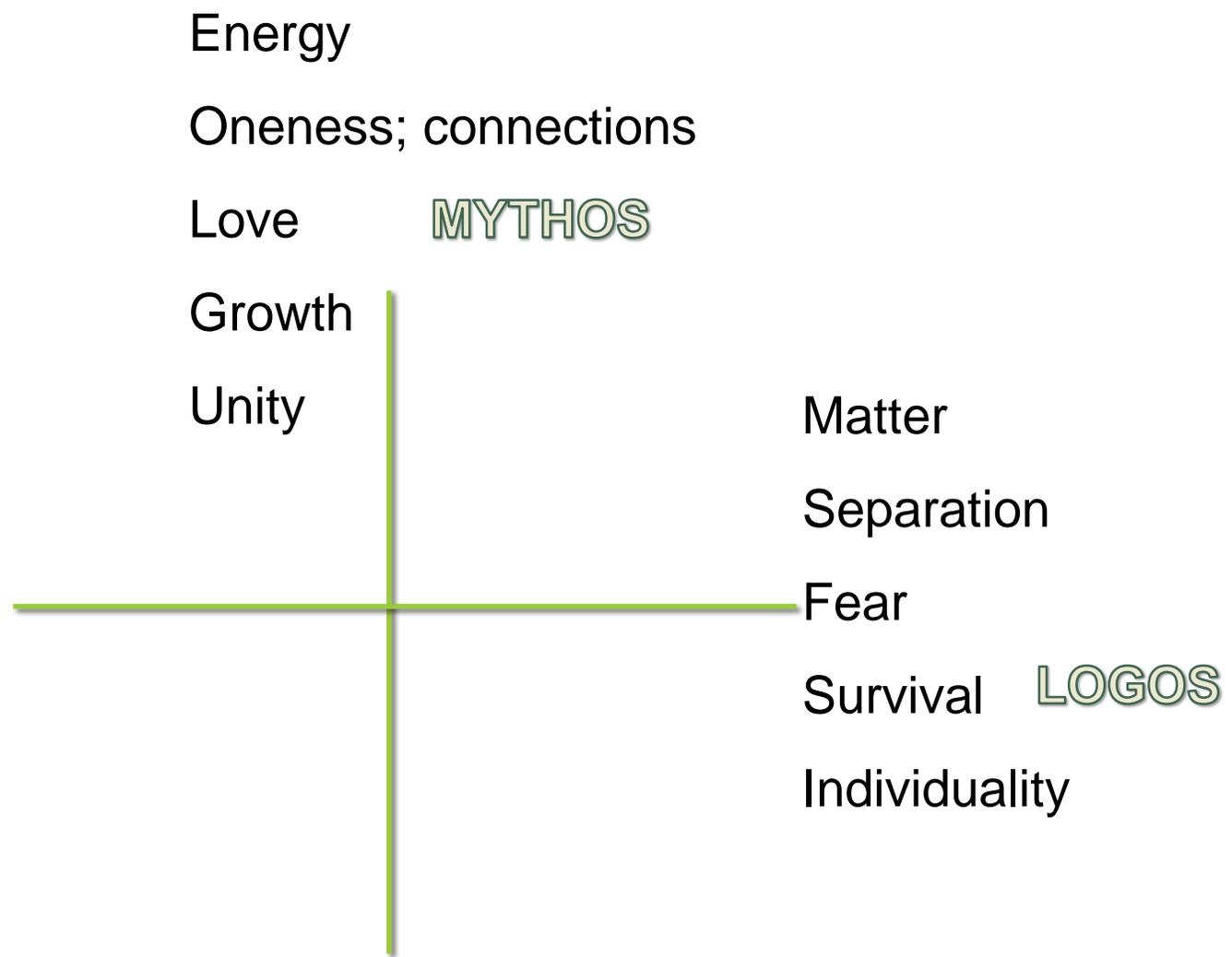
1. Which wolf are we feeding in our own hearts?
2. Which wolf are we feeding in the hearts of the people with which we work?

