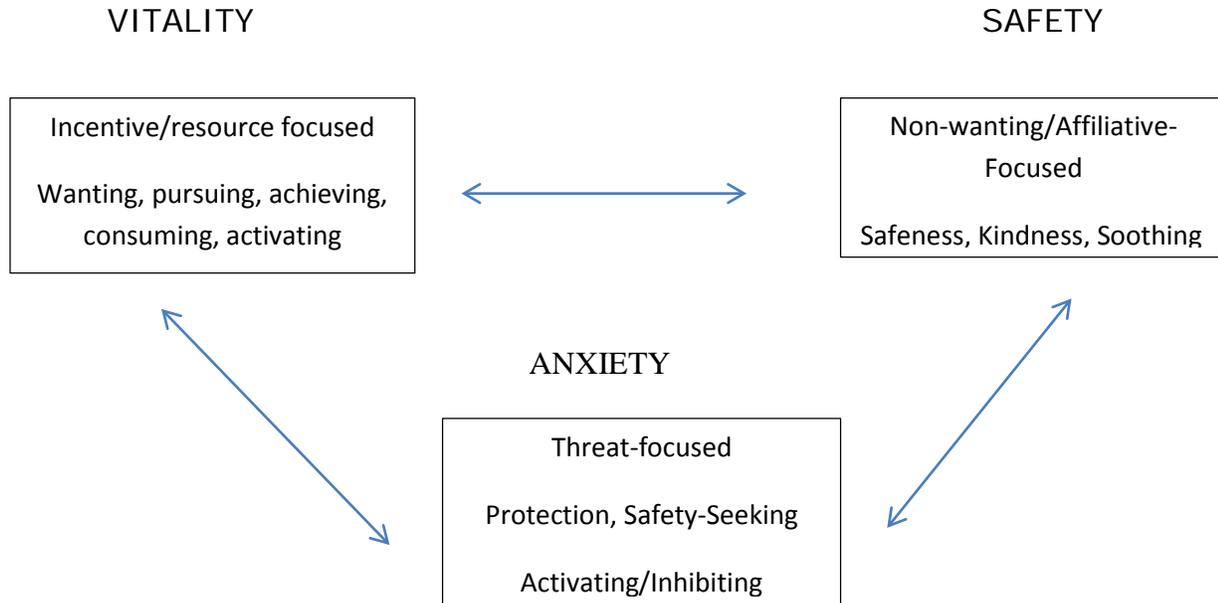


# COMPASSIONATE MIND (Paul Gilbert, London, 2009)

## Three Types of Affect Regulation



System #1: There is a threat/protection system, which helps us detect, track, and respond to things that threaten us. When this system is in charge, our attention is focused on threats, and the typical emotion we feel is anxiety, anger, or disgust.

System #2: There is an activating system that stimulates and directs our desires and helps us pursue our goals. This is the system that prompts us to “go for it” when we want something. When this system is in the driver’s seat, we feel motivated, anticipating pleasure, and it arrives or we achieve something good, we get the buzz of excitement. When this system is too muted, we can lose feelings of motivation, energy and vitality.

System #3: There is a system linked to positive feelings of contentment, peacefulness, safety and well-being. When animals do not have to cope with threat and they are satisfied, they can become calm and relaxed; and humans are just the same. We’re going to call this a soothing system, partly because when it is uppermost, it can regulate the other two.

**Learning Task 1(Inductive):** Think of a time when you were in the learning situation and one of these systems was activated. Visualize the situation and the details: Where you were, who was there, what was said, how you felt, which emotions were triggered. Make a few notes or drawings and be ready to share: 1) The situation; 2) What happened; 3) How the conditions impacted your learning.

## Learning Task 2: Emotional Life of the Brain

2A: Do a close reading of Lynne Henderson's description of the emotional life of the brain. Using your pen or pencil underline the most significant idea for you. Write one sentence to explain to a new partner why this idea is the most important. After a one-minute sharing, discuss how you could use these ideas in your organization to promote positive change and increased growth in learning collaboratively.

We will hear a sample of your ideas about applying one idea in your organization or context.

What questions do you have?

### The Emotional Life of the Brain and the Balance of the Three Systems

Lynne Henderson (2011), *The Compassionate Mind Guide to Building Social Confidence*

The balance of these three systems is not fixed. When we are being self-critical, we tend to activate a threat system; learning the art of self-kindness helps to redress the balance and stimulate the soothing system. When life confronts us with difficulties, our minds can add to our pain by jumping to certain kinds of interpretations and particular kinds of thinking. We can't avoid feeling shy or socially anxious from time to time, any more than we can avoid setbacks, loss, and trauma, but we can change the ways we thinking about these things, so that instead of feeling fearful and disheartened, we feel supported and encouraged to pick ourselves up and move on.

When our automatic thoughts are self-focused and self-blaming, they will be particularly painful and obstructive when we try to reach out and meet new people, because they undermine our confidence; it's difficult to take risks and learn new ways of relating to others if we are simply criticizing ourselves all the time.

Automatic thoughts are triggered by many things besides specific incidents. These triggers include physical brain states, bodily states, such as fatigue, and background mood states, such as feeling shy. Thoughts, sensations, and emotions that may feel as if they come from nowhere are usually related to something that is not in our awareness at the moment.

NOTES: