



sexual trauma *and mental health*

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1 in 5

women

1 in 71

men



The background of the slide is a photograph of a wooden pier or deck made of dark, weathered planks. The planks run horizontally across the bottom half of the image. In the distance, a large, dark, mossy rock sits on the shore. The sky above is a uniform, overcast grey.

2.5x

risk for past-year PTSD



2.5x

risk for past-year depression



2.5x

risk for past-year anxiety disorders



3x

risk for past-year alcohol use disorder

The background of the slide is a photograph of a wooden pier or boardwalk made of dark, weathered planks. The planks run horizontally across the bottom half of the image. In the distance, a large, dark, mossy rock sits on the beach. The sky above is a uniform, overcast grey.

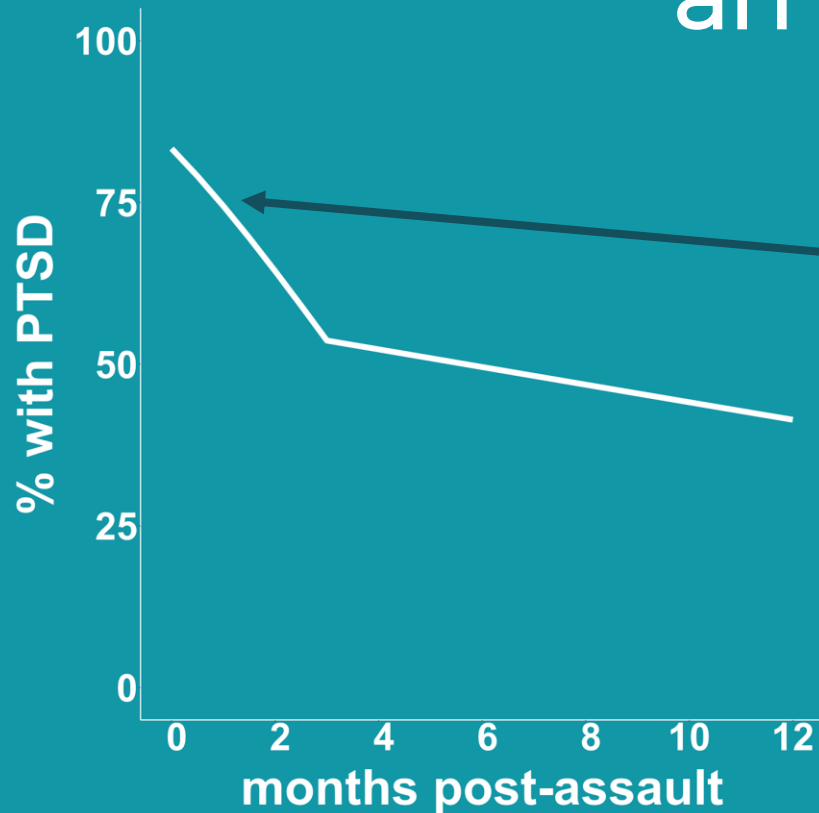
3.5x

risk for attempting suicide

what is PTSD?

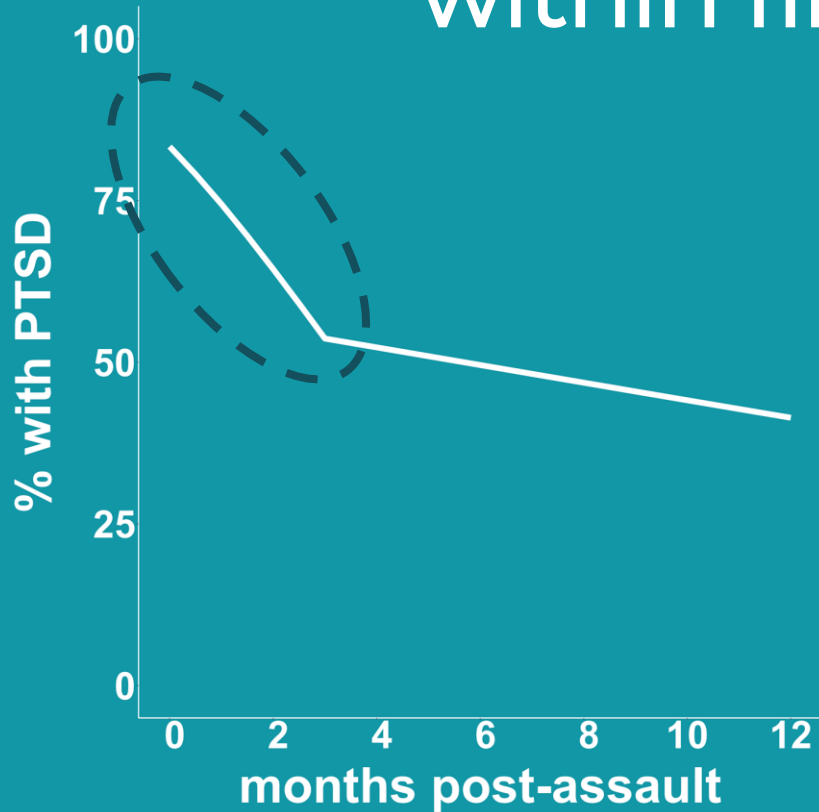


most have PTSD symptoms right after an assault

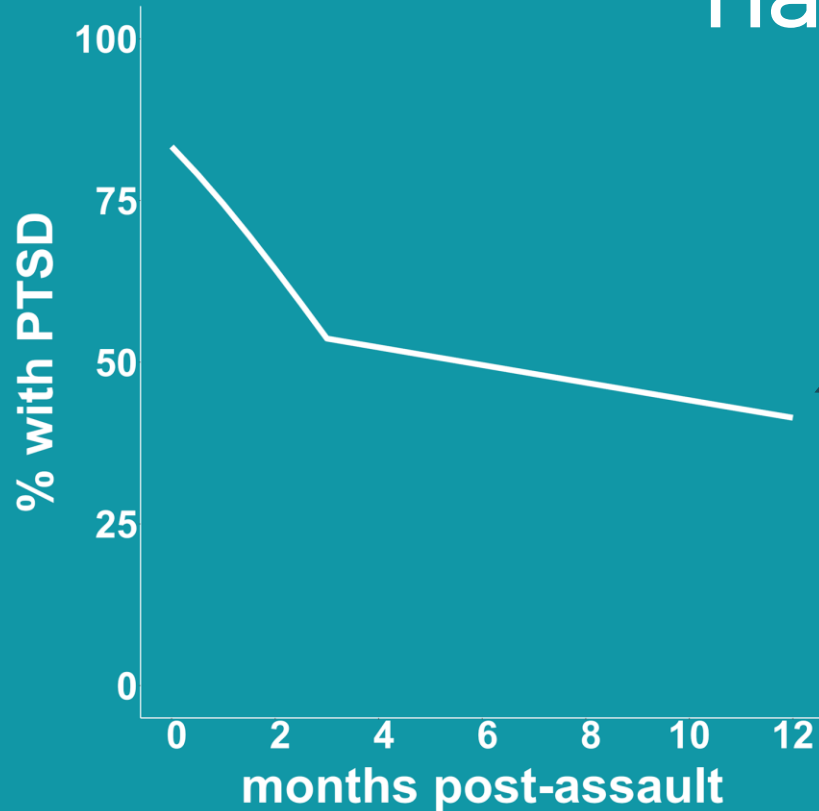


74%
have PTSD one
month later

natural recovery happens for many within first 3 months



for many, PTSD does not resolve naturally



41%

have PTSD 12 months later

how does PTSD develop?