Stefanakis (2008)

Separation - Fragmentation

Unity - Interdependence

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*Survival is the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of life; the 1<sup>st</sup> law is unity – Joseph Campbell*

# Summary: 2 Equal Dimension to Life

Dimensions	Unity	Separation
<b>Function</b>	<b>Growth</b>	<b>Survival</b>
<b>Need</b>	<b>Belonging/connection</b>	<b>food/water/shelter</b>
<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Values/ win-win/ Tribe</b>	<b>Scarcity/ fear of loss</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>Open/change</b>	<b>Closed/certainty</b>
<b>Knowledge base</b>	<b>Mythos Nonrational</b>	<b>Logos Rational</b>
<b>Emotion</b>	<b>Love</b>	<b>Fear</b>
Response to threat	Social engagement	Defenses (mobilization – immobilization)
Psychological processes Positive	Inter-dependence	Individuation
Psychological processes Negative	Ethnocentric	Egocentric
Brain function	Frontal cortex	Lymbic system
Focus	Whole	Parts
Boundaries	Thin	Thick
Spiritual experiences	Emptiness	Fullness

# Separation

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Ideas of separation are sustained within the orthodox view of science: *The world is a collection of distinct and separate elements that are related to each other by systems that are ruled by mechanical laws (Weil, 1994).*

*Premises: Objectification, Prediction (cause-effect), Control*

*Premises of this model support the use of violence and inhibit change to nonviolence (Stefanakis, 2008)*

Morgan Reynolds of the Texas-based National Center for Policy Analysis:

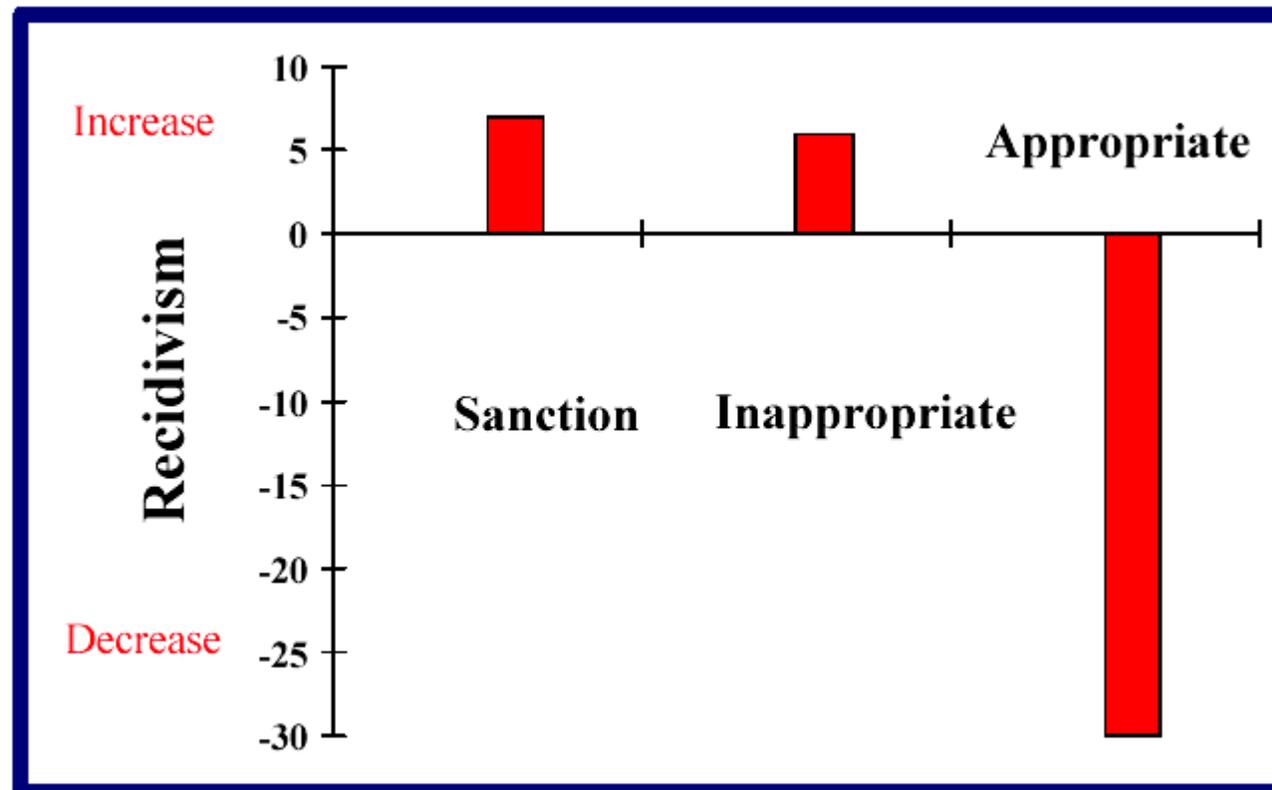
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The answer is obvious to most Americans -- yes, of course punishment reduces crime. This is only a common sense observation about how people choose to behave . . .

