



"Therapeutic Prisons" - what kind of prison environments foster safety and wellbeing?

Prof. Dominique Moran
University of Birmingham, UK

Presentation to EuroPris Real Estate Workshop
Ljubljana Slovenia
14th – 16th October 2019

Safety and security in prisons

- England and Wales (c83,000):
 - 52,814 incidents of self harm (145 per day) in the year to Sept 2018
 - 33,803 violent incidents per year
 - 24,138 prisoner-on-prisoner assaults
 - 10,000+ assaults on staff
- People spending extended periods in carceral spaces experience high levels of stress and stress-related illness (prisoners *and* staff).

How do people in prison tend to behave?

- controlling impulses, considering responses, and treating others with respect and kindness?

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OR

- impulsive, irritable, missing subtle social cues, making mistakes, and failing to make and follow plans?

How do people in prison tend to behave?

- controlling impulses, considering responses, and treating others with respect and kindness? **“reasonable”**

OR

- impulsive, irritable, missing subtle social cues, making mistakes, and failing to make and follow plans? **“unreasonable”**

Why?

- ‘Attention Restoration Theory’
- un/reasonable behaviour is thought to depend (to an extent) on ‘diminished attentional capacity’ – or mental fatigue
- Two kinds of ‘attention’ –
 - Directed
 - Effortless

directed attention



- Listening carefully
- ‘Focusing’
- Concentrating despite distractions
- Controlling impulses, considering responses, and treating others with respect and kindness
- We use directed attention in order to do this

effortless attention



- the attraction of attention without sustained effort or conscious control

directed/effortless

1. (Capacity for) directed attention enables **reasonable** behaviour

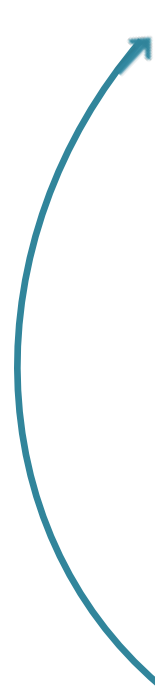
directed/effortless

1. (Capacity for) directed attention
↓ enables **reasonable** behaviour
2. Directed attention is depleted through use - leading to **unreasonableness**

