

The Butterfly Effect: A case study using process-based therapy to improve wellbeing

ABSTRACT

Process-based therapy (PBT)¹ is an emerging approach to therapy that challenges the dominance of disease-based models of mental health, therapeutic schools, and manualized approaches to therapy. PBT uses three interactive stages to explore a client's presenting issues, and tailor therapeutic interventions based on individual needs and preferences. These stages are: (1) the Extended Evolutionary Meta-Model (EEMM); (2) Network model and (3) Treatment kernel selection. There has been recent advocacy for the application of PBT to positive psychological interventions (PPIs)². Here, we demonstrate this approach using a case study design, for a client who chose the treatment kernel of mindfulness. We explore the impact of the specific mindfulness intervention, using the frameworks of PBT.

WHAT IS PROCESS-BASED THERAPY (PBT)?

- PBT is new way of looking at psychological functioning and interventions. It is an individualized approach to the evidence-based processes of change to guide therapeutic strategies that work.
- PBT identifies and brings together effective strategies from different therapeutic schools. It focuses on the individual as a person not as a problem.

THE CASE - MIRANDA

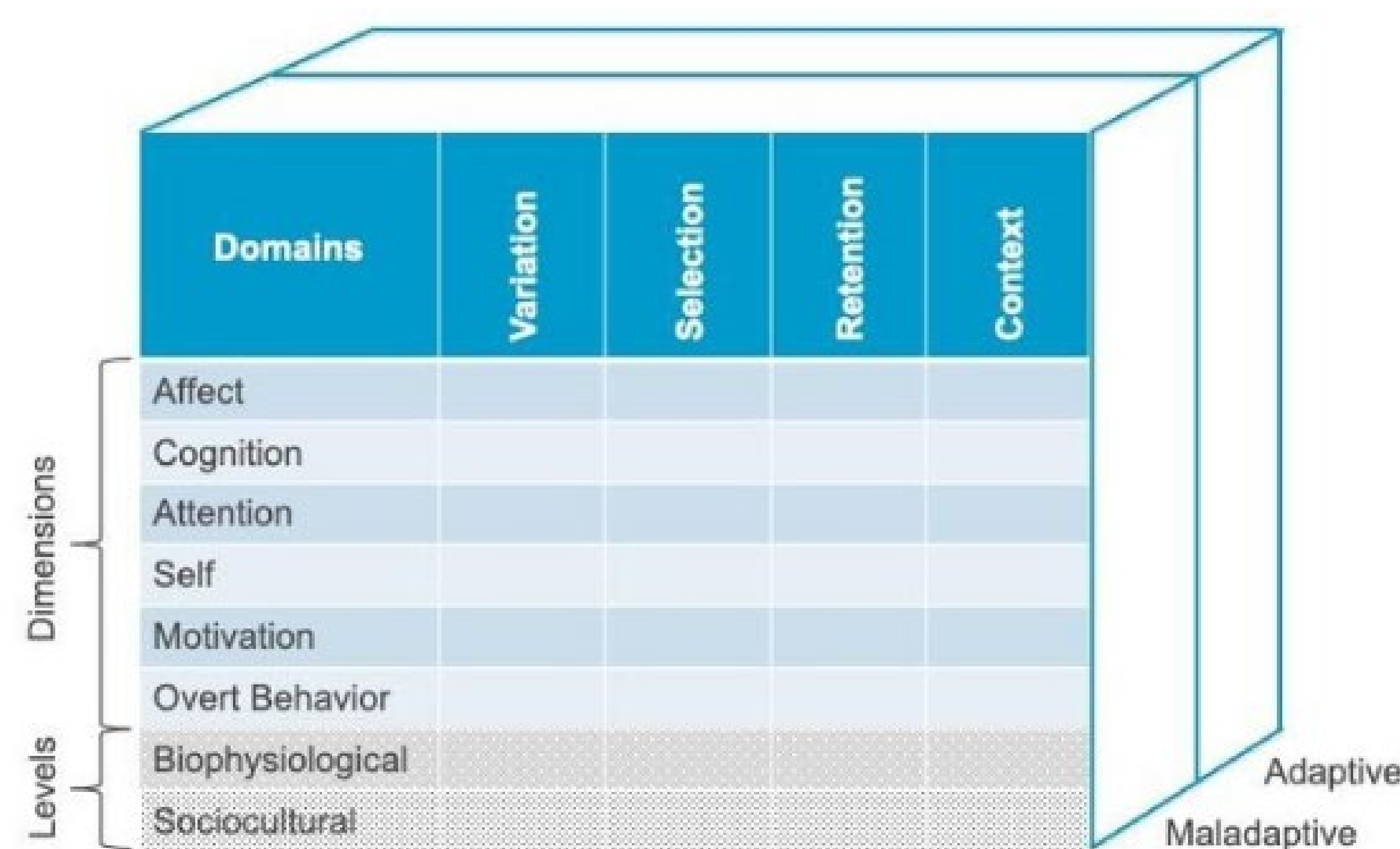
- Miranda was a professional woman, married with two children, and in her 40s.
- She presented with increasing levels of low mood, despair and anxiety.
- Key contexts were major life changes due to challenging family issues and workplace stressors.

