

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



**Digital**  
***TRAVELLERS***



# Creating a Positive Learning Environment

## Self-training Module



## AT THE END OF THIS MODULE...

...I will be able to...

- Reflect on the impact of a positive mindset
- Take some steps to create a positive learning environment in my workshops
- Find practical guidance to help me prepare and run workshops, whether in person or online



# Importance *Of* *Positivity*



# Would you like to participate in an experiment about positive mindsets?

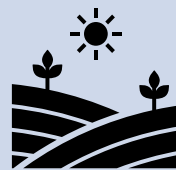
Yes

No



<https://urlz.fr/exti>

Use the QR code or hyperlink on the right of this slide to watch a video of people laughing.



Alternatively, you could watch or look at anything that makes you feel positive.

For example, a video of cats playing or people dancing.

Continue watching this presentation.

It is not essential to participate in the experiment to understand this module.



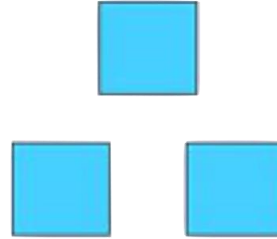
**Now**  
*Let's try  
something*



- This exercise comes from an experiment led by Barbara Fredrickson, a researcher in positive psychology
- She wanted to observe the effects of positive or negative mindset on the reasoning capacity of individuals

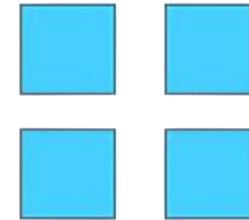
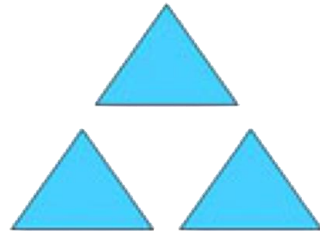
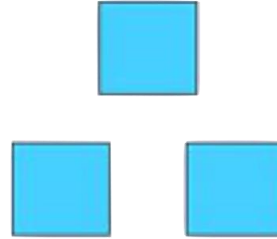


Look...





Look...



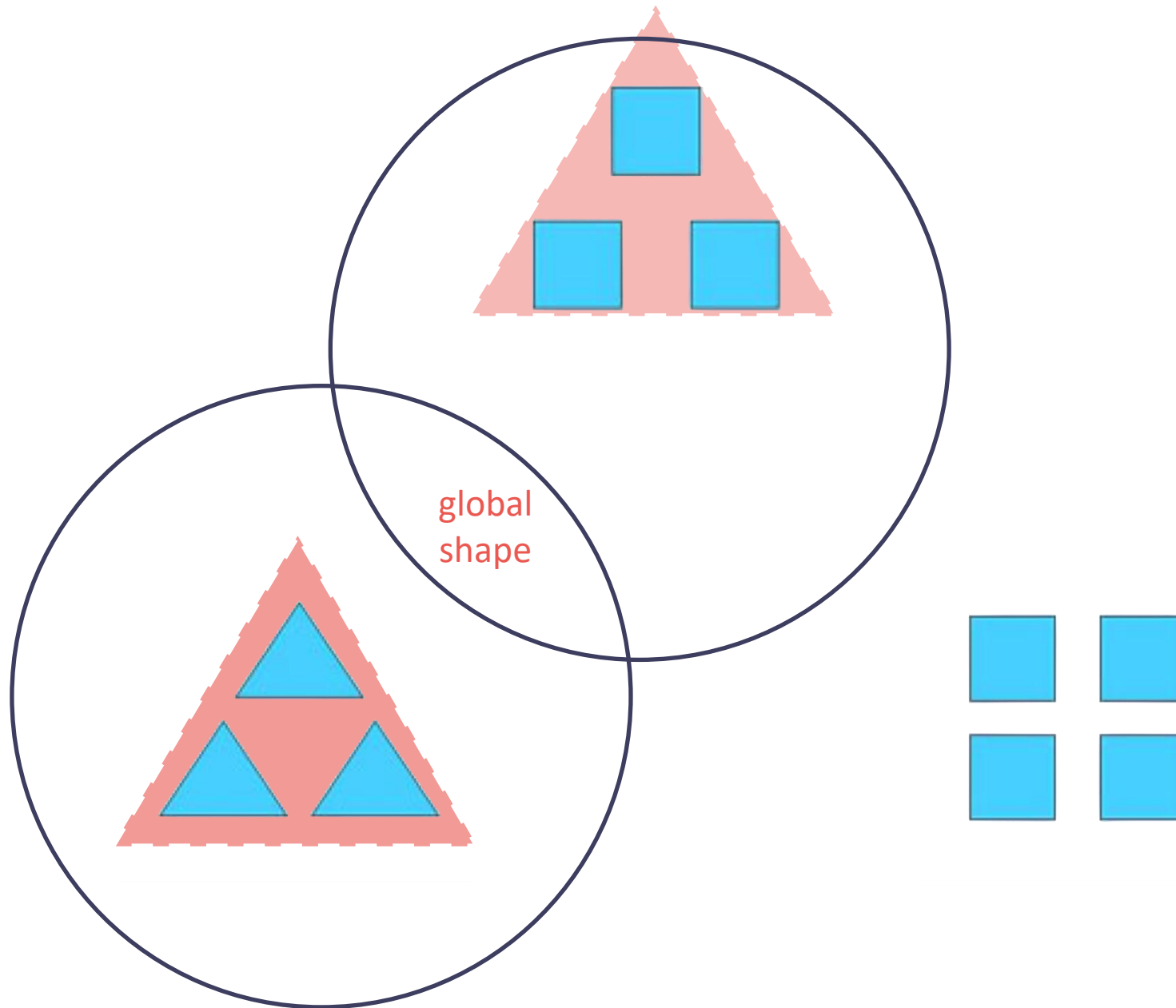
According to you, is the left picture or the right picture  
the most similar to the picture at the top?

