



Our Tricky Brains



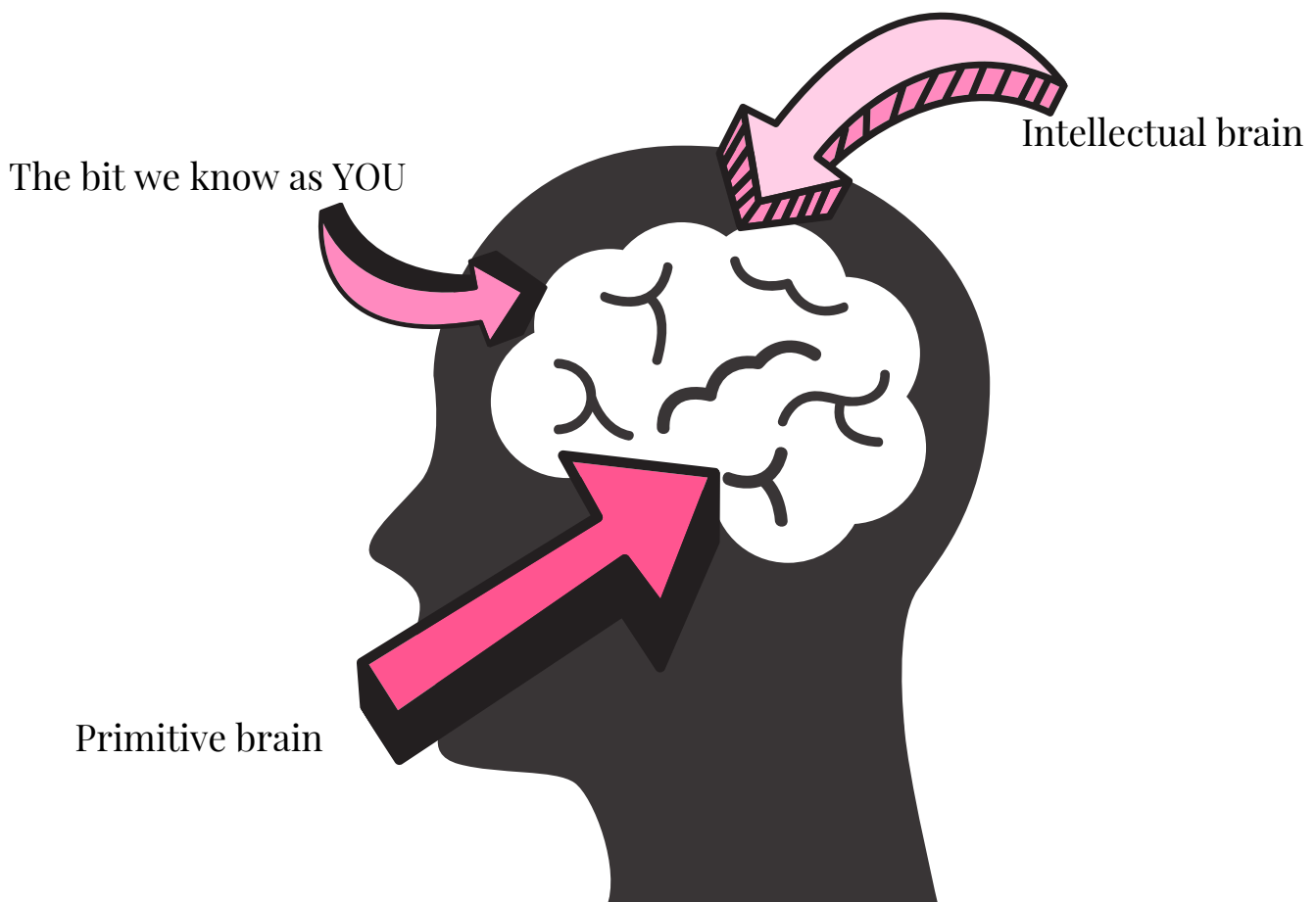
A Guide to Why Our brains Work the Way they Do.

