

Slide 1

On the next @_diabetes101 education session...

MANAGING YOUR DIABETES THE KIND WAY

WITH SOPHIE AUGARDE

TRAINEE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

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Advertisement slide

MANAGING YOUR DIABETES THE KIND WAY

Tweetorial exploring why you think you're a loser...

(and why you're definitely not).

Plus a few hacks to try and manage diabetes with kindness and compassion, even when it is seriously tricky.

(And cats).



**SOPHIE
AUGARDE**

**TRAINEE
CLINICAL
PSYCHOLOGIST**

DIABETES 101



Hi everyone, thanks for joining me in this tweetorial. We're going to be covering why we sometimes treat ourselves harshly (especially when managing diabetes!), why this isn't our fault and why compassion and kindness are really important in regulating our 'inner self-critic'.

I hope you enjoy this and if you have any comments or questions, I'll be here to answer them throughout and for some time at the end too.

Okay, hands up who has had these thoughts?



"I am totally done with this"

"This is useless. I am useless"

"I am an utter failure"

"Everyone else is managing their diabetes better than me"

"What have I done wrong now!"

"It's my fault"

"I can't get anything right"

"What's the point doing this everyday when it always goes wrong"

"I am trying so hard and it isn't good enough"

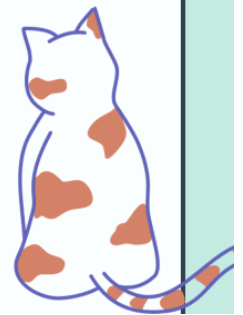
"Why can't I do this one thing"

How often do you get these thoughts about yourself in general and/or about managing your diabetes?

- Every day
- Once a week
- When I see my nurse/consultant
- Very rarely

Why do people with diabetes have more self-critical thoughts?

- Checking BG is a constant reminder of how "well" you are doing
- Expectations from others about how you "should" manage your diabetes
- Judgements based on numbers all the time (e.g. HBA1c)
- Trying to control something that is often unpredictable & uncontrollable
- Comparing self to others
- Feeling different to others
- It is knackered (and it's tough to be kind when you're tired)



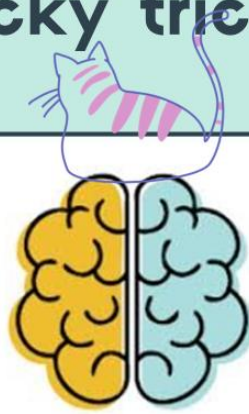
So everyone has these types of thoughts but for people with diabetes these thoughts might be more common. Here are a few reasons why...Any of them ring true for you?

Why do we do this to ourselves?!

We've got tricky tricky brains



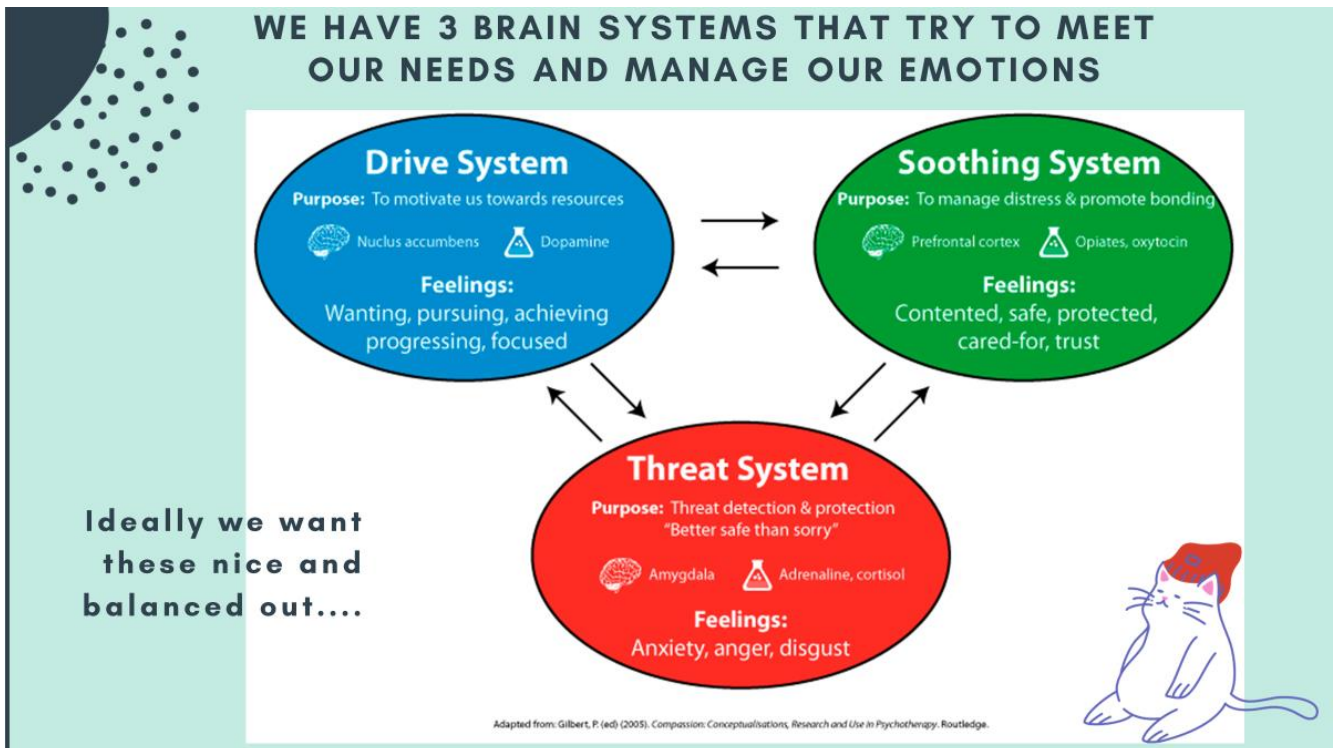
We have more 'animal' bits of our brain which focus on keeping eating, sleeping, sex and basically not dying...