how brains learn 101

have an
experience



how brains learn 101

thoughts &
memories

emotions &
bodily
reactions

have an
experience

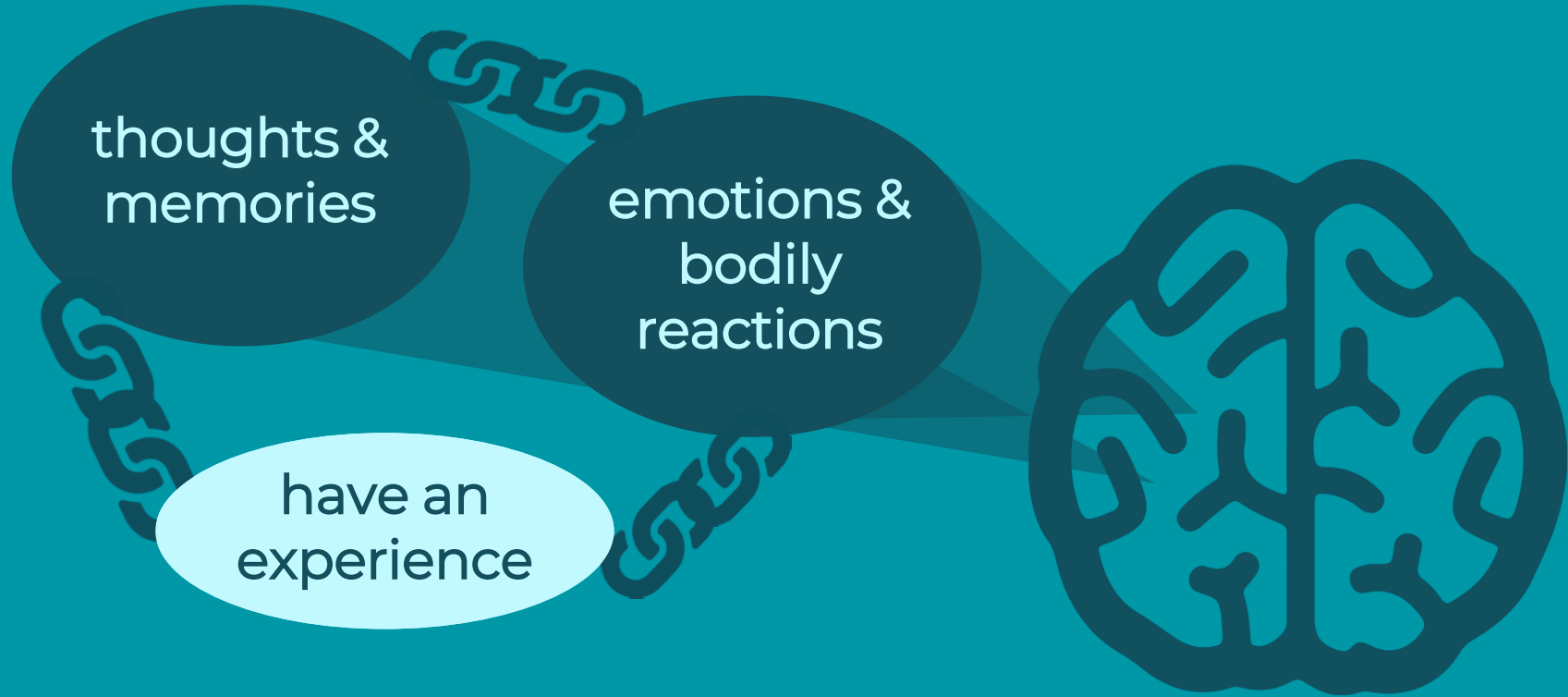




links develop when thoughts,
senses, emotions, and experiences
are paired together repeatedly



how brains learn 101





reminders of the experience are
also linked



how brains learn 101

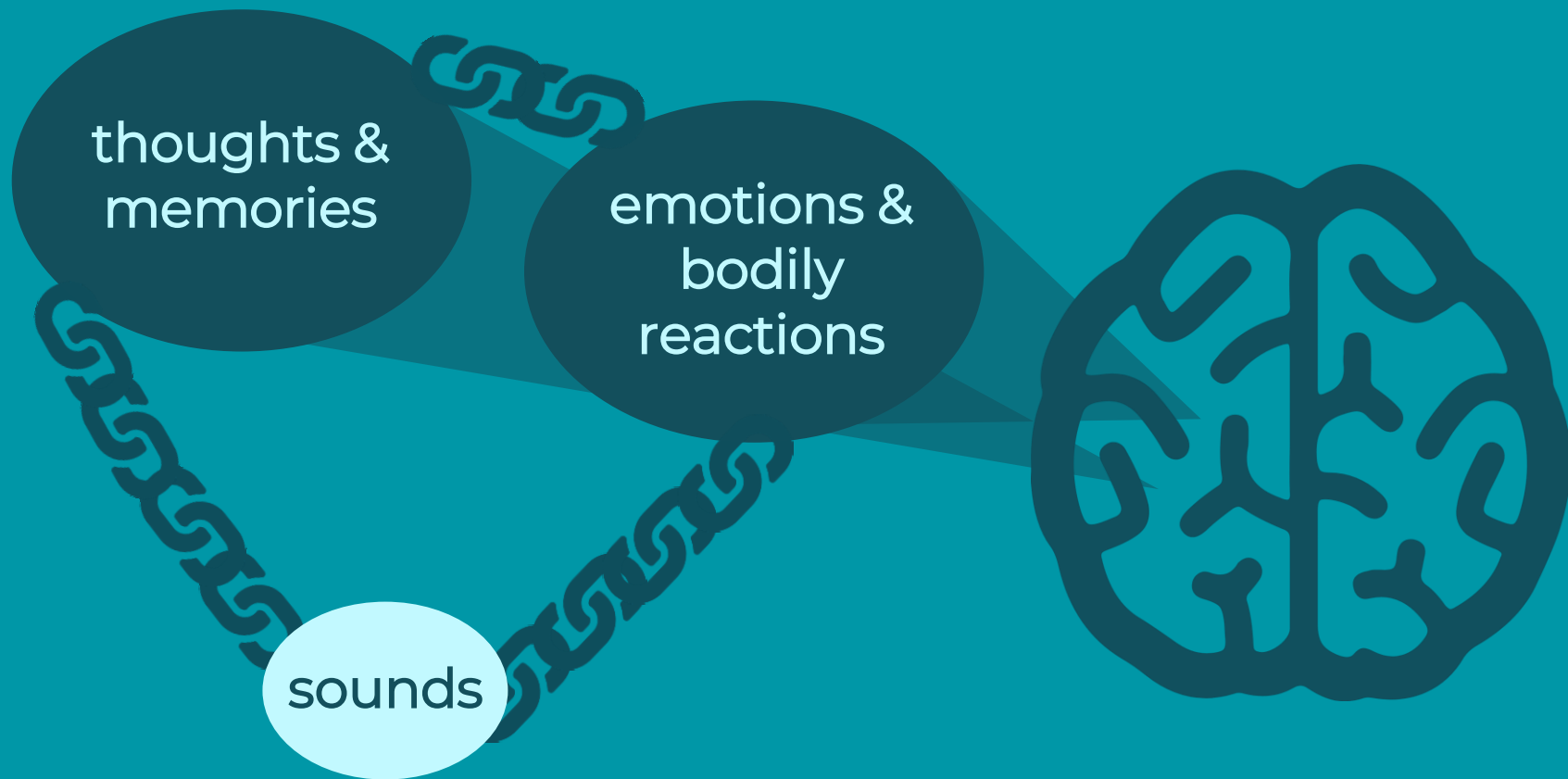




brain systems can be activated by
reminders even in the absence of
the experience



how brains learn 101



how brains learn 101

fall in love
with someone



how brains learn 101

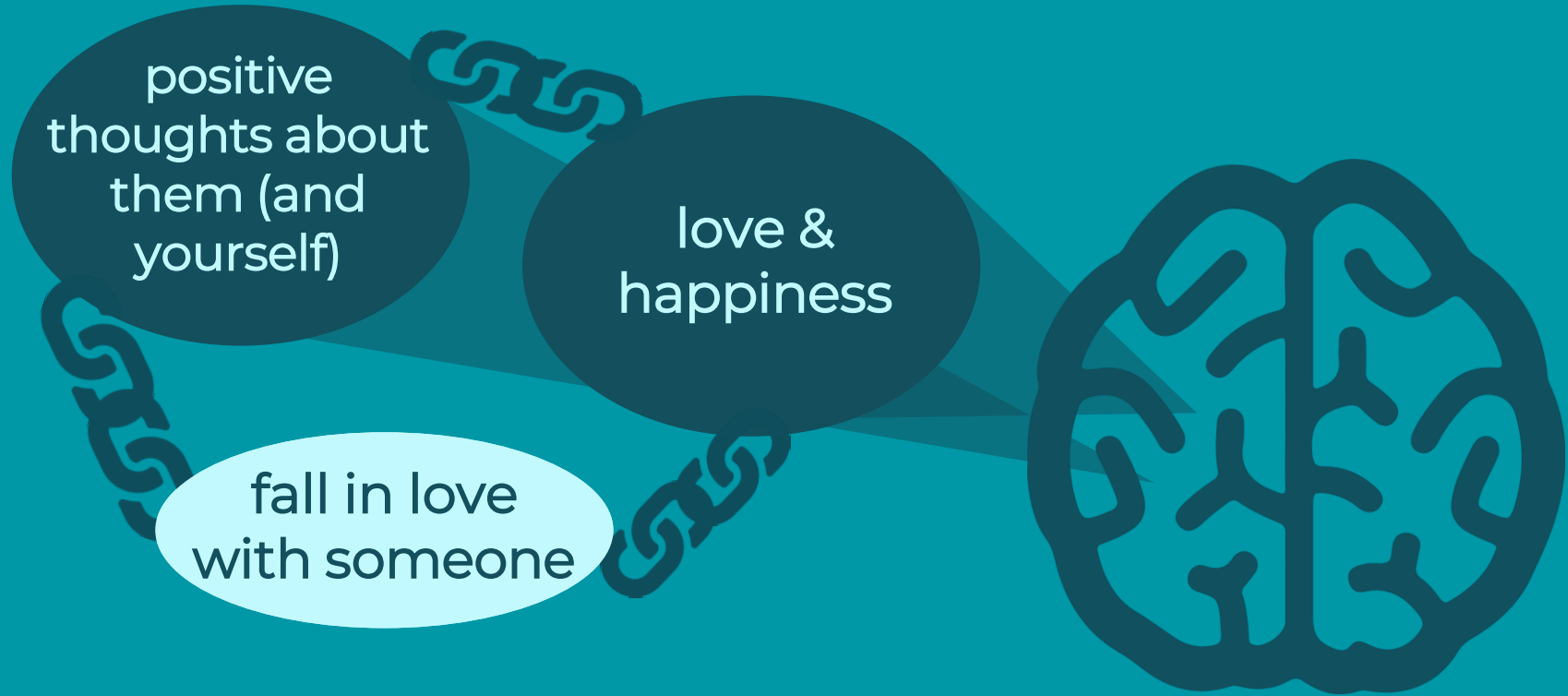
positive
thoughts about
them (and
yourself)