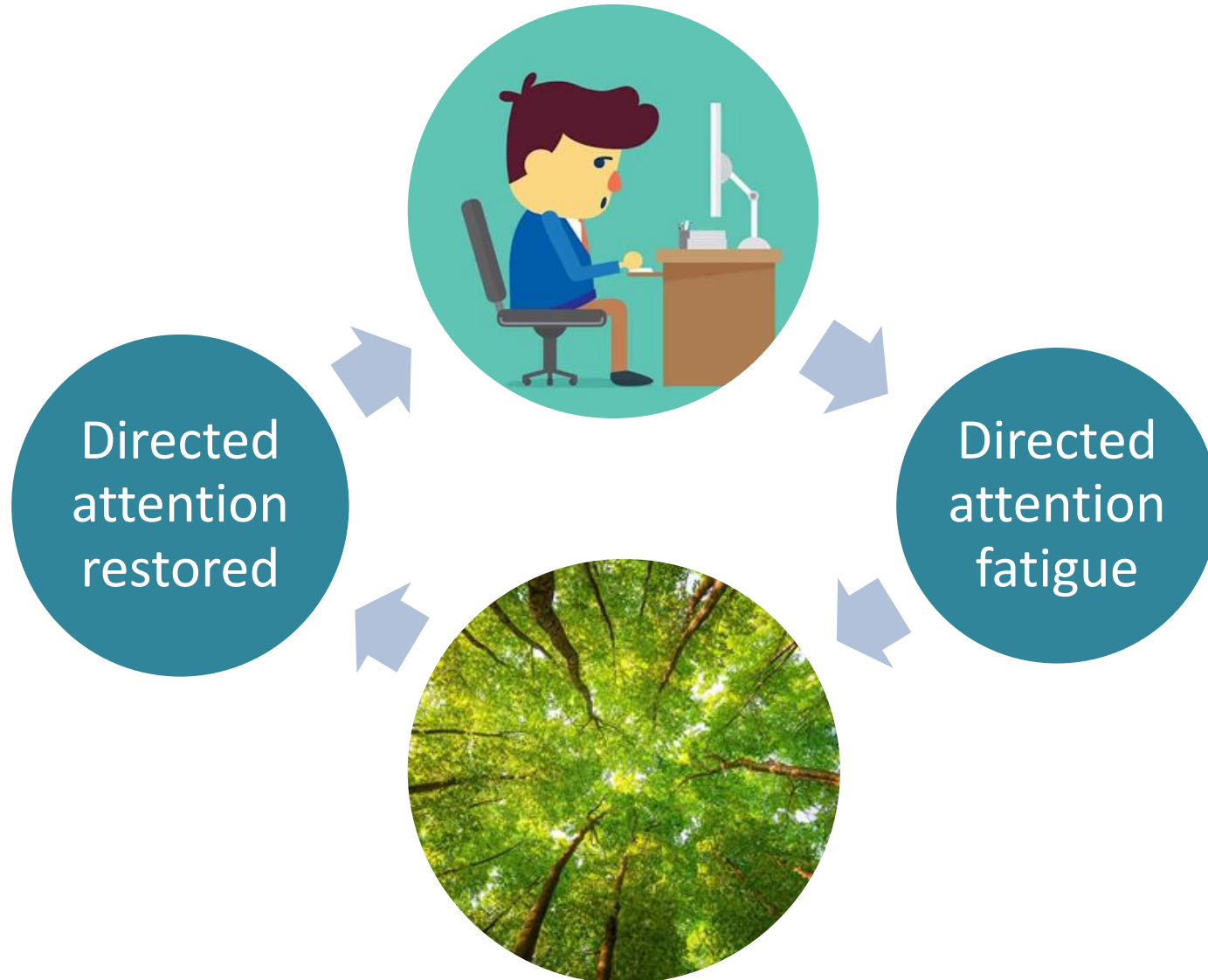
directed/effortless

1. (Capacity for) directed attention
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3. Replenishing directed attention
requires effortless attention

directed/effortless

- 
1. (Capacity for) directed attention enables **reasonable** behaviour
 2. Directed attention is depleted through use - leading to **unreasonableness**
 3. Replenishing directed attention requires effortless attention
 4. Once replenished, directed attention can once again enable **reasonableness**

directed/effortless



Effortless attention

- Two kinds:
 - Hard fascination
 - Soft fascination
- Both effortless, but ‘soft’ is more restorative than ‘hard’
 - Hard (e.g. television) grabs the attention and is hard to resist
 - Soft captures attention, but does not completely occupy the mind, instead leaving ‘headspace’ for emergence of unrelated thoughts, and for reflection

What kinds of contexts cause directed attention fatigue?

- Extended periods of focused attention, such as long working days
- Multiple stimuli and distractions
- Living in a dangerous setting
- Living with a difficult person
- Living without enough resources to meet your needs

How do we enable directed attention to restore via soft fascination?

- Restorative environments enable the following:
 - Being away
 - Extent
 - Fascination
 - Compatibility

Being away

- a departure from attentionally-fatiguing activities
- eliminating distractions
- taking a break from usual contexts and activities
- ceasing pursuit of attentionally-demanding tasks
- literally stopping and/or moving away

Being away

- Turning off a mobile phone
- Taking a walk on a lunch break
- Taking a break from a demanding task
- Taking a holiday
- Looking out of the window



Extent

- Being in a setting with enough content and structure to occupy the mind for long enough to allow directed attention to rest

Extent

Entering a 'whole other world', such as

- gardens or galleries with unfolding sections or deflected vistas,
- places with different experiences 'around the corner' but out of sight, allowing the mind to engage, and supporting extended exploration



Fascination

- the effortless capturing of attention – but ideally ‘soft’, enabling reflection

Fascination

- Immersive landscapes: forests, meadows, water, the ocean, the sky



Compatibility

- a fit between an individual's purposes or inclinations, and the activities supported.
- complex - because inclinations and needs vary between individuals, and for the same individual depending on the situation.
- a transaction – between qualities of the environment and a person's past experiences and current state

So to restore, we need:

- The opportunity to 'get away', to a context that provides extent and fascination, and which is compatible with our own needs and inclinations
- We all know what this is, for ourselves...
- We all do this (or want to do this) when we sense mental fatigue

Prison and mental fatigue

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Extended periods of focused attention, such as long working days

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24hr environment for prisoners – long working days for staff

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Living without enough resources to meet your needs

Lack of intimacy, friendship, supplies, medication, visits, access to training courses etc

prison and mental fatigue

prison and mental fatigue



multiple
stimuli

prison and mental fatigue

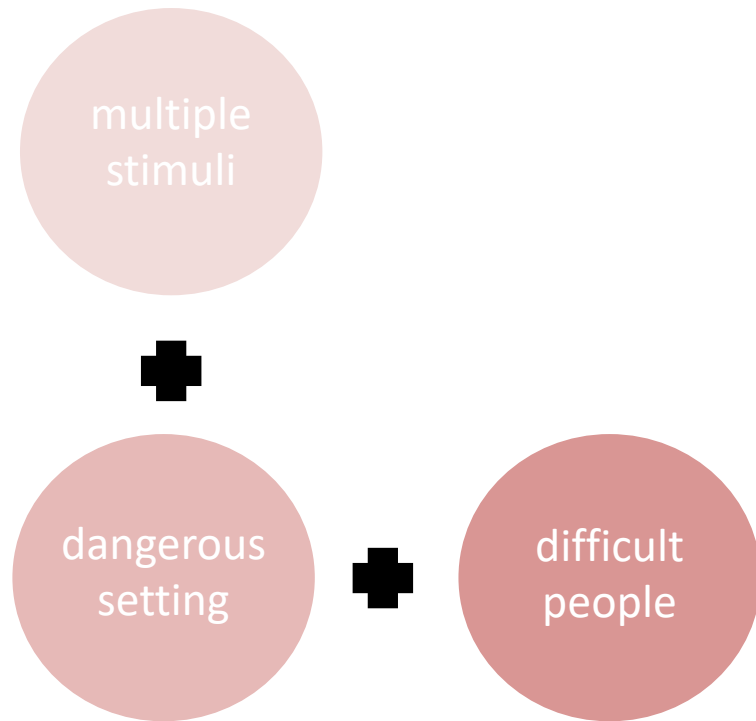


multiple
stimuli

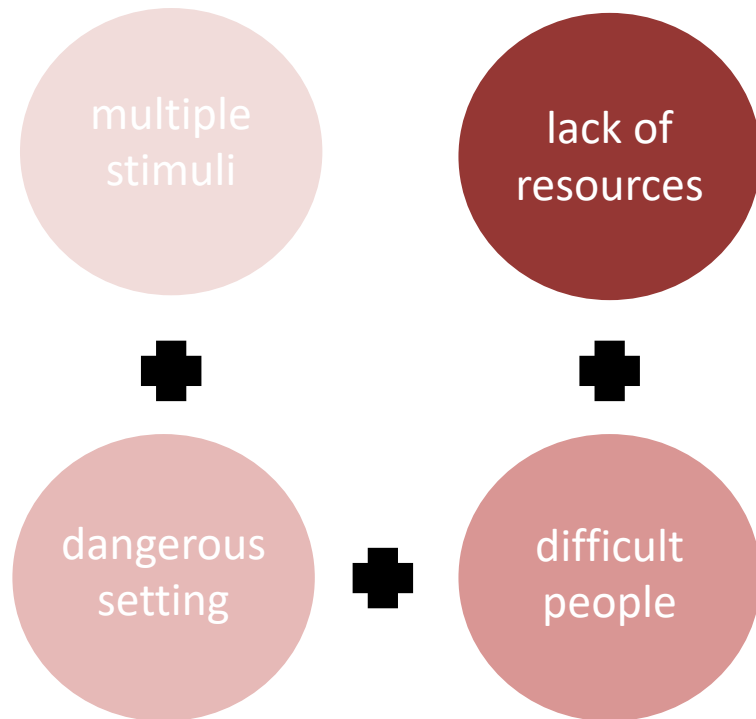


dangerous
setting

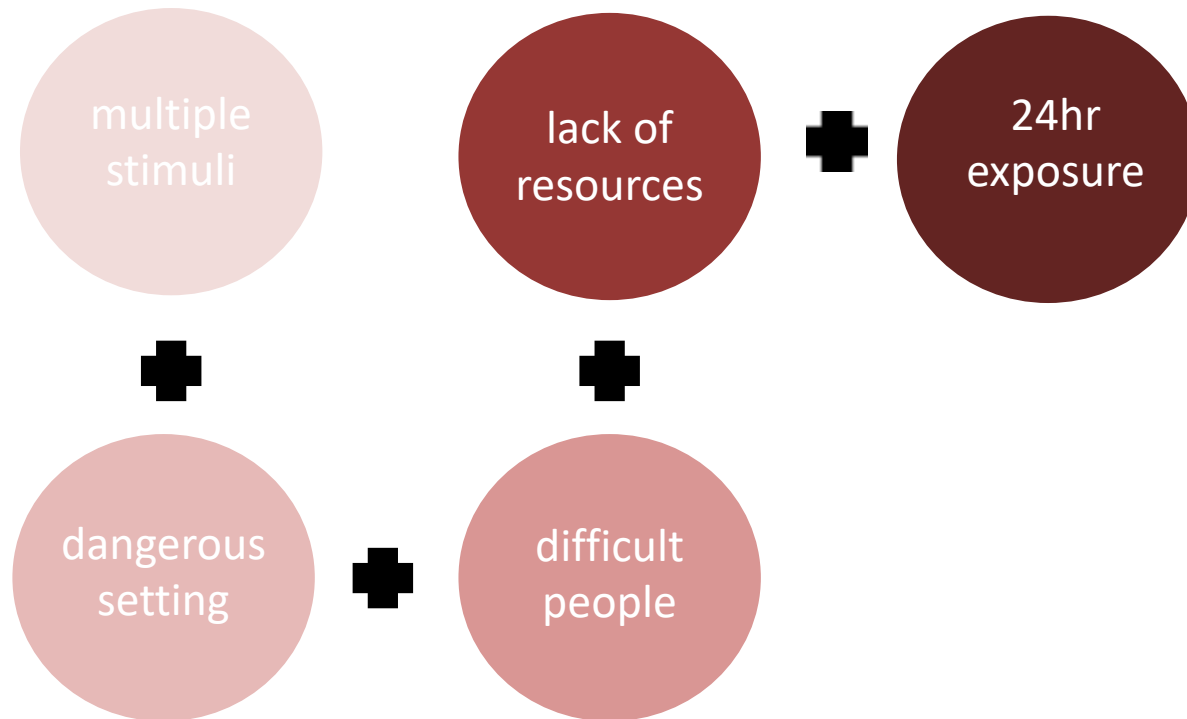
prison and mental fatigue



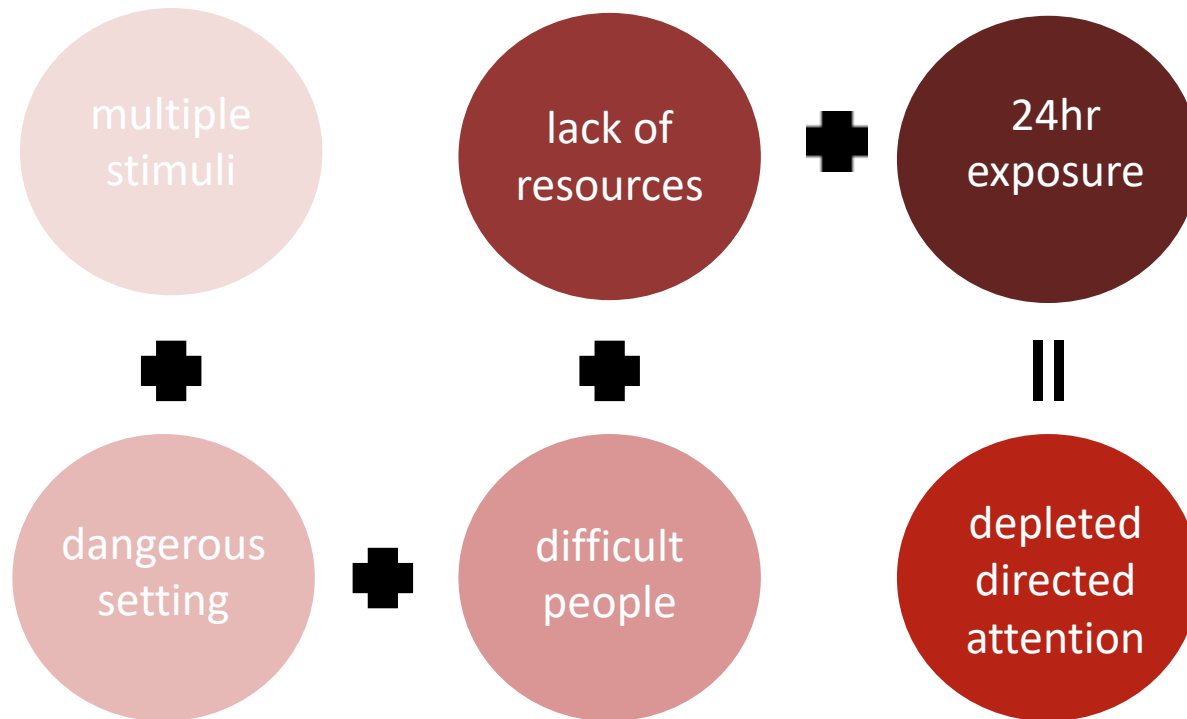
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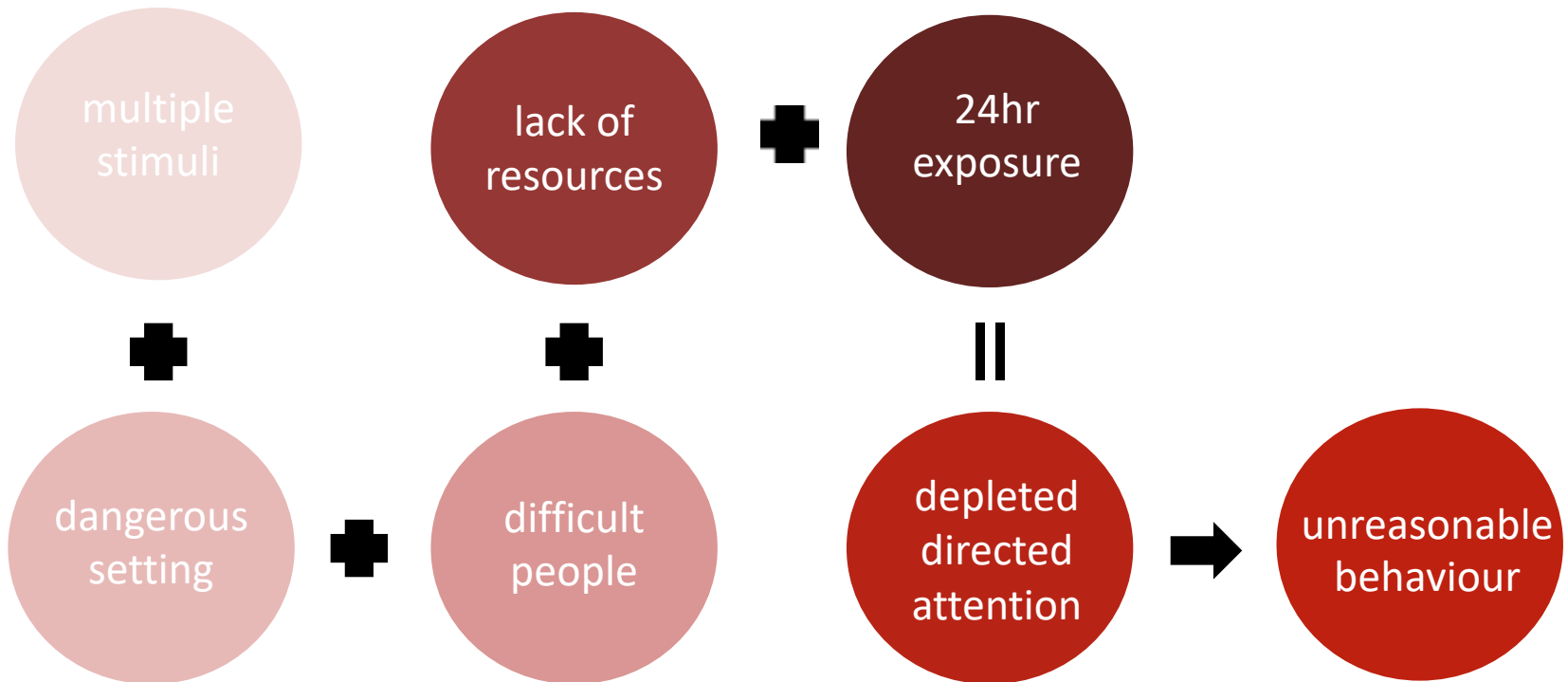
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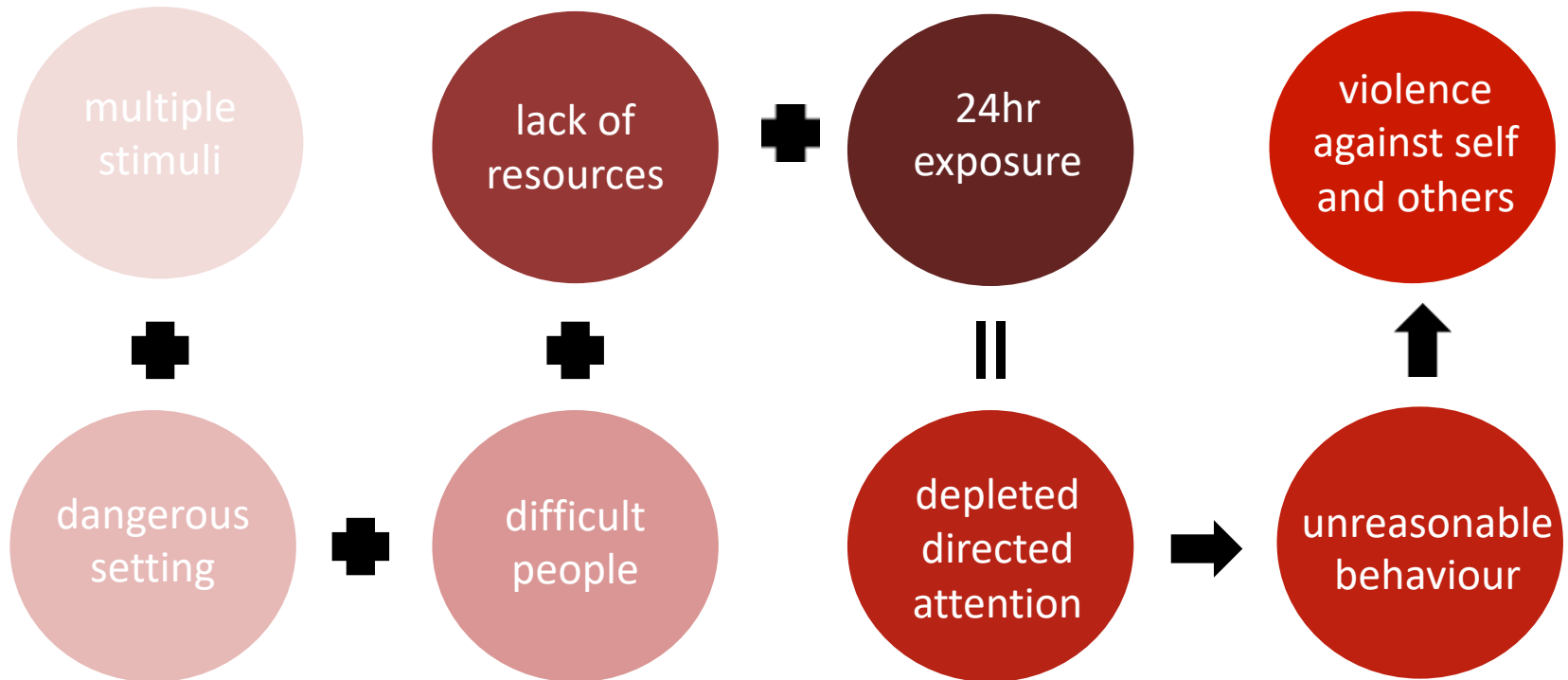
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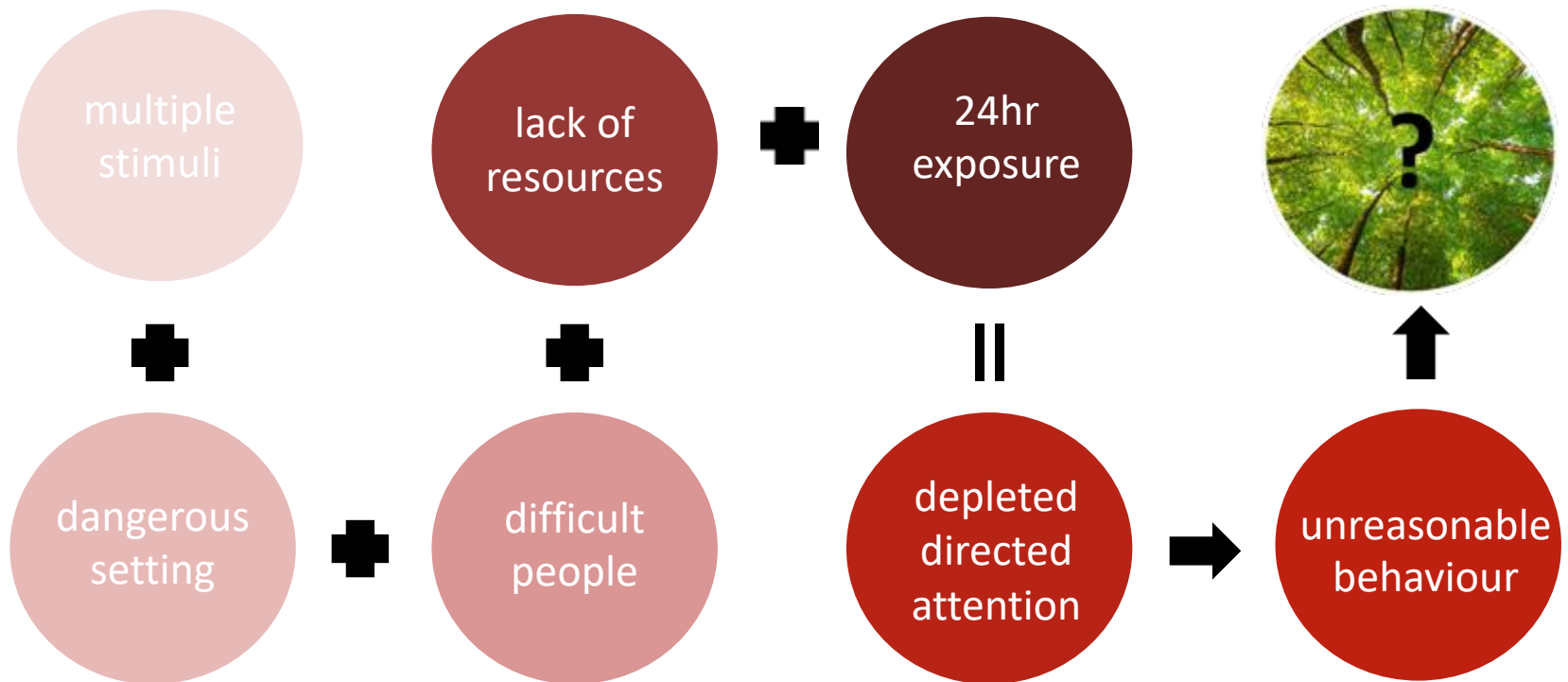
prison and mental fatigue