The 'human' bits of our brain wants us to fit in, achieve, look good, top-dog, never fail...

They end up arguing A LOT

All this seems unhelpful...so why do our brains do it?! We ALL have tricky brains. Parts of our brain are completely focused on staying alive, other parts are focused on ambitions, worries, imagination and other unique 'human' things. It can get a bit messy when they conflict...



To try to keep the peace our brain has 3 systems to try and manage our emotions and needs.
1) DRIVE system (motivation & 'getting stuff'). 2) THREAT system (keeping us alive and safe).
3) SOOTHING system (feel loved, safe, cared-for).

These systems develop and are shaped by things like our upbringing, childhood experiences and life events. Ideally they would be balanced like in the picture.

But often our drive and threat systems are much more powerful and the soothe system is small and neglected

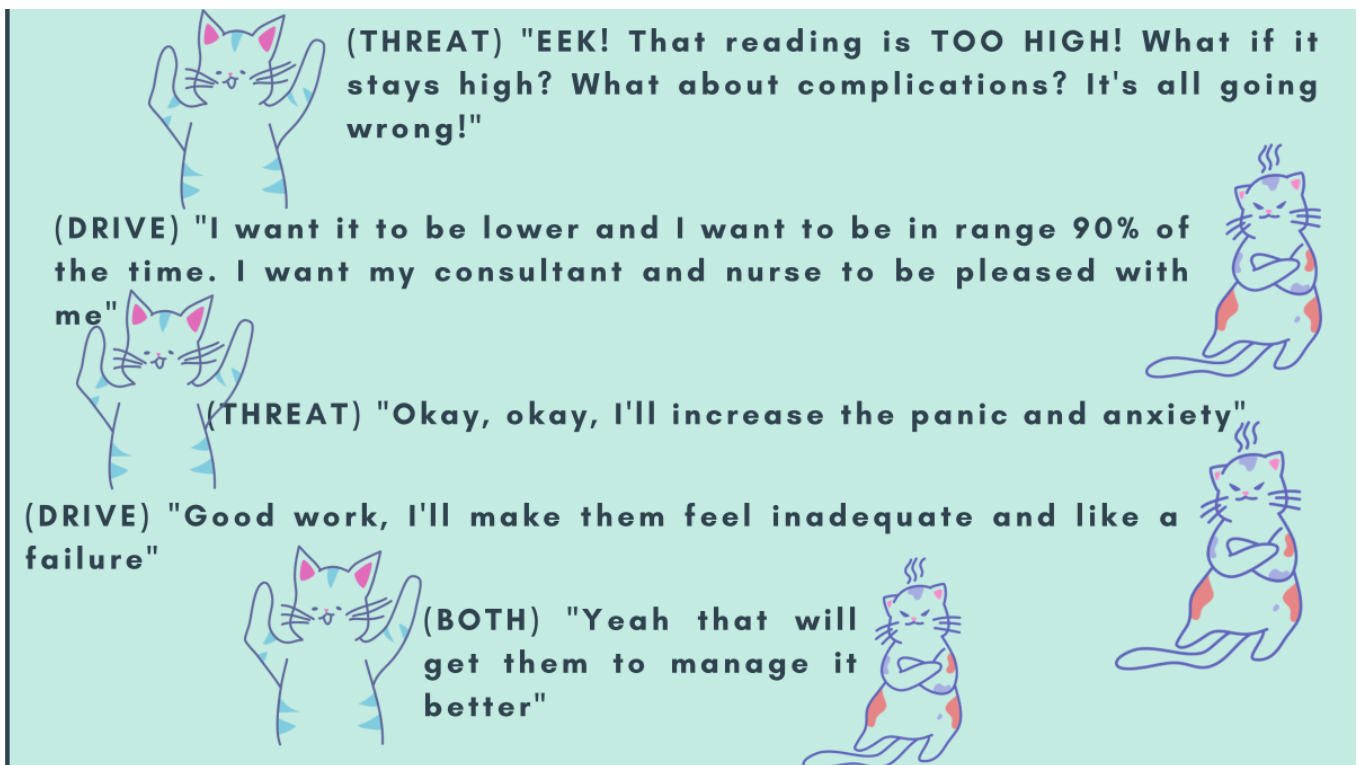
We have tricky brains and this is not our fault

The diagram illustrates three interconnected brain systems:

- Drive System (Blue oval):**
 - Purpose:** To motivate us towards resources
 - Brain components:** Nucleus accumbens (represented by a brain icon), Dopamine (represented by a flask icon)
 - Feelings:** Wanting, pursuing, achieving, progressing, focused
- Threat System (Red oval):**
 - Purpose:** Threat detection & protection "Better safe than sorry"
 - Brain components:** Amygdala (represented by a brain icon), Adrenaline, cortisol (represented by a flask icon)
 - Feelings:** Anxiety, anger, disgust
- Soothing System (Green oval):**
 - Purpose:** Relaxation, stress reduction, calmness
 - Brain components:** Hypothalamus (represented by a brain icon), Serotonin (represented by a flask icon)
 - Feelings:** Calmness, safe, protected, contentment, love

Arrows indicate bidirectional relationships between the Drive and Threat systems, and between the Threat and Soothing systems.

However, often things in our lives lead to these systems being imbalanced. For example, a traumatic accident at a young age may mean that the THREAT system is much more active, always looking out for danger because this has happened before. Often the DRIVE and THREAT systems end up bigger and more active than the SOOTHE system (which gets a bit left out and doesn't do a lot anymore)



(THREAT) "EEK! That reading is **TOO HIGH!** What if it stays high? What about complications? It's all going wrong!"

(DRIVE) "I want it to be lower and I want to be in range 90% of the time. I want my consultant and nurse to be pleased with me"

(THREAT) "Okay, okay, I'll increase the panic and anxiety"

(DRIVE) "Good work, I'll make them feel inadequate and like a failure"

(BOTH) "Yeah that will get them to manage it better"

Okay, so how does this imbalance play out in real life? We see the THREAT and DRIVE systems often trying to resolve problems in this way (see slide) for people with diabetes. Everyone is different but hopefully some of you can recognise this pattern as it is very common.

Does this type of conversation happen in your head?

- yes
- no

**Threat and
Drive aren't
the bad guys**



**They keep us
safe and
motivated**

**BUT feeling
like a loser and
constantly
anxious =
diabetes
burnout**



IMPORTANT: Threat and Drive are good. We need them to make sure we stay safe and achieve our goals. However, when it's only them in charge (with little soothe), we often end up feeling anxious, frustrated and guilty. That is really hard to live with 24/7 and can lead to burnout.

HOW DOES SOOTHE HELP?



Helps us to feel safe, calm, peaceful, and content. Helps us to help others too.



Helps to guard against some of the toxic effects of Threat and Drive



Helps us to achieve without lots of self-criticism and burnout

So, how can activating the SOOTHE system help when the 3 systems are imbalanced? What's so cool about soothe eh?

Increasing the soooooothe



1 *How would you treat a friend?*

- **Notice:** How do you speak to yourself? Is it harsh, cruel, judgemental?
- **Imagine:** Your close friend is sat in front of you telling you about the exact same problem you have. How would you speak to them?
- **Apply:** Speak to yourself but this time as you would a friend

There are lots of ways to tap into and activate the soothing system. As with most things it takes practice BUT here are 3 everyday life hacks to get you started

2 Build your own compassionate coach

- The coach does not have to be a real person. It can be a character, animal or object
- Importantly it needs to be wise, understanding, kind, forgiving and totally accepting (of you, your past etc).
- What does it look like? How do they sound? What do you notice?
- Imagine the coach is with you now, how do you feel? Keep the coach in your pocket



Kind mind / take a break

3

- The critical voice of threat and drive are trying their best to help (even if it doesn't feel like it...)
- Sometimes acknowledging this can help: **"hey, thanks brain, I know you're trying to help but it's not really working"**
- This would be a good time to think about your compassionate coach. Or simply take a 5 minute break to do something nice for yourself



More exercises to activate the SOOTHE system especially when you start noticing the Threat and Drive 'critics' creeping in.

Remember: these take practice so don't be disheartened if it's difficult the first time. Keep going!

PS. there's some resources on the next slide to help out

*Check out these 5 minute resources
for more*

REALLY NICE VIDEO ON SELF-
COMPASSION (SWEET DRAWINGS)

<https://youtu.be/-kfUE41-JFw>

"THANKS
MIND!"
PRACTICE

<https://youtu.be/206WtwEyzg>

BEING A FRIEND TO YOURSELF
(COOL LITTLE CARTOON)

<https://youtu.be/wFUxiljp-Nk>

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

https://youtu.be/_XLY_XXBOWE

COMPASSIONATE COACH MEDITATION

<https://youtu.be/JqlzlxWSzg>

There are loads of cool resources out there about compassion and kindness. Here are a few that relate to the 3 exercises in the last two slides. Give them a go if you fancy it :-)

That's the end of the tweetorial but I will be hanging out here for a bit longer if you have any comments or questions.

Thank you so much for joining me and I hope it has been useful (heart emoji)



... And chill...

**Thank you so much
for following this
tweertorial** 

I'll be hanging out on here for the next
half hour or so if there's any comments
or questions, fire away :-)