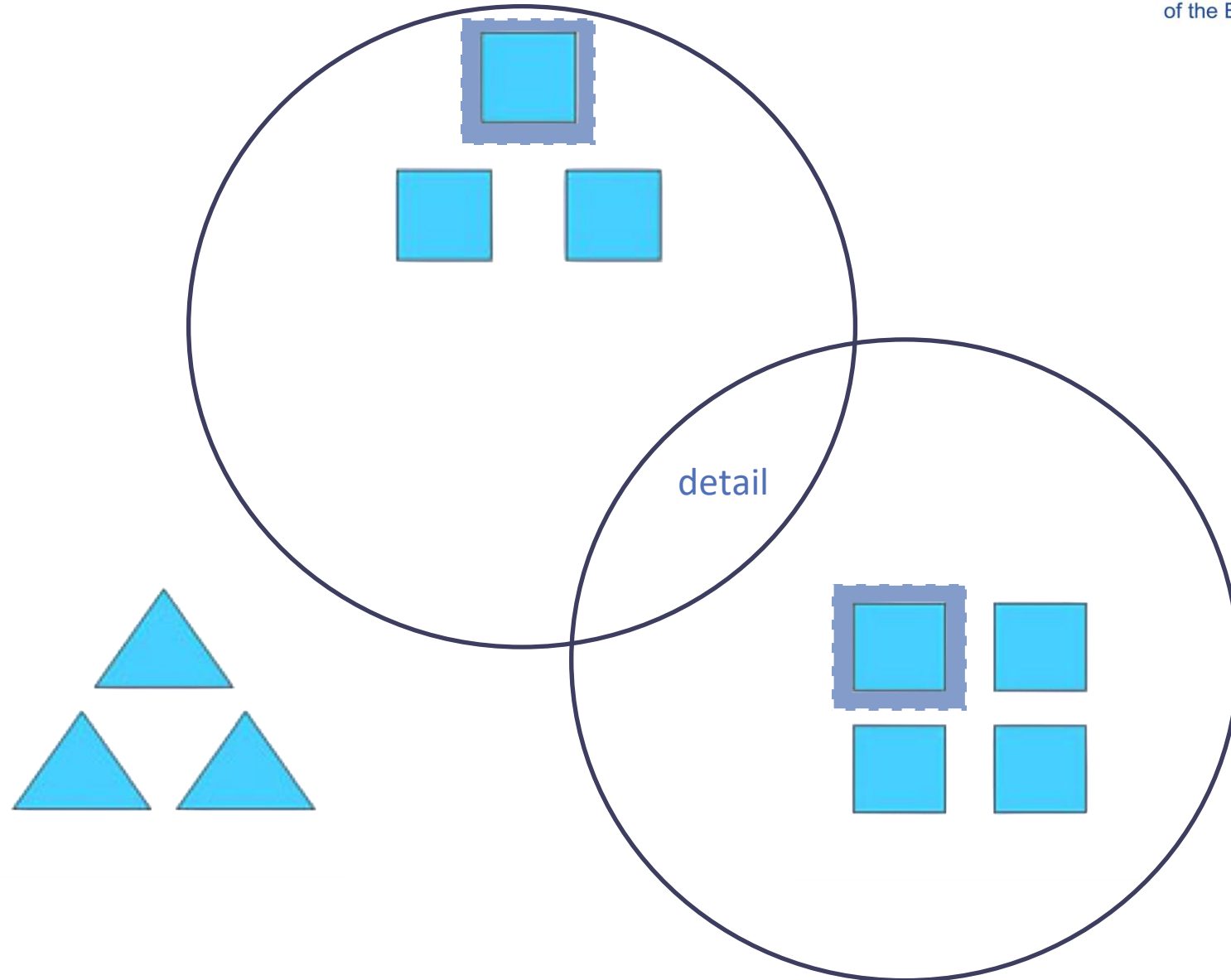
There is no right answer. Your choice depends on the comparison criterion your mind is using.





# Possible *Comparison Criteria*



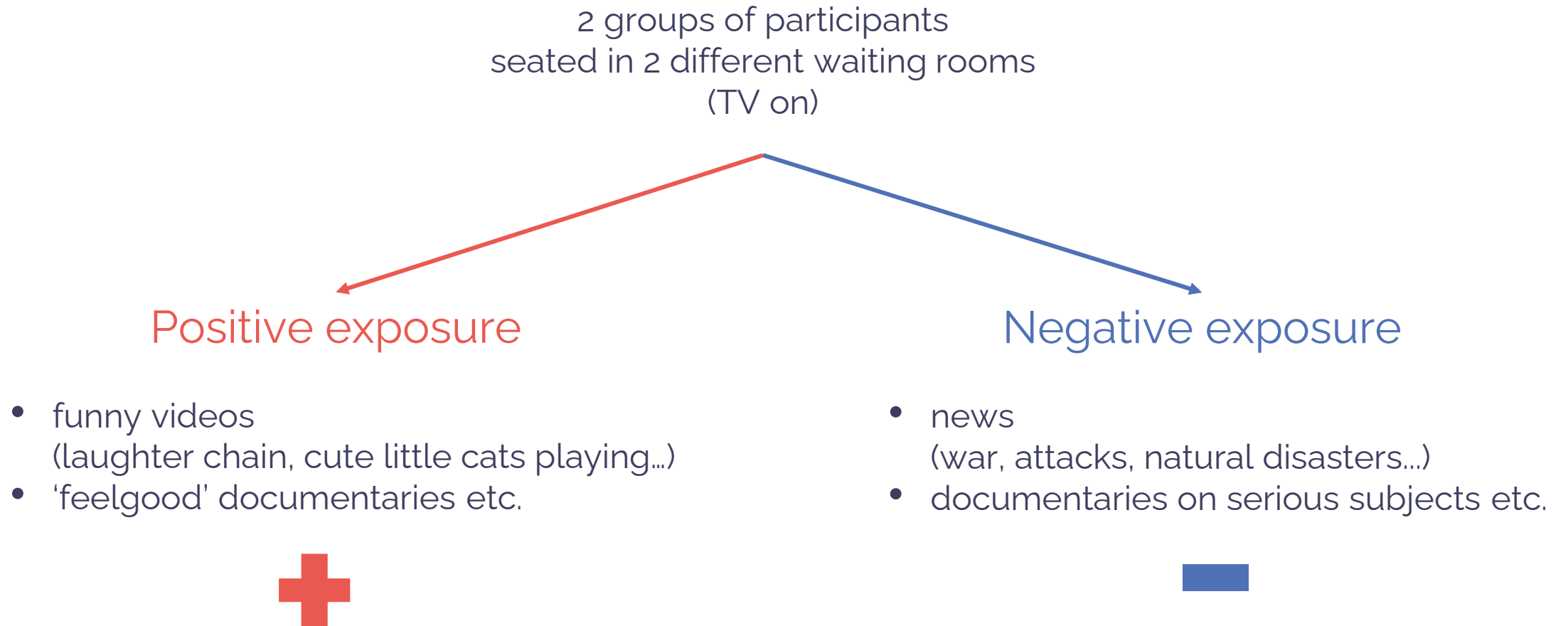




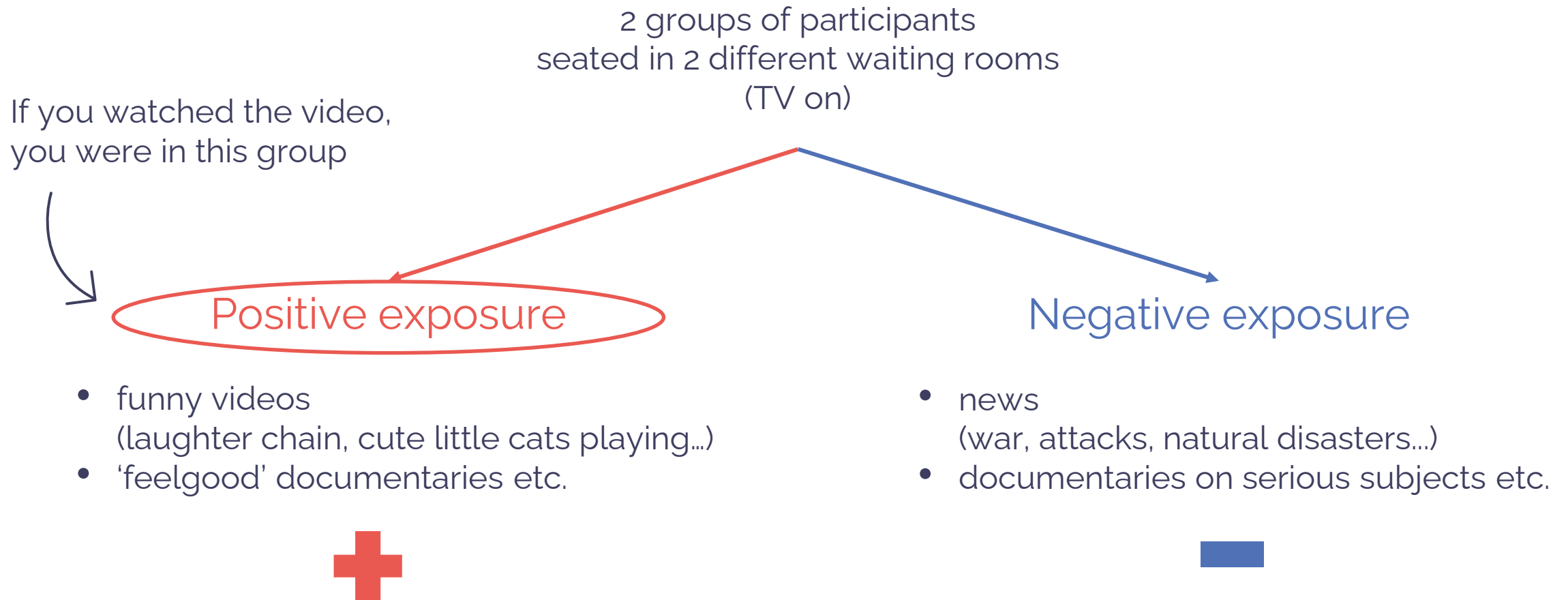
**It's likely**

***You chose the  
left picture***

To understand why we think, if you watched the video, it is likely that you choose the picture on the left, some explanation of Barbara Fredrickson's experiment is needed.