. Public opinion strongly supports the increased use of prisons to give criminals their just desserts. **The endorsement of punishment is relatively uniform across all groups. More than three-quarters of the public see punishment as the primary justification for sentencing. More than 70 percent believe that incapacitation is the only sure way to prevent future crimes, and more than three-quarters believe that the courts are too easy on criminals. Three-quarters favor the death penalty for murder. (Reynolds, 2000)**

# DV intervention outcome data

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# Let's Examine Common Sense: Rational or Nonrational?

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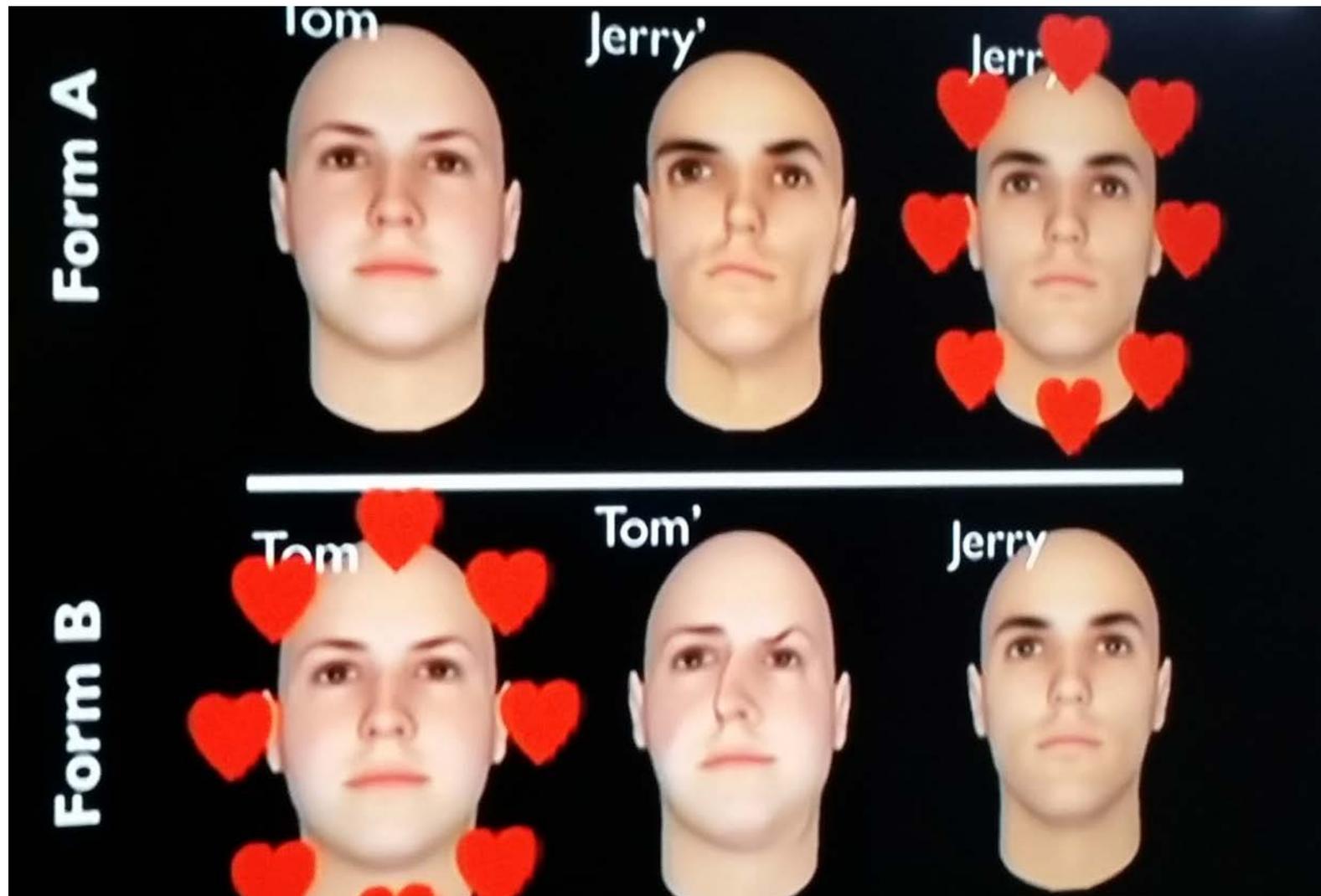
Would you prefer:

1. Trip to Paris including Hotel (incl breakfast)= \$500.00
2. Trip to Rome including Hotel (incl breakfast)= \$500.00
3. Trip to Paris including hotel but no breakfast = \$500.00

Equal preference with choices 1 and 2 only but

When option 3 is added people  
overwhelmingly choose option 1

# Nonrational example



# The Limits of Logos

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Some experiences and decision making are non-rational (Logos ignores the contradictory complexity of life where our humanity is situated)

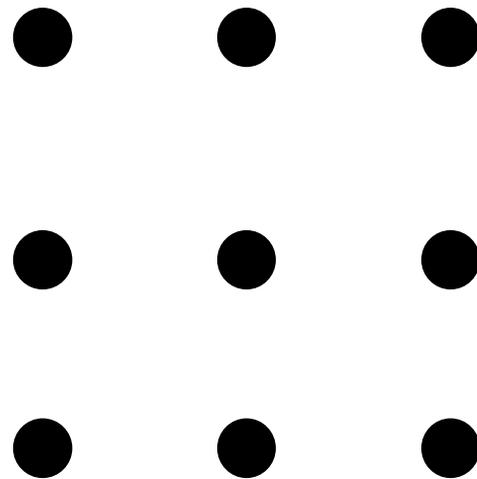
Focuses more on stability (prediction; control) and therefore not as well on transformation (especially nonlinear change)

Can become simply symptom/behaviour/problem management

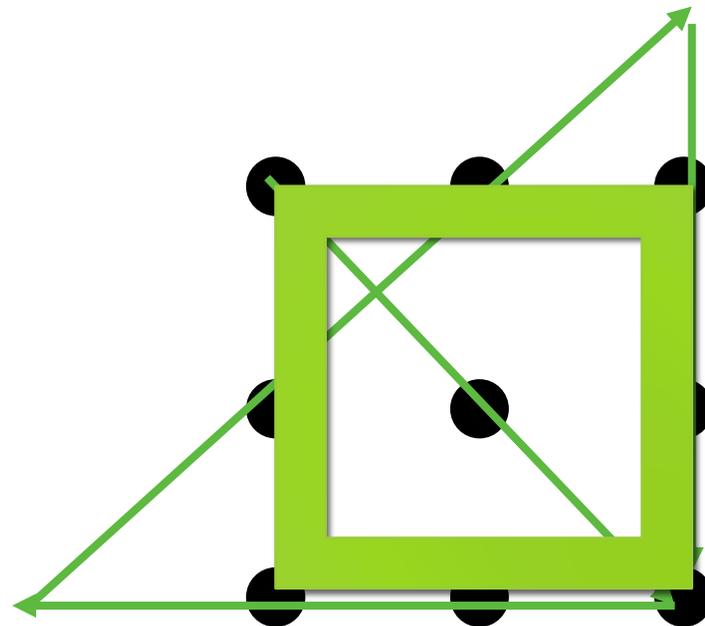
Can replicate the problem

Often it doesn't matter how true something is if we don't believe it or are not moved by it – meaning trumps logic

Connect all 9 dots with 4 straight lines but you cannot leave the 2 dimensional space (no lifting of pen)



Connect all 9 dots with 4 straight lines



The belief that Logos/science/reason can solve all our problems or that people will respond with reason to evidence is like this

# Compassion is the Antidote

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Compassion is made visible scientifically within a perspective which highlights the non-fragmentary nature of the universe in which energy manifests in the form of matter, life and information that is linked or inter-connected (Weil, 1994)

The Universe is one indivisible dynamic whole even as it includes individual elements (2 truths: there is a material world in which we can and need to differentiate individual elements and also at a deeper level of experience all these elements are inter-connected and inseparable)

# Compassion

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Compassion is the truth that is truer than the truth of our individual selves; it is the realization that you and the other are one ~  
Schopenhauer

What is compassion?