Often when we struggle with feeling low or anxious or angry etc we can think 'it's just us' or that there's something wrong that we can't cope as well as others.

But here's the thing...we all struggle from time to time and it's down to our tricky brains. But once you understand how & why they work the way they do it can be life changing!

The first thing to know is that we have no choice about the brain we are born with...and its design is something that has been passed down to us from hundreds of thousands of years and the primary function of our brains is **SURVIVAL**. That's right...SURVIVAL not HAPPINESS.

To keep things simple we talk about the intellectual and the primitive (emotional) brain. The bit at the very front is the bit we know as you and the bit which interacts with the world.





Our Tricky Brains cont.

So, when we are up in our intellectual brain we make a **proper assessment** of things, we are also **generally positive** and it's the part that we don't share with other animals.

Our primitive brain houses the **amygdala** (the fight/flight part....cue butterflies in our tummy, sweaty palms, increased heart rate etc), the **hippocampus** (stores all our behaviour patterns - if the brain has reacted in a way and we survived then it considers this a success and will repeat it again i.e. screaming when see a spider) and the **hypothalamus** which controls chemicals between body and mind, temperature regulation etc.

When we are down in our primitive brain we are **generally negative** and **see things from the worst possible perspective**. When you think about it this makes sense, if there had been a wild animal, say a polar bear, going to eat us then we aren't going to stand around thinking about it....no, we are going to be off like a shot. We are also going to be on high alert, constantly looking out for a threat (if there was a polar bear going to eat us it would be wise to know where it was!)

Our primitive brain usually causes us to behave in 3 ways - anxiety, depression or anger.

So how do we move from the intellectual part of the brain down to the primitive part of the brain?

Essentially this is **anxiety** - the way we think and feel about things in our lives and our perspective on them (we can all experience the same thing for example but have a different perception of it e.g. some uni students will be excited, others will be homesick)



Our Tricky Brains – cont.

How do we cause this anxiety?