love &
happiness

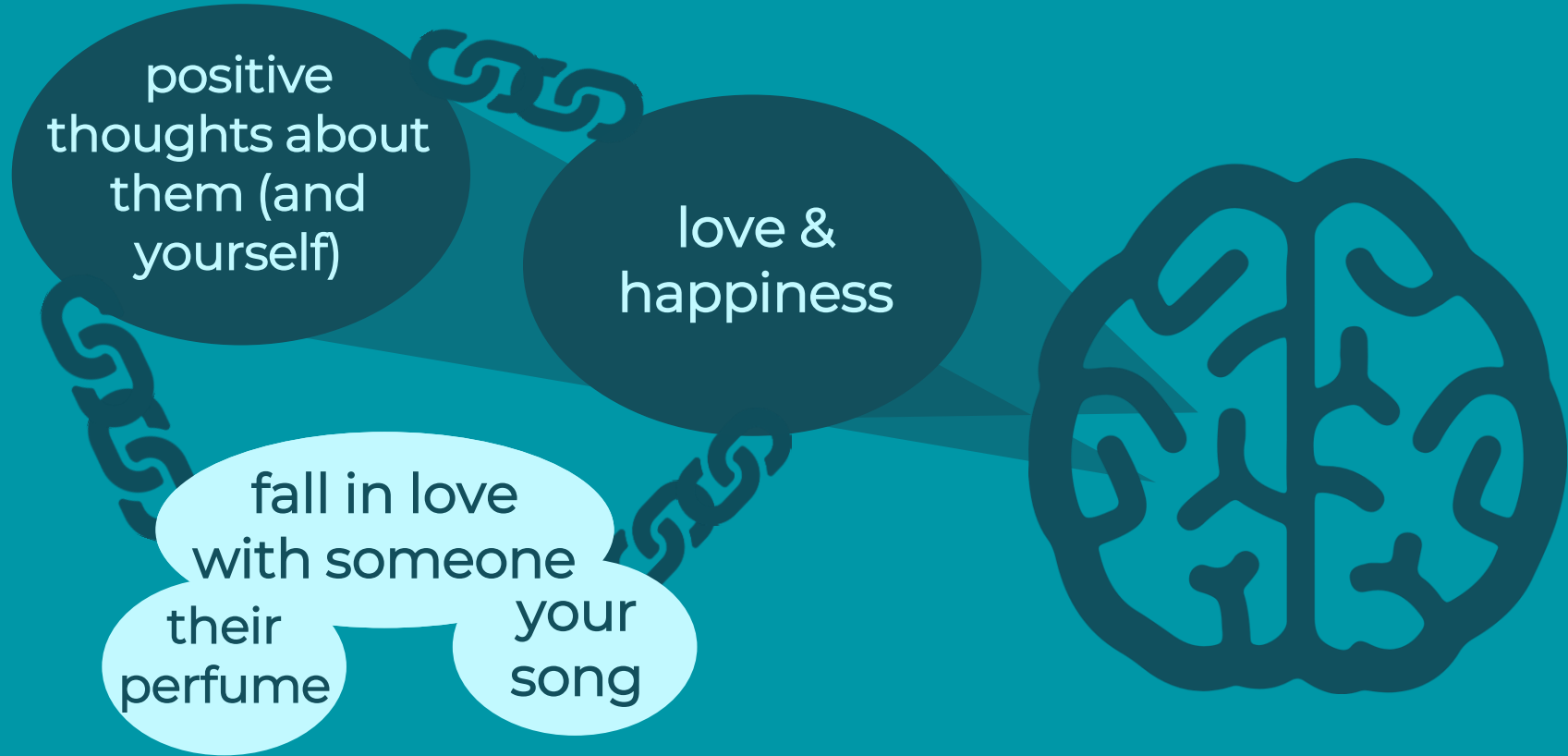
fall in love
with someone



how brains learn 101



how brains learn 101



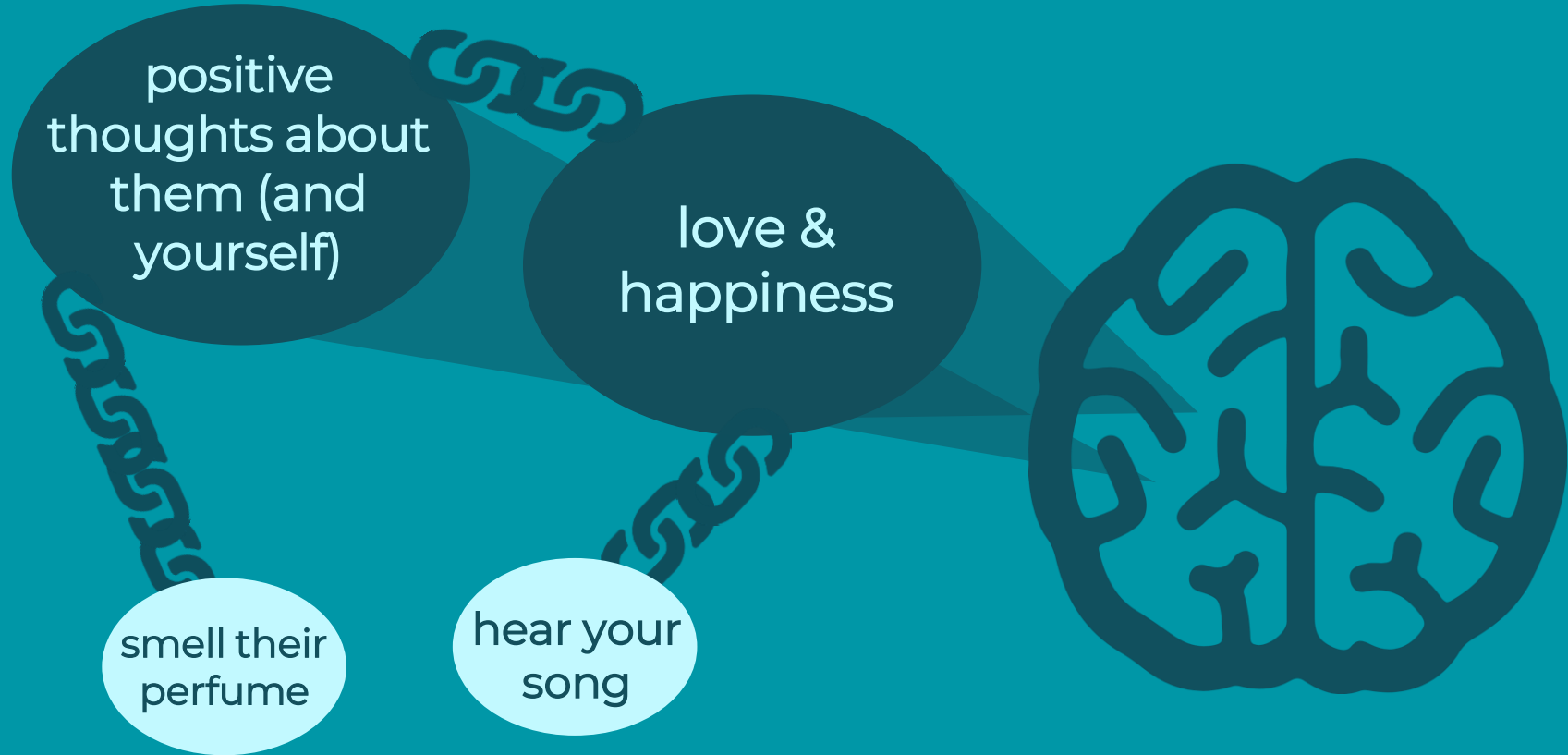
how brains learn 101

smell their
perfume

hear your
song



how brains learn 101

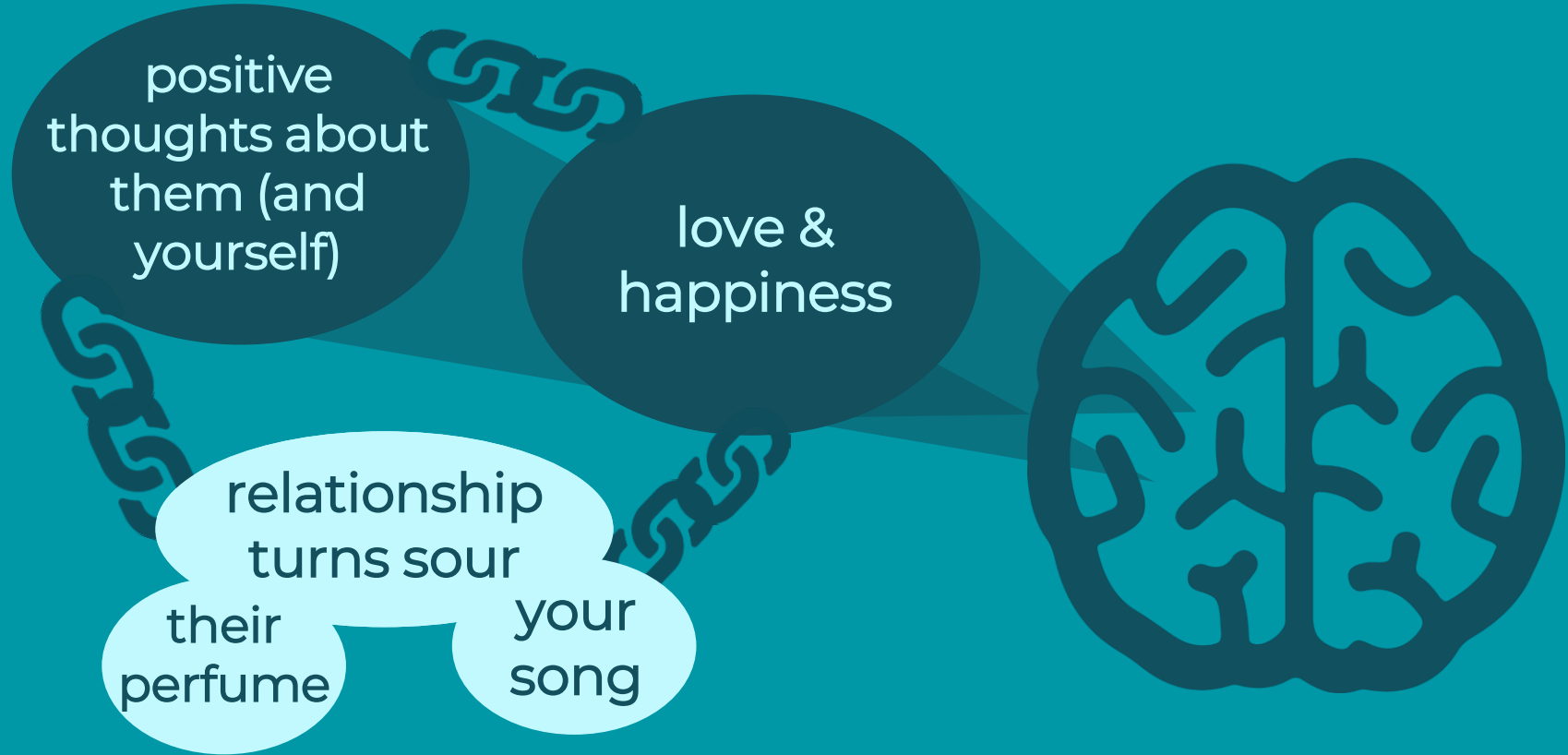




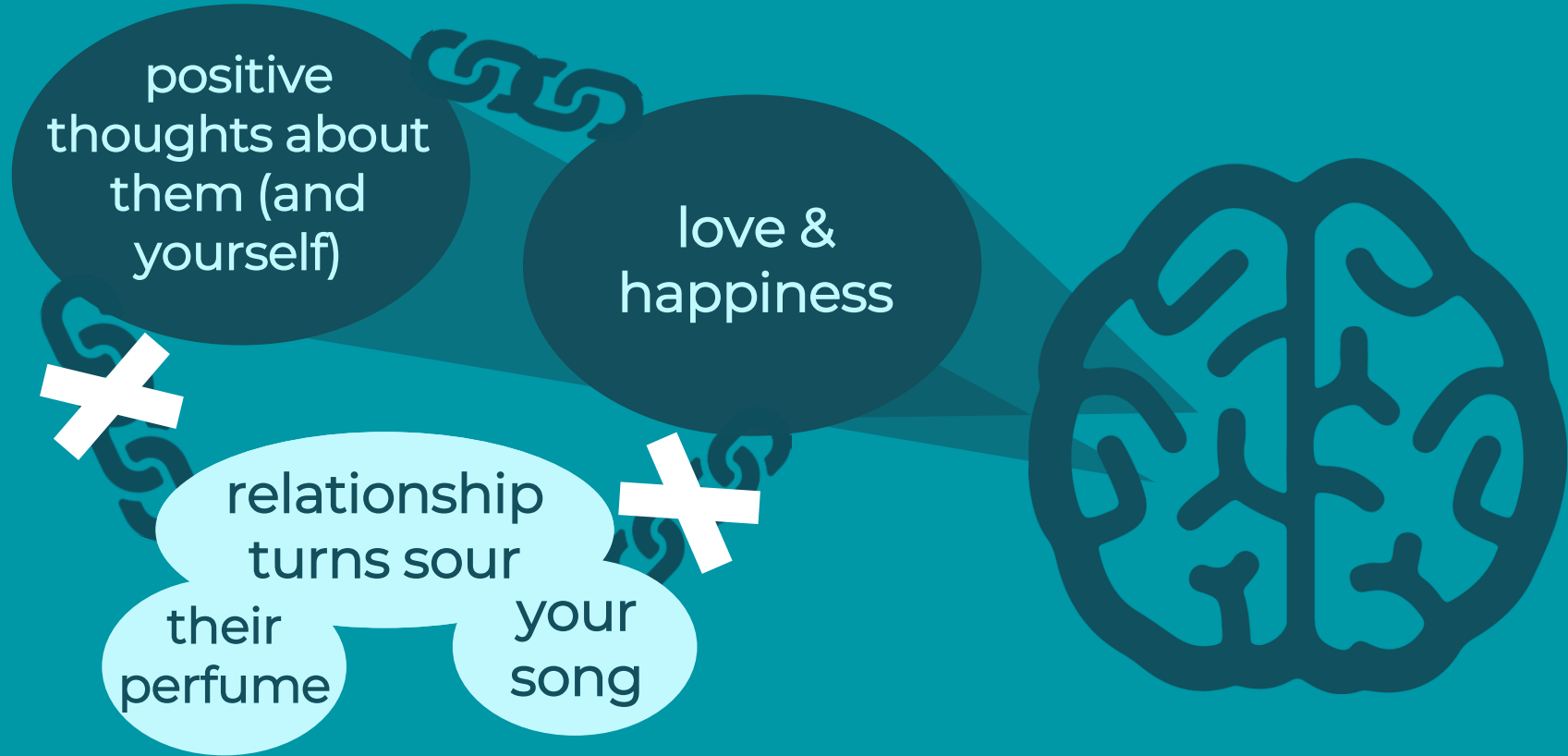
links can be broken if things
stop being paired, or are paired
with new things



how brains learn 101



how brains learn 101



how brains learn 101



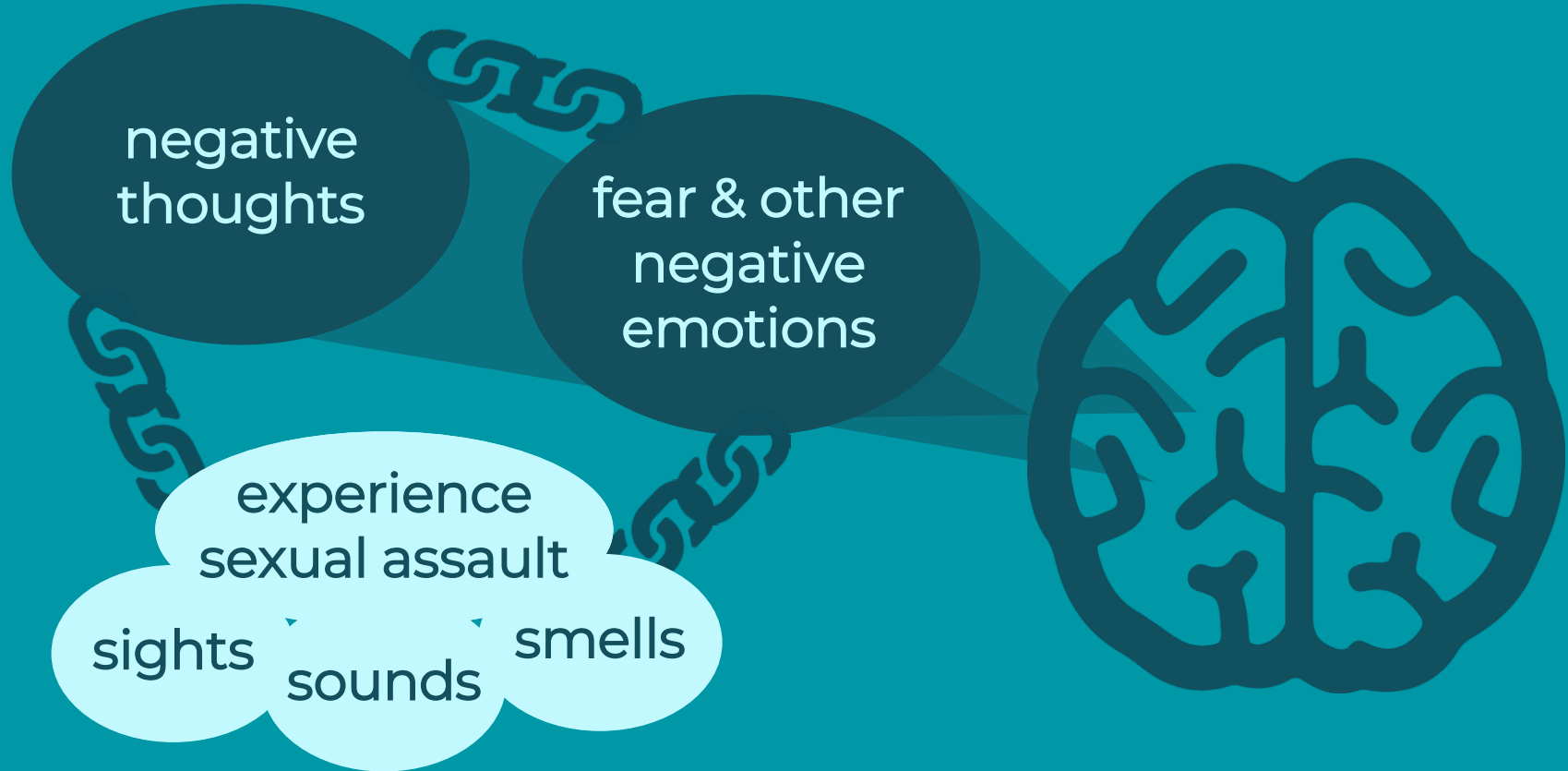
how brains learn 101





links can get really strong after
experiences with intense
emotions





A diagram illustrating a cycle of negative thoughts and emotions. On the left, a dark blue oval contains the text "negative thoughts". A thick, dark blue chain connects this oval to another dark blue oval on the right containing the text "fear & other negative emotions". From this second oval, a beam of light points towards a stylized brain on the far right. Below the "negative thoughts" oval, there are three light blue ovals: "experience sexual assault", "sights", and "sounds", with "smells" positioned to the right of "sounds". A chain also connects the "experience sexual assault" oval back to the "negative thoughts" oval, completing the cycle.