STEP 1 EXTENDED EVOLUTIONARY META-MODEL (EEMM)

- Use the EEMM Dimensions and Levels to facilitate a structured understanding of the client's concerns and issues

Adaptive Functioning (A)

- Self – "I am resilient"
- MOTIVATION – values feeling competent and independent
- OVERT BEHAVIOUR – reaches out for help, spends time in nature
- BIOPHYSIOLOGICAL – healthy diet & exercise
- SOCIOCULTURAL – close friends, pursuing higher education

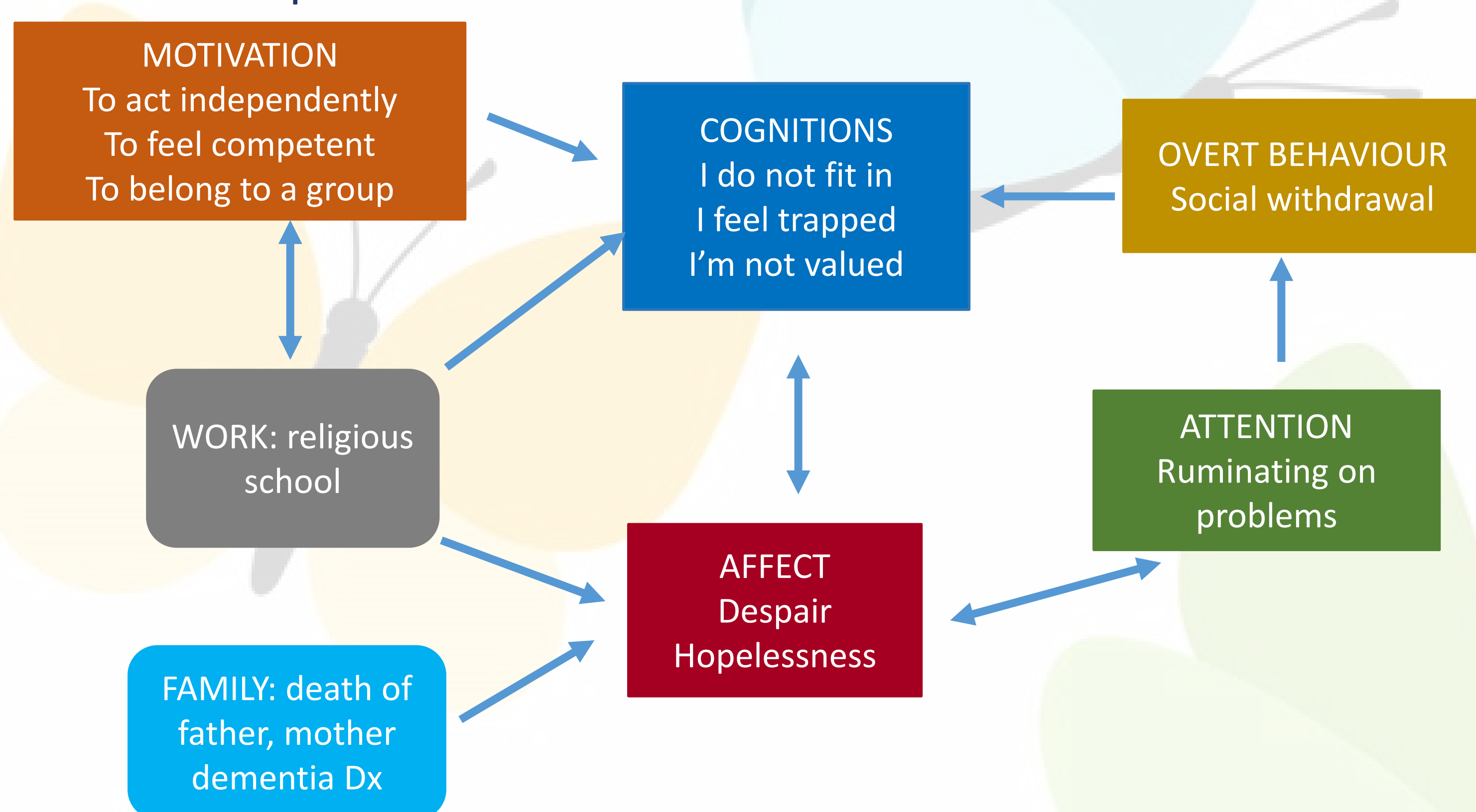


Maladaptive Functioning (M)

- AFFECT – sadness and despair
- COGNITION – "I feel trapped"
- MOTIVATION – values not aligned
- OVERT BEHAVIOUR – fewer social activities
- BIOPHYSIOLOGICAL – reduced exercise, poor sleep
- SOCIOCULTURAL – financial, family, work challenges

STEP 2 NETWORK MODEL

- Develop a network model of the main issues identified in the EEMM.