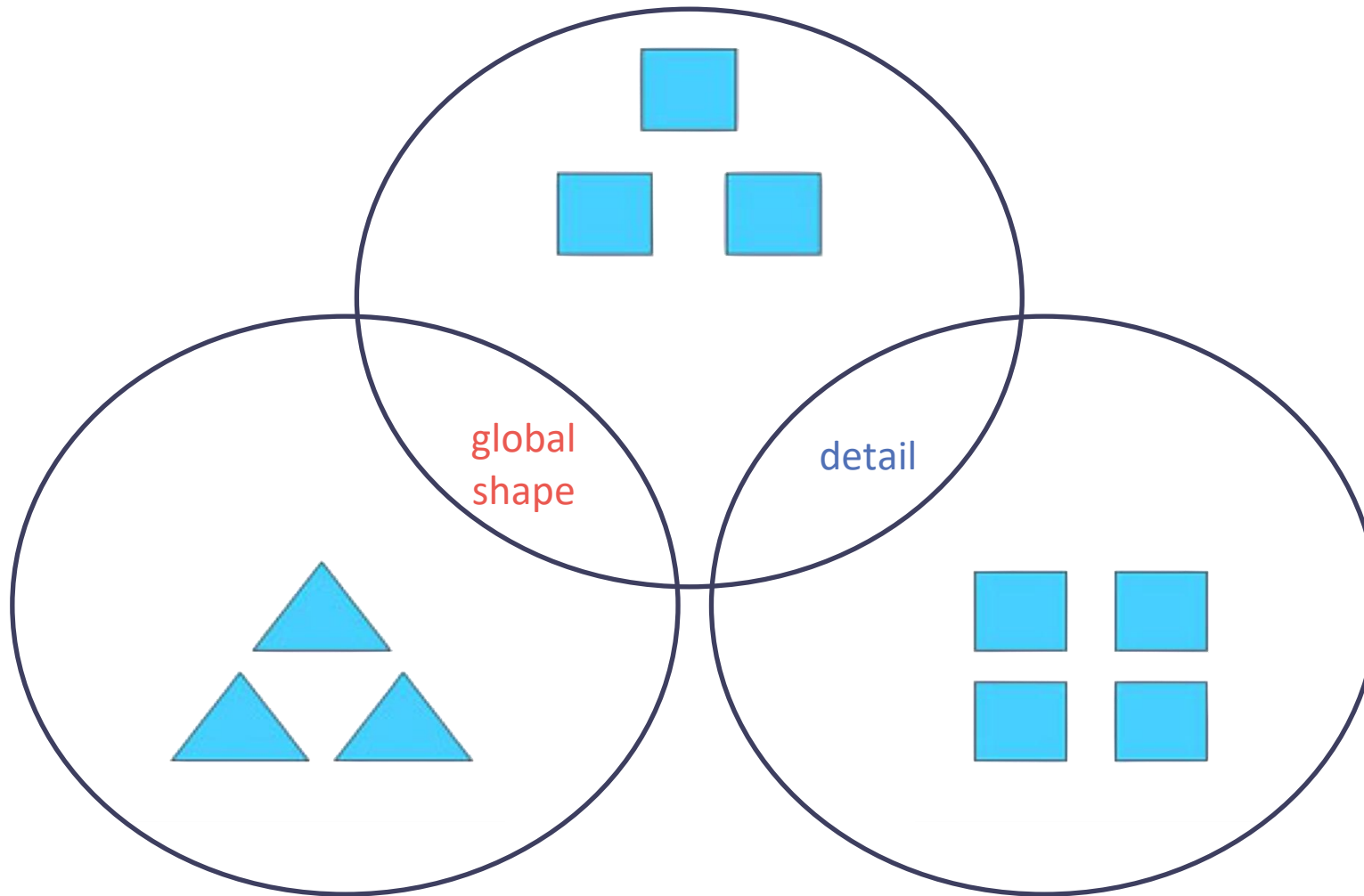
To understand why we think, if you watched the video, it is likely that you choose the picture on the left, some explanation of Barbara Fredrickson's experiment is needed.



# Barbara Fredrickson's experiment



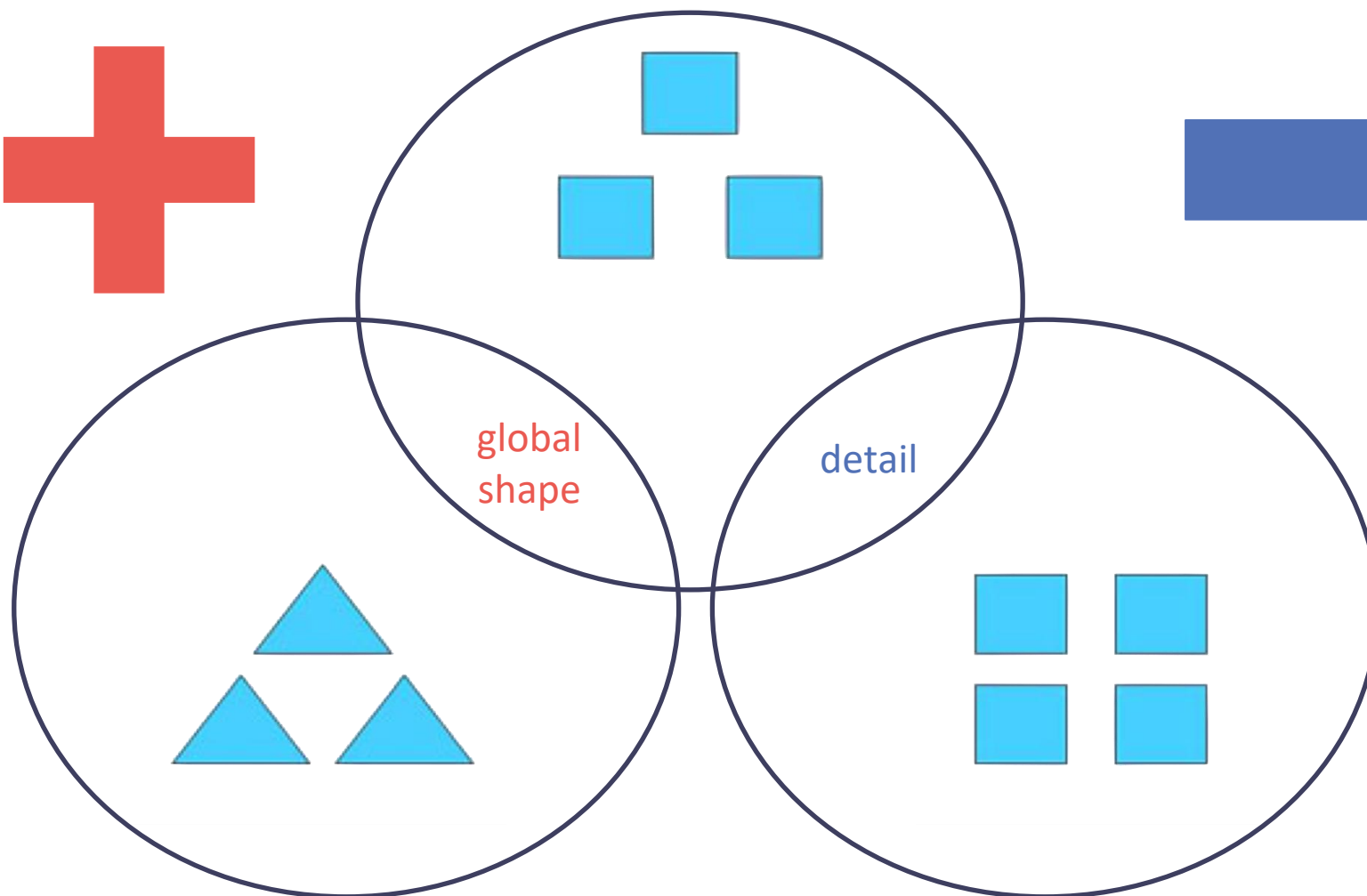
The two groups answered the same question about the similarity between the pictures they were shown.





# The result of Barbara Fredrickson's experiment

Positive  
exposure



Negative  
exposure



# Why do we think it is likely that you chose the picture on the left?

The general interpretation that can be drawn from this experiment is:

## **Positive mindset**

Allows the brain to see something in a more holistic, global way

## **Negative mindset**

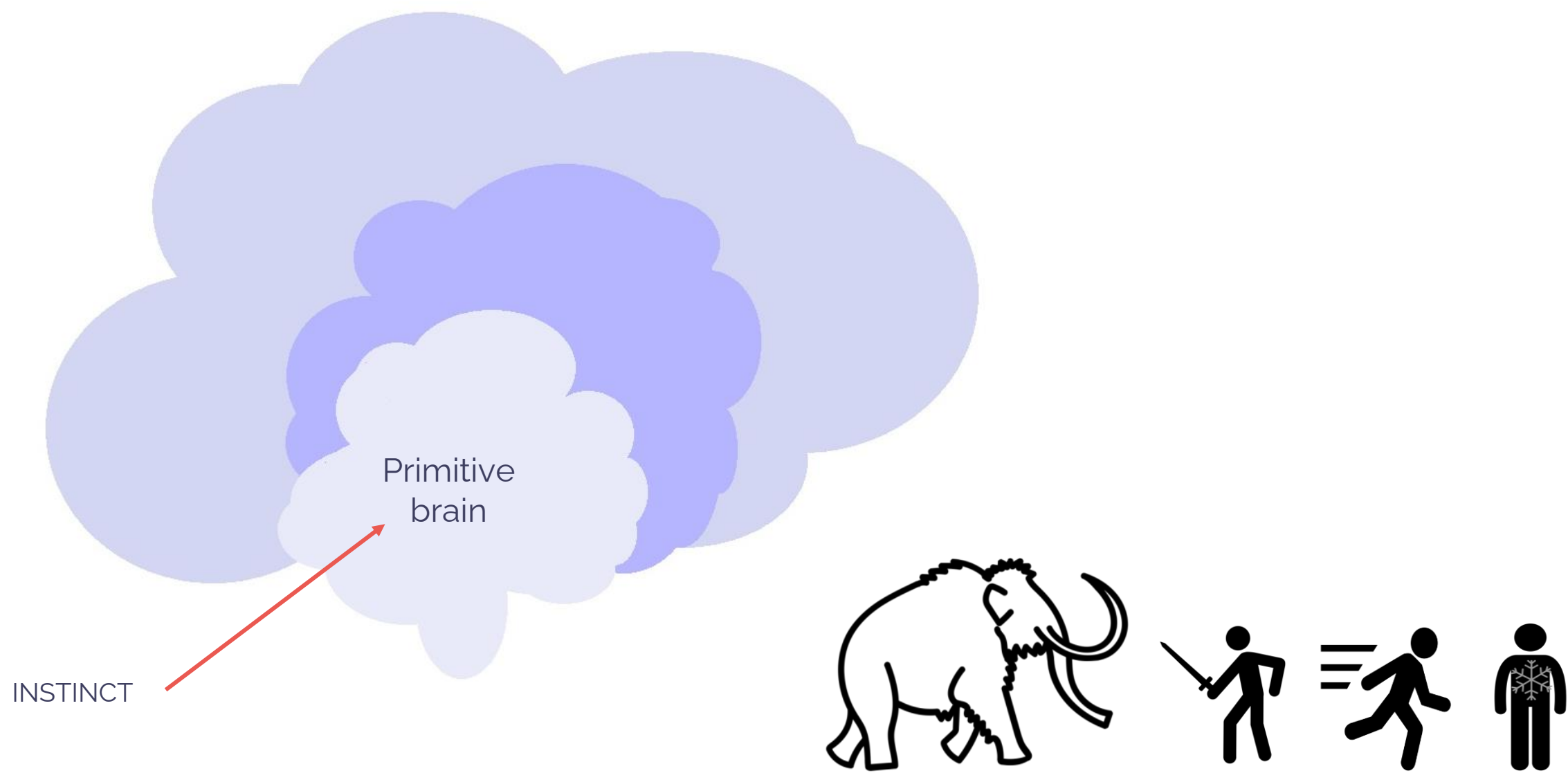
Makes the brain to focus on details

- There was no right answer: we're not saying that we should always be positive or that a global approach is better than another
- We just wish to draw your attention towards the correlation between positive and negative mindsets and ways of thinking