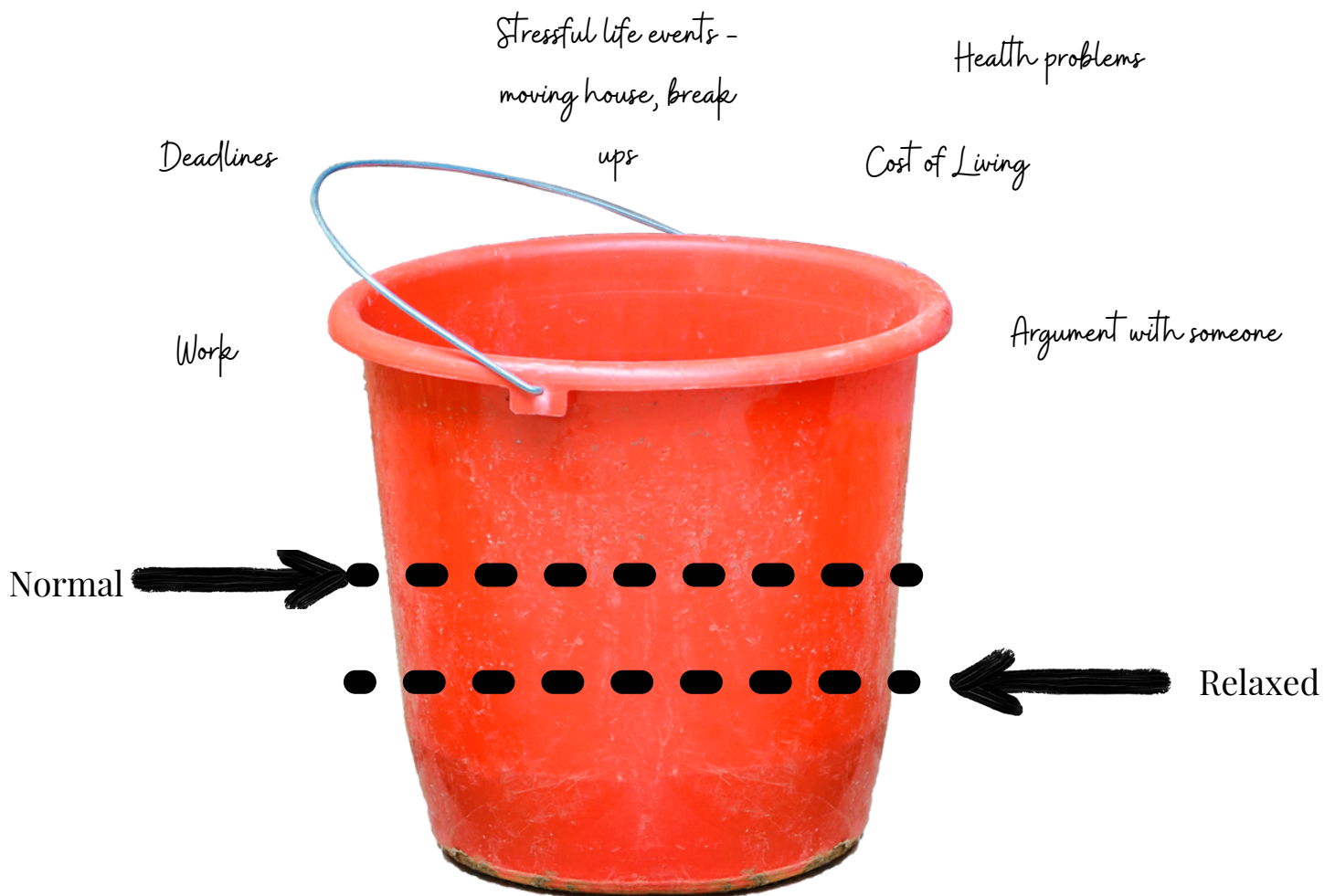
- **Thinking about the past** – ruminating about it
- **Forecasting the future** – what if...I can this getting our crystal ball out and predicting (usually negatively) what will happen.

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You might want to **catch and jot down examples of when you do this.....**

Here is the amazing bit....

Our brains **can't tell the difference between real and imagined!!!** So all those negative thoughts feel like they've actually happened and they go in our stress bucket.

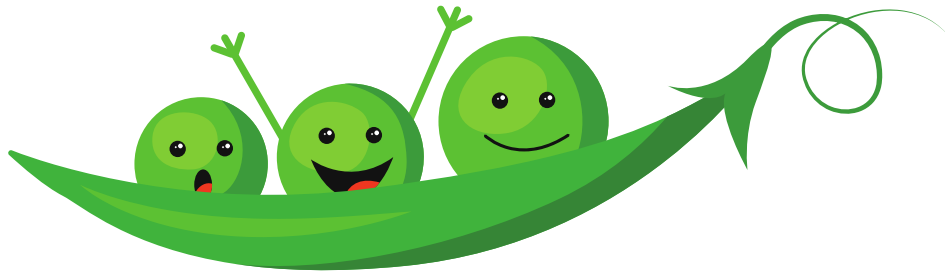




Our Tricky Brains Cont.

How do we empty our stress bucket?

Basically, through **positive activities** (things we enjoy), **positive interaction** with others, looking out for 'what's been good' (**positive thought**) - we call this the 3 P's.



It would be really good to think about some of the things that would be
YOUR 3 P's.....

And our **Rapid Eye Movement** (REM) sleep is **ESSENTIAL** for emptying our stress bucket.... so if we are not sleeping well, drinking too much alcohol regularly etc then this interferes with emptying / keeping on top of our stress buckets.

Our REM sleep is restricted to about 40% of our sleep - evolution prioritises sleep for physically restoring us (running away from that polar bear again)...the good news is that listening to the audio downloads provided causes our brains to refresh in the same way as having some REM - one of the brilliant reasons to listen to them regularly.