prison and mental fatigue



prison and mental fatigue



How can prisons enable directed attention to restore?

- Being away?
 - Tricky....
- Extent?
 - Where?
- Fascination?
 - What kind of space is needed? TV is not enough
- Compatibility?
 - Challenging given the reason for presence...

Nature contact

- What can prisons do to enable restoration?
- Nature contact
 - Green spaces and nature images
- We know that nature contact is ‘good for us’ in general, but might it help with this particular challenge?

Research project

- Attention Restoration Theory and nature contact in prison
- Anonymous self-completion survey of prisoners at a new prison in the UK
- Adapted the 'Perceived Restorativeness Scale' to test for Being away, Fascination and Compatibility, with open-ended questions probing Extent – in relation to green spaces and nature images



Green spaces/nature images...

Being Away

- ...are more like areas I would usually see outside of prison
- ...give me a break from my day-to-day routine
- ...make me think about things I wouldn't usually think about
- ...help me feel connected to the outside world
- ...help me to think about things that are important outside of prison

Fascination

- ...are interesting to look at
- ...make me want to look at them for longer

Compatibility

- ...give me a sense that my time here could be worthwhile
- ...give me a sense that I could find ways to be myself here
- ...help me to focus on who I really am

Other

- ...give me a sense of normality
- ...help me find a sense of peace
- ...help me to feel calm

Differences in responses for green spaces (S) and nature images (I).