- Images
- Actions

Are there limitations to this conception?

When a surgeon cuts open a person to remove a tumor is that compassion?

# Intelligent Compassion

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Connection (to life; to the other)

Desire (to relieve suffering; promote well-being; to create life affirming meaning)

Through skillful means (that unfold in the context when being in the right state)

# 1. Compassion is an emotional competency and a target of intervention

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Compassion has neurological correlates that increase in activity with practice. It is a flexible skill that can be trained and it appears to enhance emotional sharing and perspective taking (Davidson, 2003, 2008, 2011)

Compassion regulates physiology and increases cognitive capacity for problem solving and openness to adaptation

- Broaden and Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2003, 2009)
- Reduces glucocorticoid reactivity (Dallman, 2006) and releases oxytocin and endorphins that tones down (threat system) amygdala (Gilbert , 2010)

Teaching Compassion is essential to anti-violence work: As men begin to identify with other's feelings, needs and concerns (empathy) and they begin to care about the other person's feelings, needs and concerns such that they wish attend to these needs (compassion), control and power as choices of interaction become less visible.

# Principles of Influence

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**Compassionate state:** Shift our own experience into open state; one fundamentalism rarely changes another fundamentalism

**Stories:** Get emotional (emotions activate behaviour more than facts)

- People have more empathy hearing the story of one suffering child than they develop for statistics of 10,000 suffering children
- But don't rely on negative emotions because it can shut people down
- Couple negative messages with empowering ones and move quickly to solutions

Surprise and mystery – important to get people out of state of certainty by building up curiosity and activating the unexpected.

## 2. Approaches based on compassion build connections

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Keeps men in treatment and therefore reduce risk and recidivism

- Drop-outs tend to be younger, single, unemployed and generally a higher risk for re-offending. (Disconnected)
- Program completion is associated with reduced recidivism. Need to keep them in treatment.
- Facilitator's skill in engaging the client reduces attrition and manages risk. (Echhardt et al, 2013; MacMurran & Ward, 2004; Stefanakis, 2000; Stefanakis & Trimble, 2001).
- Research on Interpersonal Neurobiology: **The safer people feel the more open to change they become;** Connection activates more advanced neural circuitry that supports pro-social behaviour (Porges, 2009)

## We need to model what we teach

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Research suggests that the **heart rate variability** in one person can have an impact on another person (McCraty, 2002)

**Mirror neurons:** neural networks for perception and action share a common code - our initial perceptions prepare us for action (Goleman, 2006)

- Emotion stirs a related urge to act; observed emotions, whether of contempt or compassion, activated the neural circuitry in the pre-motor cortex to respond as if we were experiencing the emotion

# Principles of Influence

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## Building Rapport

**Familiarity:** people like those like them and who like them;

- uncover real similarities in appearance, beliefs, values
- Synchronize: modeling, mirroring, pacing and matching
- Confirm rapport by leading/ mind-reading
- Show genuine interest (mirror neurons don't lie); ask questions about needs and values; genuine praise

**Social Proof:** People follow the lead of similar others

**Induce Reciprocity:** people repay in kind; give what you want to receive

*They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care –Zig Ziglar*

### **3. Intelligent Compassion also indicates that we need to be clear about accountability**

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Compassionate approaches attend to responsibility not blame (Gilbert, 2010)

Compassion allows one to take responsibility for ones actions without being overwhelmed by negative emotions (Leary et al 2007)

Skillful action is based on intelligent compassion; a compassion that has both warmth and clarity (sees things as they are) and desire to effect life affirming change

When a man is engaged in tactics of control he is suffering even as he creates suffering; compassion moves us to hold him accountable as it is the only way to end suffering

# Principles of Influence

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**Framing** goal as mutually beneficial; invite them to be part of the solution not just the problem; Treating people with decency can push almost any interaction into a cooperative frame from an adversarial frame