**How**  
*Can we  
explain this?*

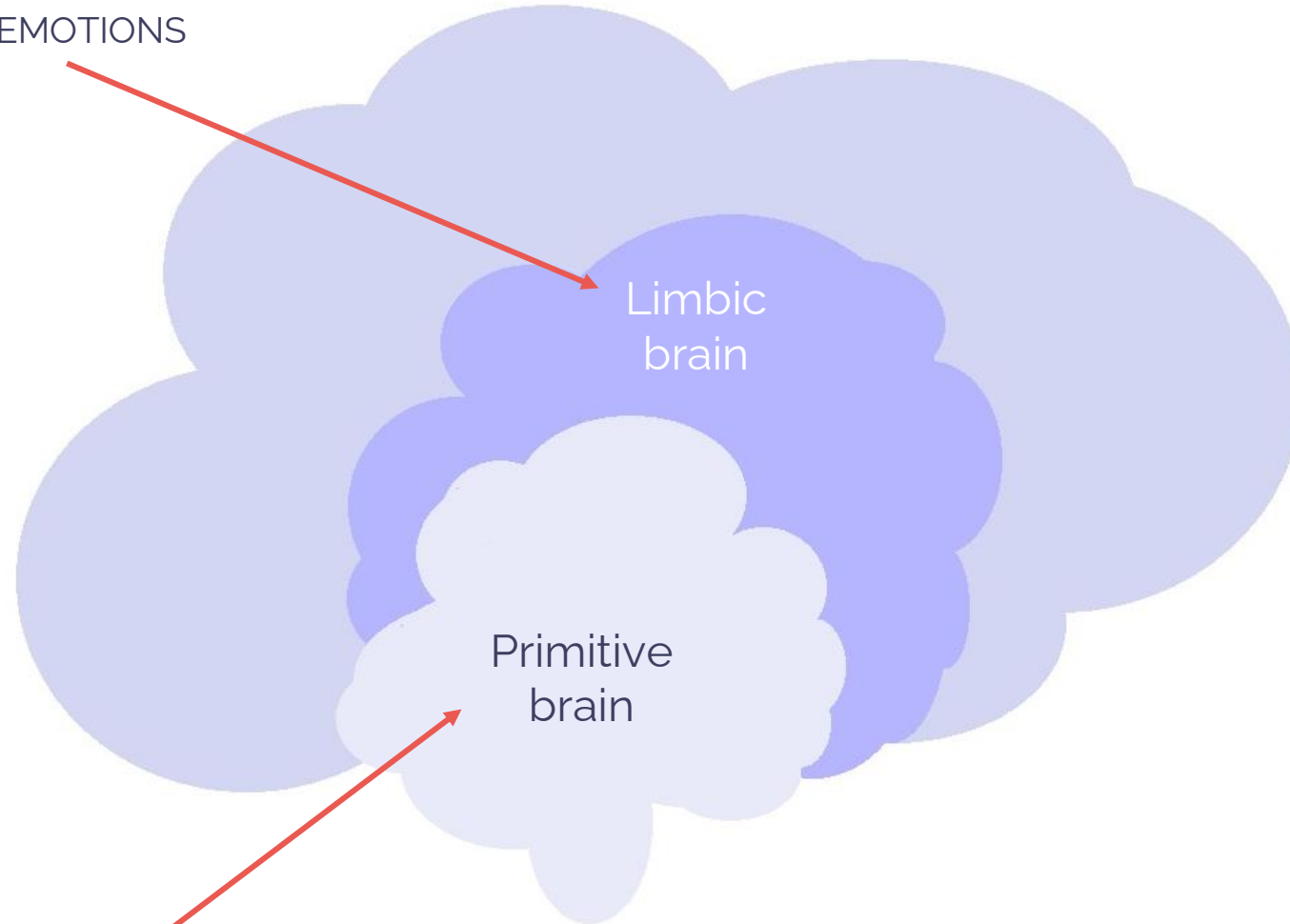
# Explanation: how our brains function



# Explanation: how our brains function



MEMORY & EMOTIONS



Limbic  
brain

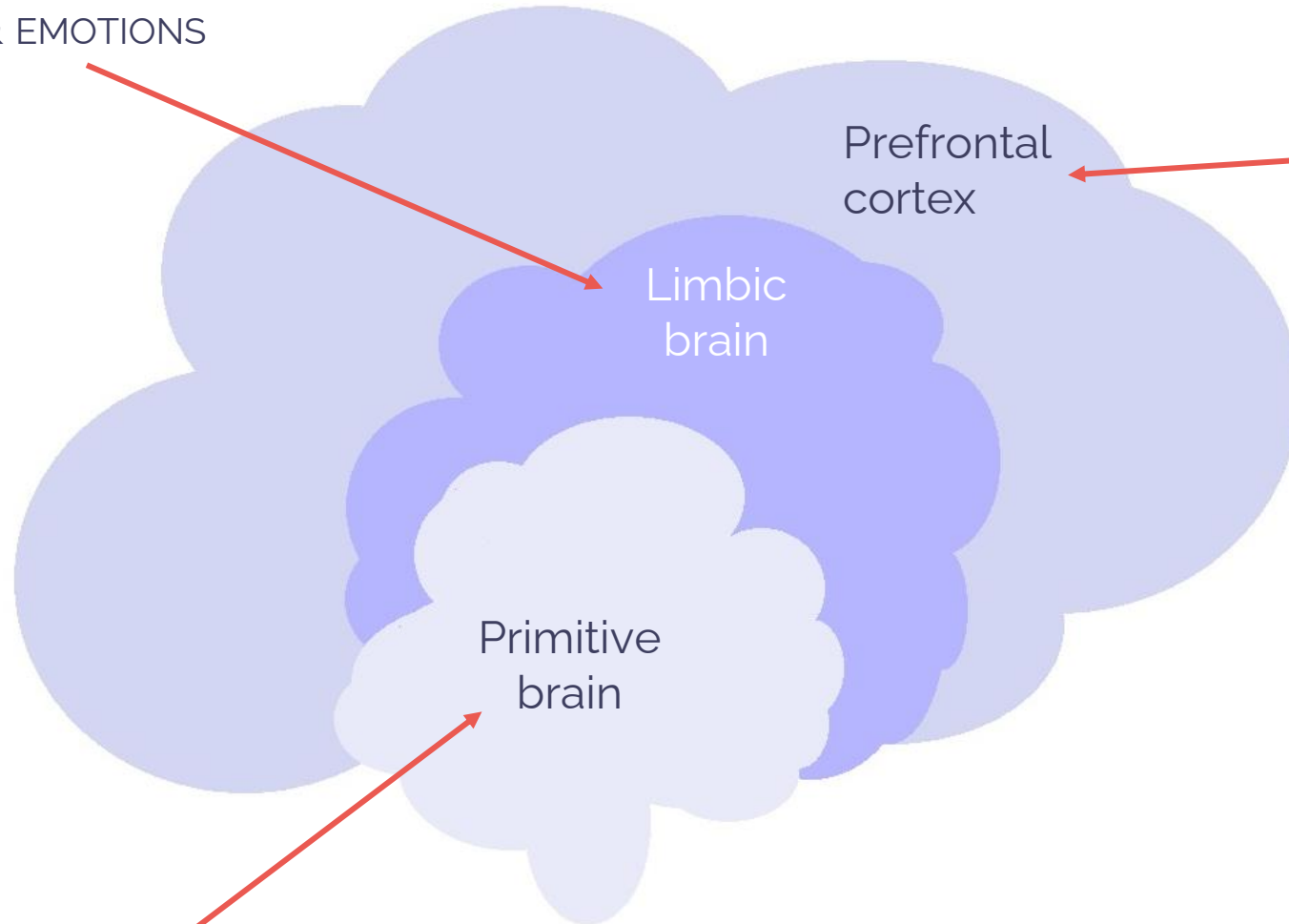
Primitive  
brain

INSTINCT

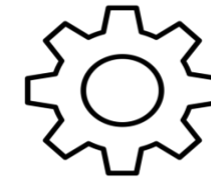
# Explanation: how our brains function



MEMORY & EMOTIONS



THINKING & REASONING



- Exclusion of irrelevant details
- Planning
- Management of emotions
- Assessment/objectivity
- Empathy
- Attention/focus
- Curiosity/creativity

INSTINCT



# The connection between how our brains function and positive and negative mindsets

- Situations of danger, stress or tension
- Negative mindsets



**Primitive brain**



**Less** able to...

- Calm, safe and positive situations
- Positive mindsets



**Prefrontal cortex**



**More** able to...

Be creative and curious, manage emotions, evaluate situations objectively, empathize, plan, be focussed..