negative
thoughts

fear & other
negative
emotions

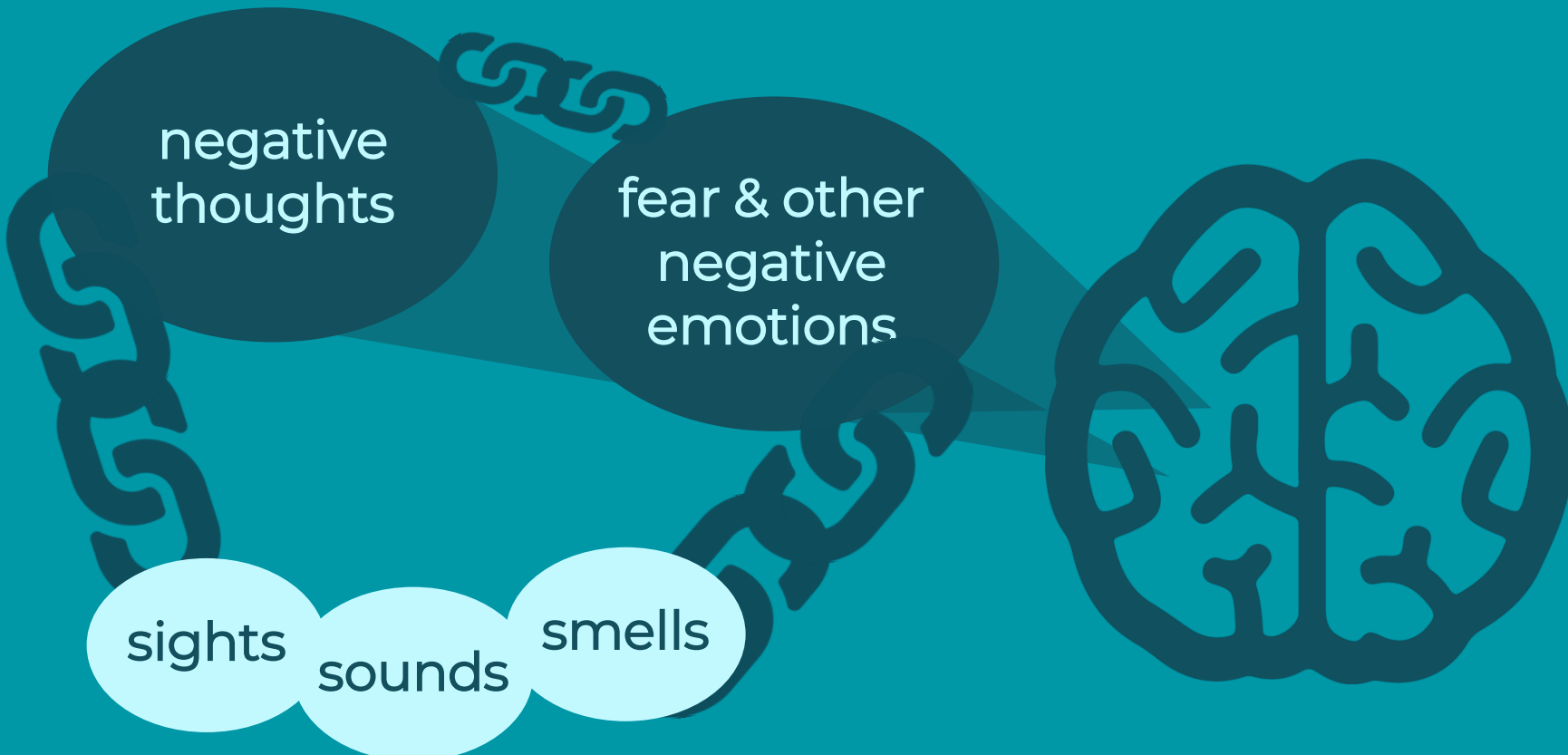
experience
sexual assault

sights

sounds

smells





A diagram on a teal background. On the left, a chain of five ovals is arranged in a semi-circle. The top-left oval is dark teal and contains the text 'negative thoughts'. The top-right oval is also dark teal and contains the text 'fear & other negative emotions'. The bottom-left oval is light teal and contains the text 'sights'. The bottom-middle oval is light teal and contains the text 'sounds'. The bottom-right oval is light teal and contains the text 'smells'. A thick, dark teal chain connects these ovals in a continuous loop. A beam of light from the 'fear & other negative emotions' oval points towards a stylized brain icon on the right side of the image.

negative
thoughts

fear & other
negative
emotions

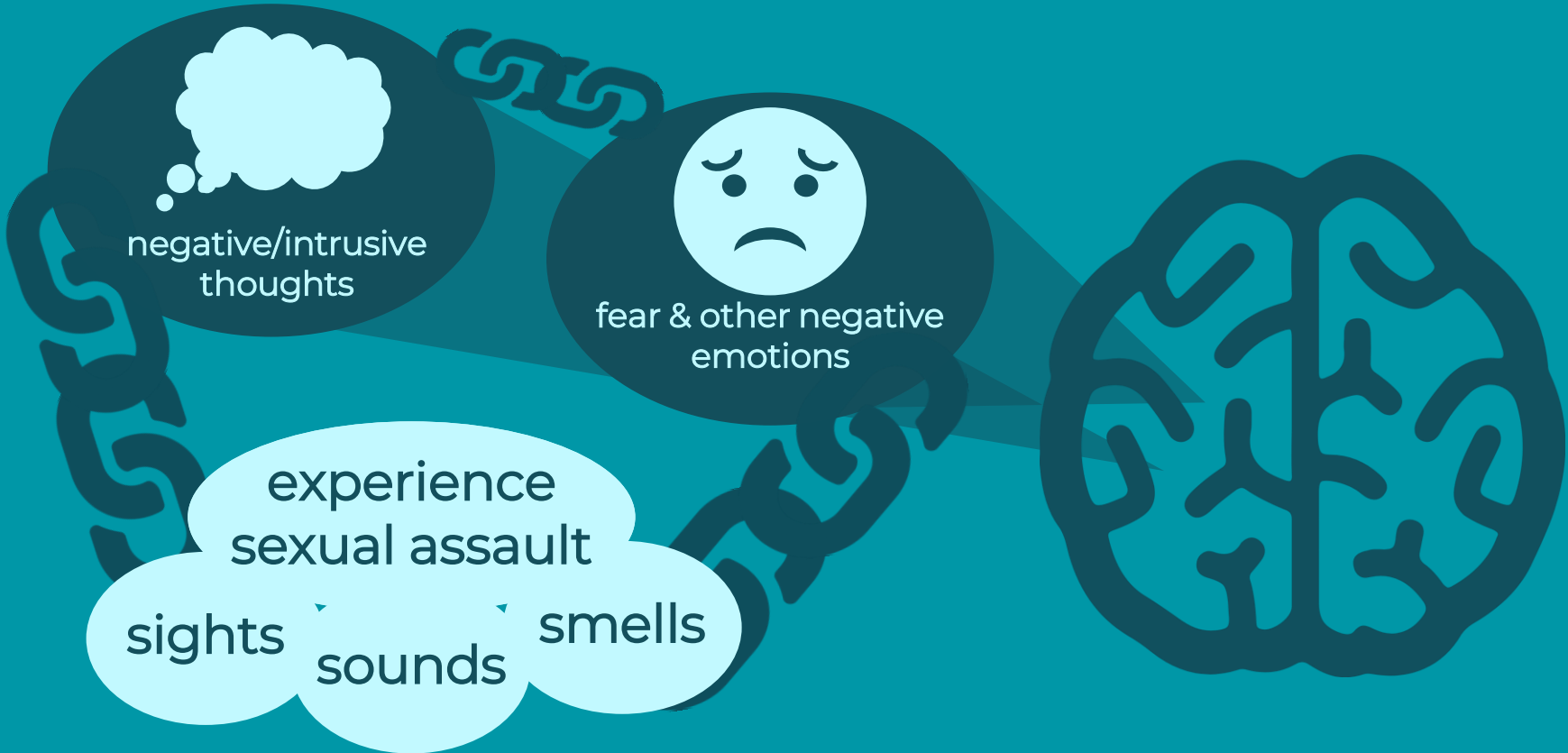
sights

sounds

smells



look familiar?



look familiar?



remember: links break when things stop being paired



A person is sitting on a dark, polished floor against a light-colored, textured wall. They are hunched over, with their head buried in their arms, suggesting a state of distress or avoidance. The person is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The wall has a horizontal band of darker paint or shadow. To the right, a brick wall is visible. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

avoid avoiding

when reminders are safely confronted rather than avoided, links break



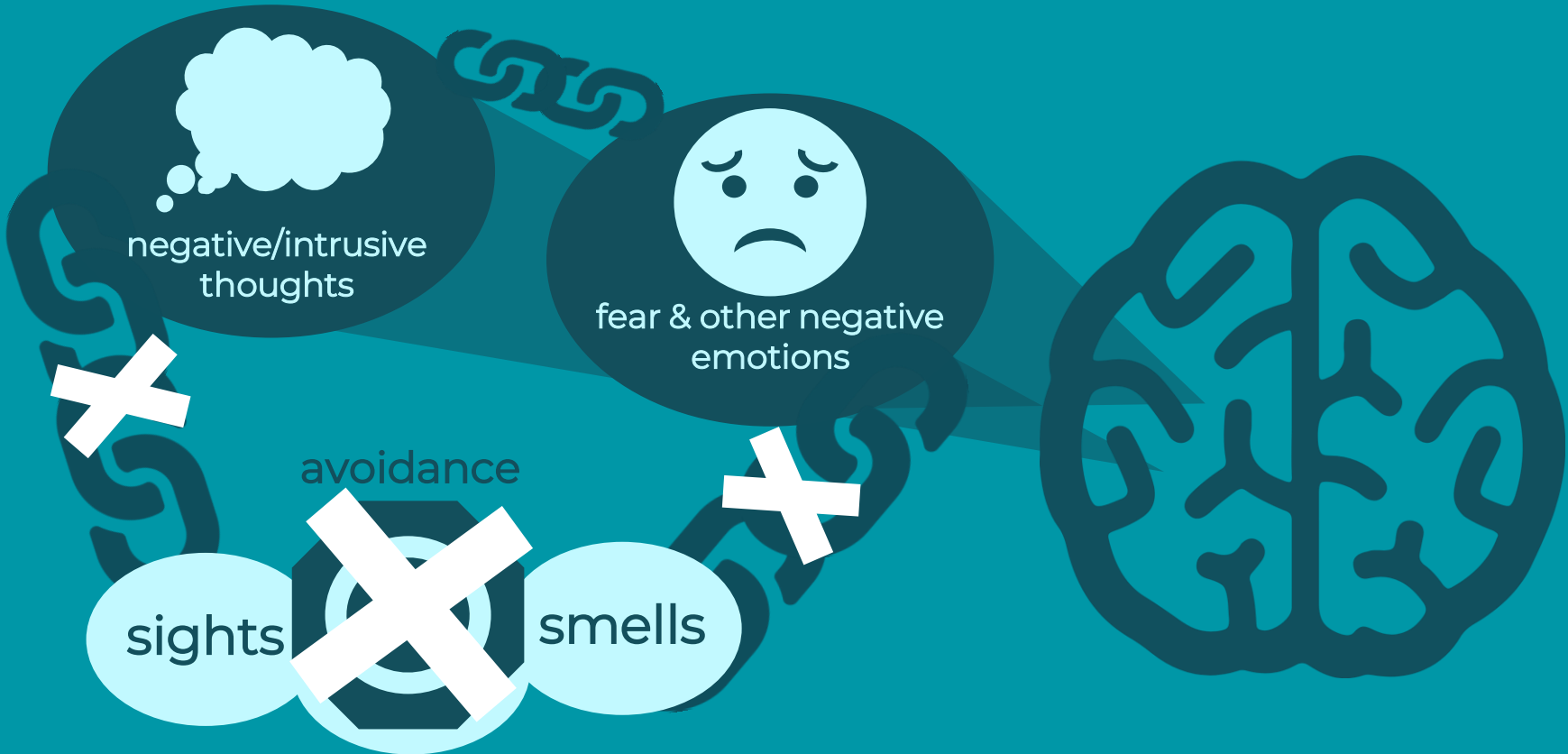
when reminders are safely confronted rather than avoided, links break



trauma-focused cognitive
behavioral therapies target
these links



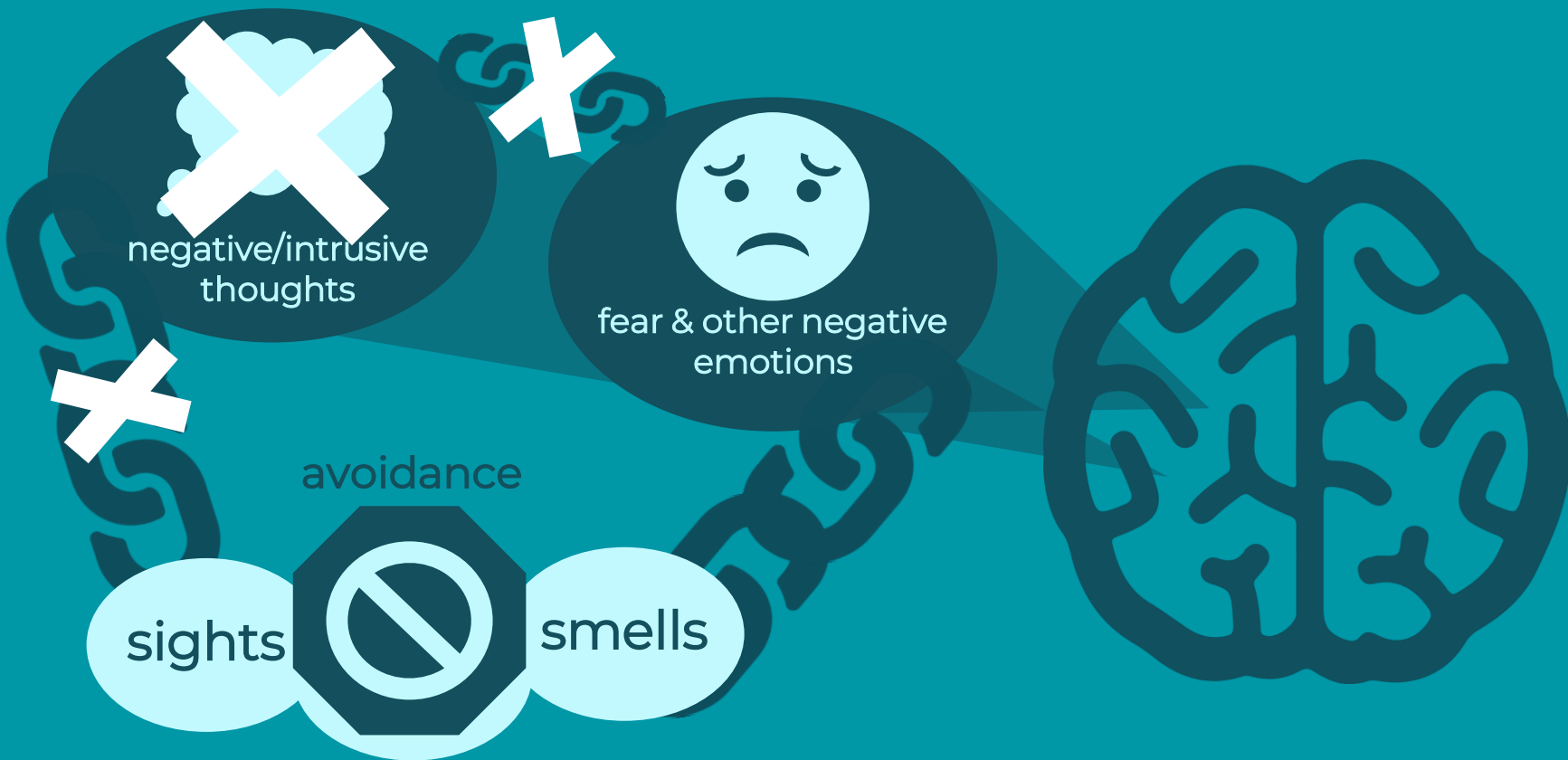
prolonged exposure therapy



74%

of those treated with prolonged exposure therapy do better than those treated with standard talk therapy

cognitive processing therapy



In a study of child sexual abuse survivors...

93%

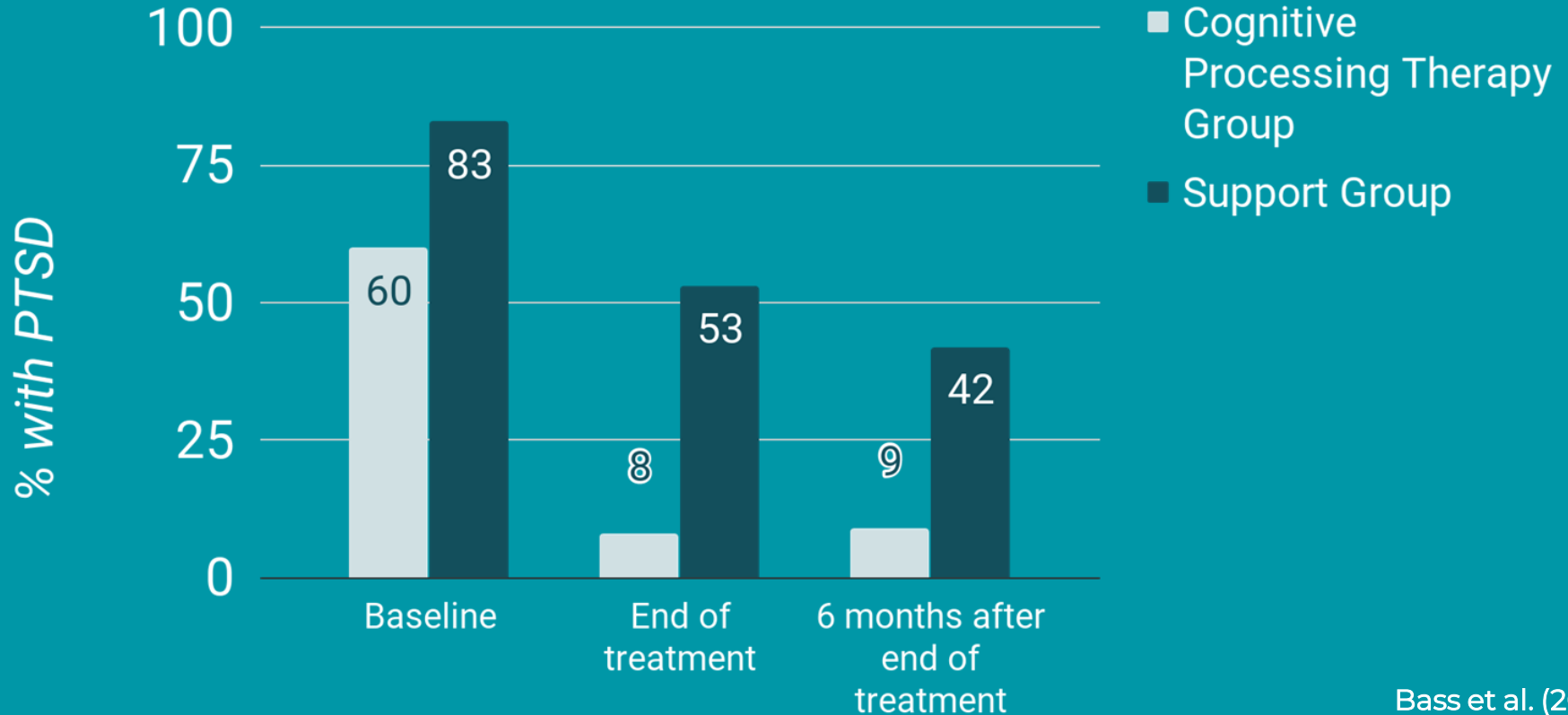
of those treated with
cognitive processing
therapy