**Credibility** (authority to influence): People defer to experts.

Factors: expertise+ perception of expertise

Experienced, trained, informed, qualified, skilled, intelligent

Perception: Verbal, assertive, poised, relaxed, friendly, inspiring

Building credibility: stress education, position and experience; be a fluid communicator (know your area); pick up your speaking pace; cite evidence; argue against your point of view; be likable (smile and use humour appropriately)

#### 4. Compassion makes change (and obstacles to change) visible and invites people into change process

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- Instead of getting caught up in blame/rhetoric of resistance or pathologizing labels we focus on asking questions regarding obstacles to change and how we can intervene to facilitate further change
- **Shifts brain from narrow focus on details to see objects (people) as wholes**
- New research highlights the positive impact of short-term compassion training on prosocial behavior (Lieberg, Klimecki, Singer, 2011)

# Principles of Influence

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**Whole person** perspective: what is hidden in the dominant descriptions that offers a connection to you, to the issue, to change

**Scarcity** and fear of loss: people value what is scarce and they are motivated more by the fear of losing something rather than gaining something

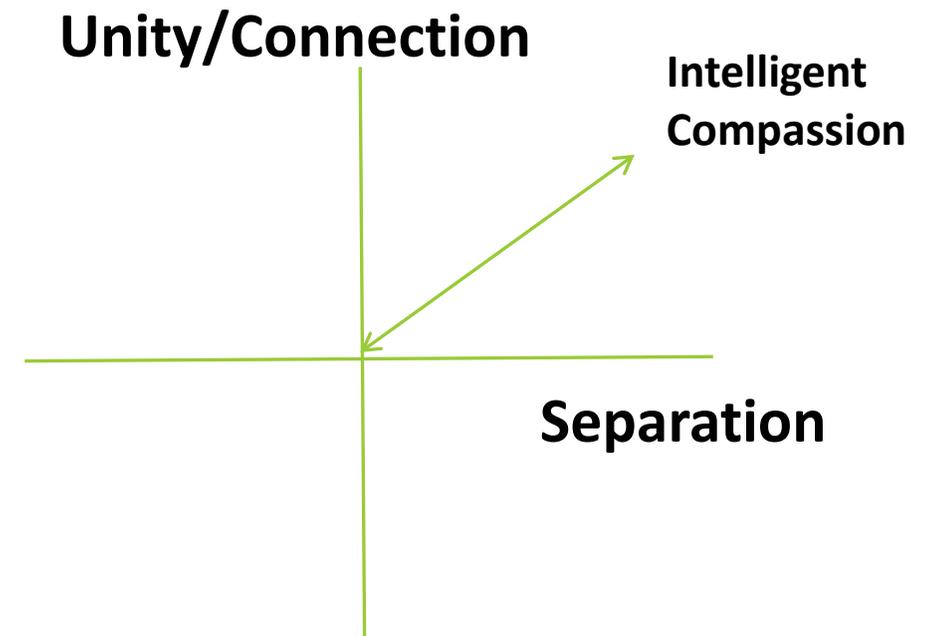
**Consistency:** People follow through with written, public and voluntary commitments. People will own their actions. How can you get people to take an action instead of persuading them to change a belief?

# The Logos of Compassion

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1. Compassion is an emotional competency
2. Compassion facilitates engagement/rapport
3. Compassion creates openness which makes accountability and responsibility clear
4. Compassion focuses on facilitating change and overcoming barriers

# Intelligent Compassion Processes



# Conclusion - For Facilitating Change Knowledge Brokers Need to Know:

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Context: There are 2 equally important dimensions to life - Unity & Separation

1. Fragmentation experiences are common and work against change by creating closed states
2. They arise out of the privileging of the framework of separation (2<sup>nd</sup> dimension of life)
3. Change requires cultivating contexts and experiences that open space for possibility

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4. Intelligent compassion processes facilitate change by reconnecting us to the first dimension of life (Unity) without disconnecting from the second dimension.
  5. Intelligent compassion processes involve:
    - Opening via compassion based practices and interactions
    - Building alliances and engagement that facilitate transformational experiences – reconnect to problem from whole (vs parts) perspective
    - Action for change through skillful means (doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right place, by being in and cultivating the right state)