**Positive mindsets benefit everyone!**



# Positive *Learning Environments*

# How can I get myself, as a facilitator, into a positive mindset?

- Watch the My Role as a Facilitator module's video  
The role of a facilitator is to create a learning environment which facilitates the learning of participants. You do not need to be an expert on digital world to organise great workshops on digital skills.
- Read and watch the testimonies of other facilitators  
You can find the testimonies of lots of other facilitators in the Testimonies section under the Becoming A Facilitator header on The Digital Travellers Database.  
The facilitators talk about the challenges they faced and how they overcame them!
- Take simple steps to minimise stress before workshops  
Plan workshops in advance and make sure that you have multiple copies of materials, including on paper, in case of technological problems. Try to take a moment to sit down and calm down before workshops begin.



# How can I get myself, as a facilitator, into a positive mindset?



- Explore the Practical Guidance section

You can find the Practical Guidance section under the Becoming A Facilitator header on The Digital Travellers Database. In this section, you can find lots of materials to help you plan, run and evaluate your workshops as well as Do's and Don'ts and an FAQ!

## Some examples:

- Guide: Planning a Workshop
- Guide: Reaching out to and Interacting with Specific Audiences
- Post-Workshop Questionnaire for Workshop Participants
- Guide: Planning Online Workshops



# How can I create a positive learning environment for my participants?

- Reflect on the barriers that workshop participants may face

As discussed in the *Working With Vulnerable Groups* module, many workshop participants may face physiological barriers to workshop participation such as low self-confidence or a lack of motivation.

- Ensure activities are accessible to all

Inclusive activities, which all participants can access and complete, will help participants to grow in confidence and minimise their stress, helping them to use the superior skills of their prefrontal cortexes.

- Choose small, incremental steps

As discussed in *The Stages in a Workshop* module, short stages of approximately five minutes can create dynamic and fast-paced workshops which allow participants to slowly grow in confidence and autonomy throughout the workshop.

# How can I create a positive learning environment for my participants?

- Encourage workshop participants

Celebrate what participants can do and praise progress, however small. This will help to gradually build their confidence.

- Defuse tension

Defuse tension during the workshop by using humour. Make light of any drama and help participants to see things positively.

- Use fun tools to engage participants

The Practical Guidance section under the Becoming A Facilitator header on The Digital Travellers Database contains lots of ideas on how to make your workshops lively and engaging. For example, there are explanations of tools that you can use energize your audience.



## IN SHORT

# What practical use is a positive mindset to me when delivering workshops?

- It can help me cope if things do not go as planned during workshops  
Something 'going wrong' during a workshop is not necessarily a bad thing - I can model how to cope with and overcome unexpected challenges to participants. Similarly, if I make a mistake during a workshop, I can show participants that no mistake is insurmountable and there is no shame in making them.
- It can help me to see things in a global, objective way  
A positive mindset is not just a good mood, it helps us to use our superior skills.
- It can make my workshops more enjoyable and more productive for participants  
In a positive learning environment, learners are in a better position to learn.



## NEXT STEPS

In your training journey...

### 1. Consult other modules

- Working with Vulnerable Groups
- My Role as a Facilitator
- The Stages in a Workshop

### 2. Browse practical guidance related to this module

- Do's and Don'ts





## IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE...

Module sources:

- La Chaine Du Rire De Skype (2011): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONhq28FLHJU>
- Le modèle du Cerveau dans la main de Daniel Siegel, démonstration faite par Nadine Gaudin (2013): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zxJ-KG6cZM>
- Emotions: Limbic System. Jeffrey Walsh: <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/health-and-medicine/executive-systems-of-the-brain/emotion-lesson/v/emotions-limbic-system>
- Positive emotions broaden and build. Barbara L. Fredrickson, in Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 47, 2013, pages 1-53.
- Positive emotions broaden the scope of attention and thought-action repertoires. Barbara L. Fredrickson. and Christine Branigan, in Cogn Emot. 2005 May 1; 19(3): 313–332. doi:10.1080/02699930441000238 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3156609/>)
- The Negativity Bias: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negativity\\_bias](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negativity_bias)
- The Positivity Ratio (2009): <https://www.positivityratio.com/>
- MOOCs: The Science of Happiness (edX) and Positive Psychology (Coursera)



## IF YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE...

Image sources:

Mammoth by Dan McCall from the Noun Project: <https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=mammoth&i=1049036>

Fight by ChangHoon Baek from the Noun Project: <https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=Fight&i=337900>

Escape by B.Farias from the Noun Project: <https://thenounproject.com/search/?q=escape&i=861467>

Man by Gan Khoon Lay from the Noun Project: <https://thenounproject.com/term/human/2751435/>

Brain image adapted from the book «Pleurs, crises et opposition...et si c'était de l'anxiété» by Nancy Doyon and Suzie Chiasson-Renaud, Éditions Midi trente (via: <https://www.miditrente.ca/fr/billet/comment-se-manifestent-les-peurs-chez-les-tout-petits>).