26%

of those on the
waitlist


lost their diagnosis of PTSD after 3 months

cognitive processing therapy is effective even with complex clients



A silhouette of a person running on the crest of a large, textured sand dune under a clear sky. The dune's surface shows horizontal ridges and some darker patches.

aside from trauma-
focused therapy, what affects
recovery?




sexual
assault
survivor



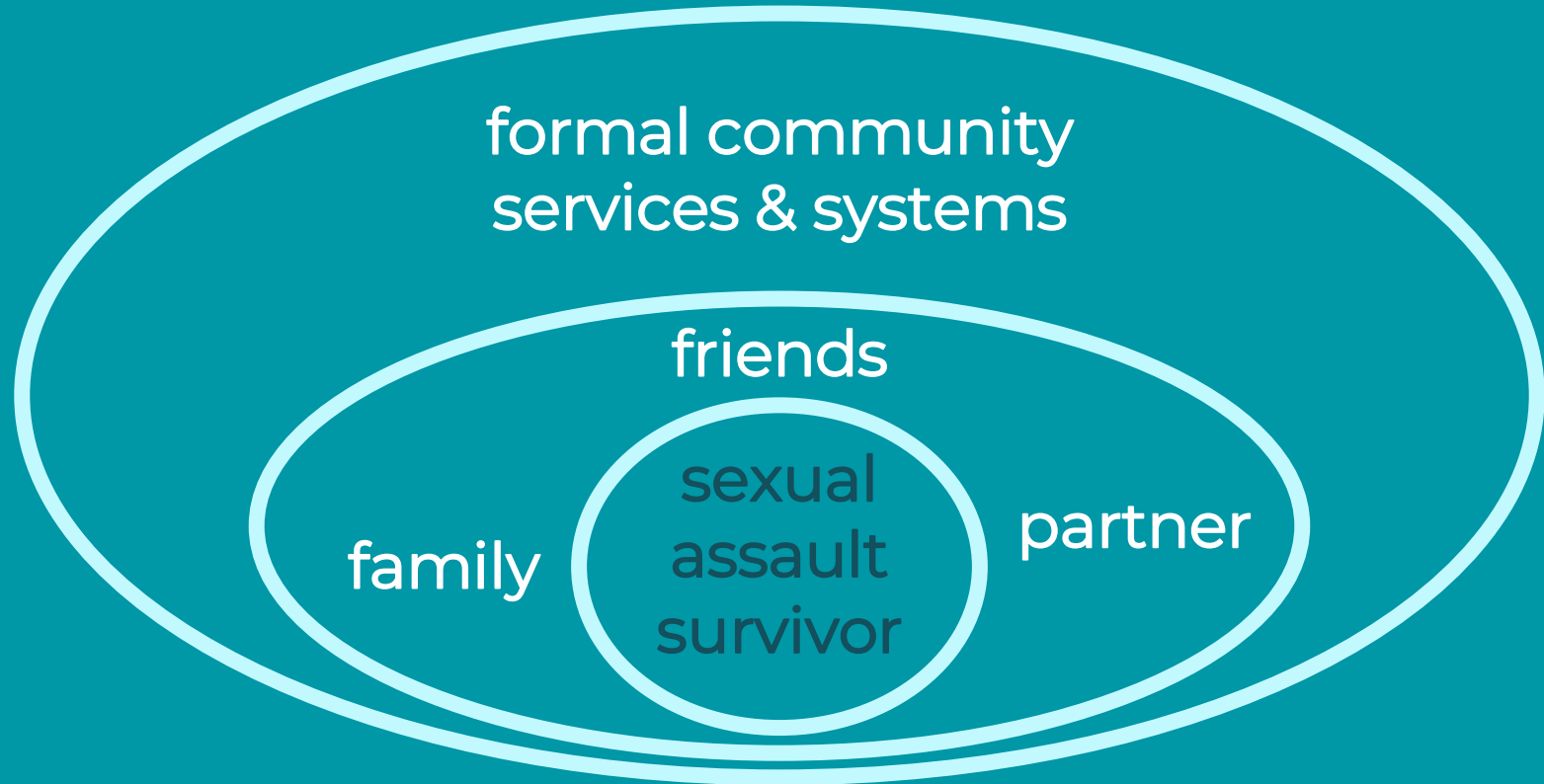
no one recovers
in a vacuum

Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009



sexual
assault
survivor





sociocultural
beliefs & norms

The diagram consists of four concentric ellipses on a teal background. The outermost ellipse is labeled 'sociocultural beliefs & norms'. The second ellipse is labeled 'formal community services & systems'. The third ellipse is labeled 'friends' at the top, 'family' on the left, and 'partner' on the right. The innermost ellipse is labeled 'sexual assault survivor'.

formal community
services & systems

friends

family

sexual
assault
survivor


partner





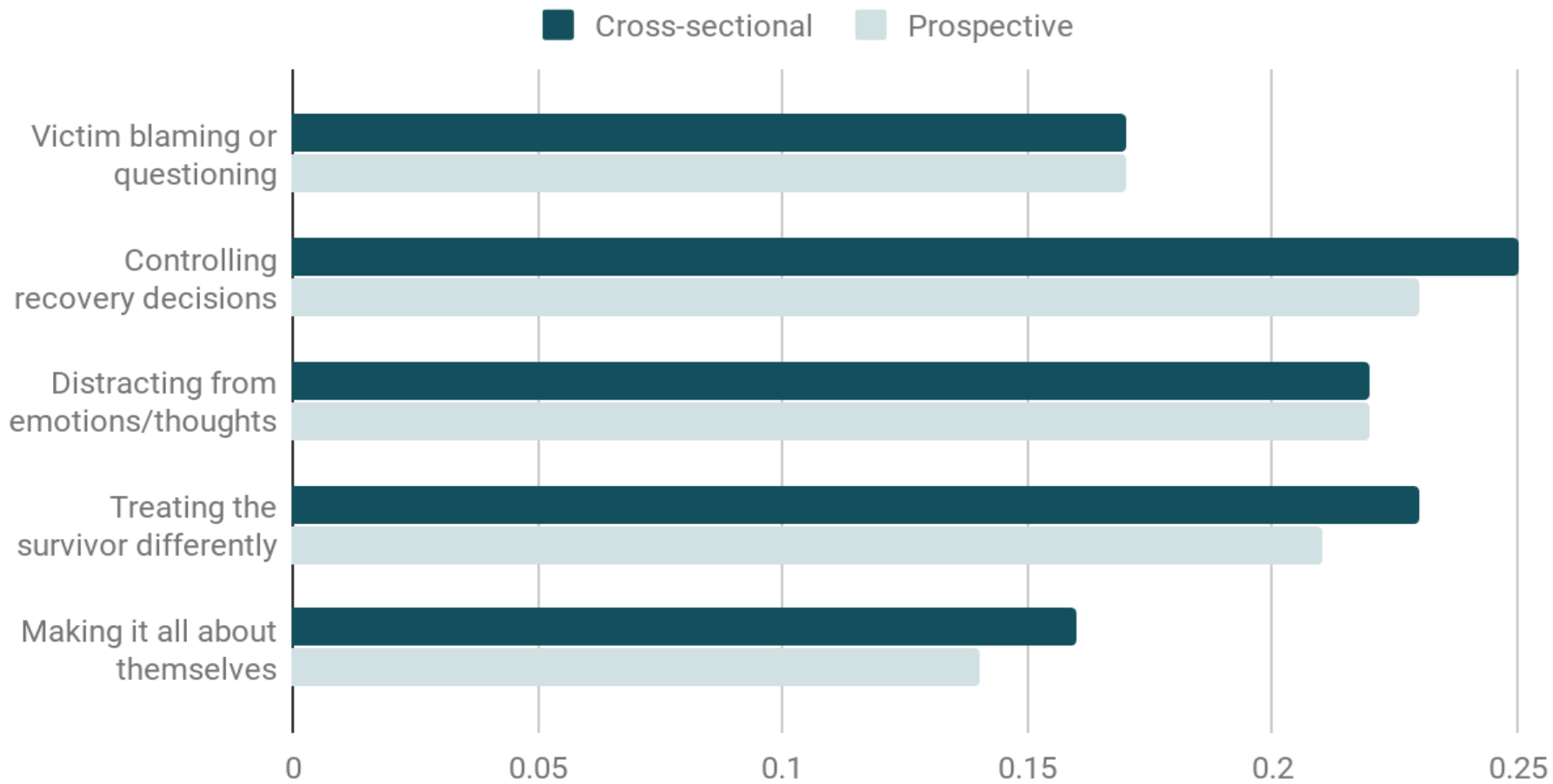


how can we
make the water better?