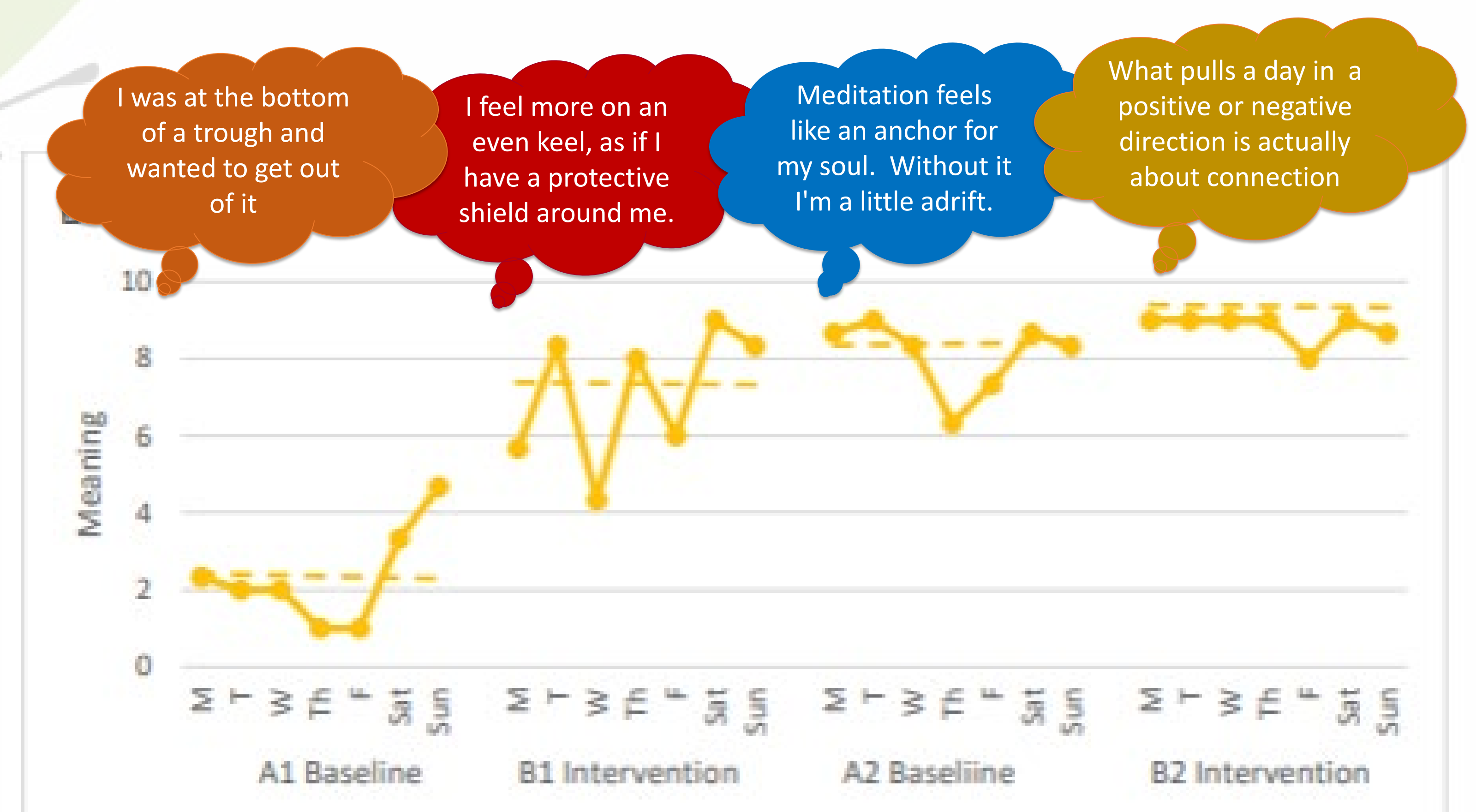


CLIENT OUTCOMES

- On an individual level, key changes occurred for affect (lower psychological distress, emotional regulation), cognitions (perspective, defusion) and overt behaviours (active connection).
- The negative impact of the workplace context was evident across the four weeks.
- An unexpected shift in motivation occurred; the client identified a core misalignment between her values and current contexts. This motivated a realignment of values and goals and produced a major shift in her sense of meaning.

STEP 3 CHOICE OF TREATMENT KERNEL

- A four-week intervention using an ABAB design (A=no intervention, B=intervention) was developed.
- A daily loving-kindness meditation (20 minutes) was completed during the intervention weeks.
- Daily self-monitoring occurred using: (1) Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire; (2) modified Differential Emotions Scale; (3) PERMA-Profilier; (4) Kessler-10.



¹ Hofmann, SG, Hayes, SC & Lorscheid, DN (2021). *Learning Process-Based Therapy*. Context Press. ² Ciarrochi, J, Hayes, SC, Oades, LG & Hofmann, SG (2022). Toward a Unified Framework for Positive Psychology Interventions: Evidence-Based Processes in Coaching, Prevention, and Training, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-16.