prioritize
survivors'
choice &
control

encourage
feeling (rather
than avoiding)
feelings

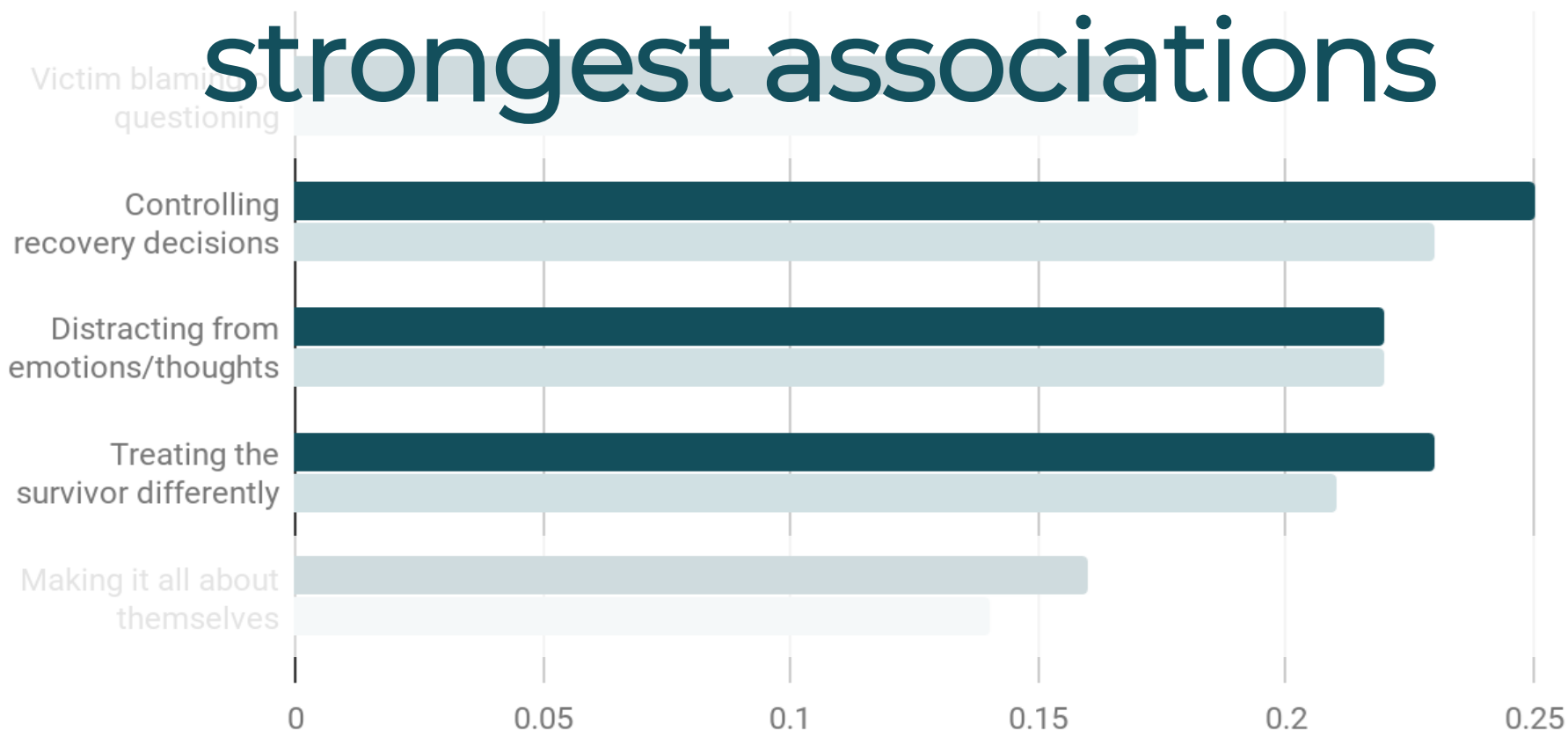


Correlation between mental health problems and how often victim received reaction

Dworkin, Brill, & Ullman, 2019

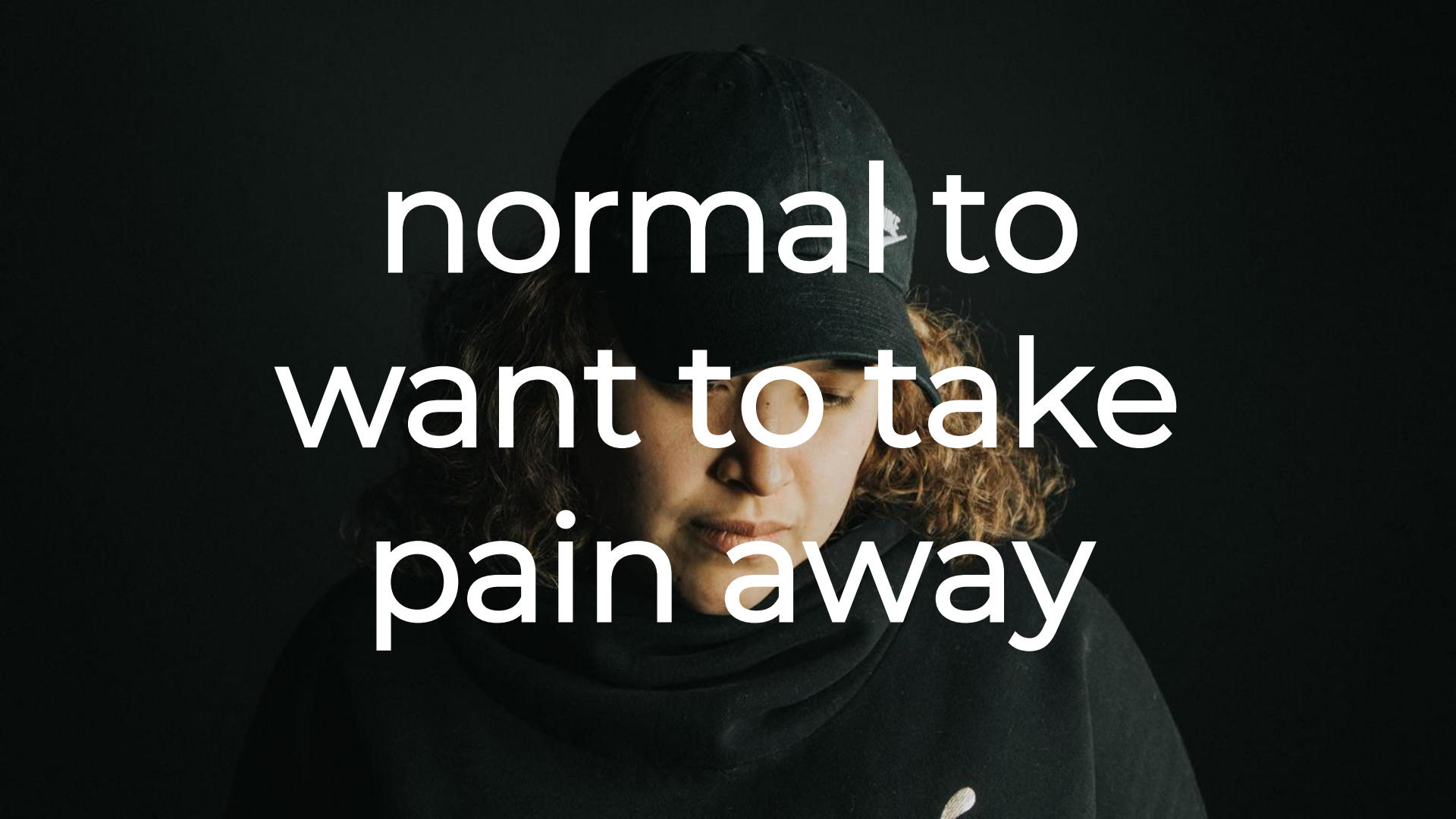
■ Cross-sectional ■ Prospective

strongest associations



Correlation between mental health problems and how often victim received reaction

Dworkin, Brill, & Ullman, 2019

A woman with curly hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a black baseball cap and a black hoodie. She is looking down and to her right with a somber expression. The background is dark. Overlaid on the image is the text "normal to want to take pain away" in a white, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines.

normal to
want to take
pain away



but there's no
quick fix.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands held together in a prayer-like gesture, palms facing each other. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame. The person is wearing a gold ring on their left ring finger and a black wristband on their left wrist. There is a tattoo on the back of the left hand. The background is a blurred green, suggesting an outdoor setting. Overlaid on the hands is the text "can't heal pain by avoiding it" in a white, sans-serif font.

can't heal
pain by
avoiding it

A photograph of an older man and a woman embracing outdoors. The man, with grey hair, is wearing a light blue checkered shirt and has his arms around the woman. The woman, with dark hair, is wearing a dark blue top and has her eyes closed, leaning her head against the man. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage. The text "pain heals when it's felt" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

pain heals
when it's felt



thanks!

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