	<i>are like areas I would usually see outside prison</i>		<i>give me a break from my day-to-day routine</i>		<i>are interesting to look at</i>		<i>make me think about things I wouldn't usually think about</i>		<i>help me focus on who I really am</i>	
	S	I	S	I	S	I	S	I	S	I
% agreeing	84	64	62	53	84	81	60	60	39	37
% disagreeing	9	22	24	31	6	14	29	23	40	32
% undecided	7	14	14	16	11	5	11	17	21	32
n =	85	83	85	83	85	83	85	83	85	82

<i>make me want to look at them for longer</i>		<i>give me a sense of normality</i>		<i>help me find a sense of peace</i>		<i>help me think about things that are important outside of prison</i>		<i>help me to feel calm</i>		<i>help me feel connected to the outside world</i>	
S	I	S	I	S	I	S	I	S	I	S	I
67	64	79	57	71	61	58	63	75	59	64	52
21	24	15	27	19	20	22	27	18	24	21	30
12	12	6	16	11	20	20	11	7	17	15	18
85	84	85	82	85	82	85	83	84	83	86	83

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Fascination

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Compatibility

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85	84	85	82	85	82	85	83	84	83	86	83

Other

green spaces/nature images

- Green spaces and nature images enabled **being away** and **fascination** (as well as **calm** and **normality**)
- Green spaces somewhat more effective than nature images
- Neutral scores for **compatibility**

green spaces/nature images

- ‘Extent’ was explored only through open-ended questions
 - What difference green spaces/nature images make
 - Whether they should feature in other prisons;
 - Why (not)

Negative/Neutral

In my opinion it is a complete waste of money that can be used in other aspects of prison life.

Makes no difference to me.

It's better than a plain wall.

It would be very dull without them.

Benefits for others

Maybe others appreciate and admire nature's beauty more than I do.

I see people admiring them, they also talk about them, what they don't do for me they do for others - each to their own!

I would like to think that they have a positive effect on people without them realising.

Conduct indicates value

I would think that many prisoners simply see [nature images] as something to rip off the walls.

I've never seen anybody intentionally damage these [green spaces].

Feelings of calm

It makes a big difference to how I feel. I feel much calmer and don't feel as though I'm trapped in a concrete jungle. I feel much happier and less stressed. (green spaces)

It is nice to see them and it makes me feel calm and relaxed and chill out (nature images)

Being away (green spaces)

*Having green areas makes a huge difference compared to concrete, hard finishes. The main difference is that it **takes away the feeling of prison**.*

*For me it **takes me away from being in jail** to look out my window and seeing different coloured flowers really can change how you feel just like that.*

*Pleasant to look at and reminds me of **the world on the outside***

*The green outside areas make things look and feel more natural so **when I get out** normal things like trees and gardens don't feel so alien.*

Fascination and extent

*There are more grass areas or small gardens and parks where I can go to relax if the weather is nice. I sit down on the grass and **let my mind wander in peace** whereas [prison] is like a concrete jungle.*

Being away/extent/compatibility (nature images)

*They help me **take my mind away** from [this prison] and prison in general ... **most people don't want to be in prison** and can **put themselves in the image***

*Feelings of calm, as a focal point on natural scenes and **distract from the daily grind of prison life. I really enjoy the images** and **find myself picturing being in that place**, mountain, seaside etc*

Being away/extent/compatibility (nature images)

These images make a difference, because every time I look at them I don't just think "Oh that looks nice" - I can feel the wind flapping my jacket. I can hear my dog barking. I can smell the fresh air. I can feel the grass on my feet. It makes me imagine and dream. It gets me out of jail for however long. Every time I look at it I notice something that I couldn't see before.

Reasonableness?

I've had numerous conversations with people sitting on the landings talking about these images. The question I always ask is "If you was there now, what would you be doing?" Everyone I spoke to have all got good imaginations and it brings good happy emotions. It's a break from the usual prison politics.

Some frustrations...

Regime limited access to green spaces – respondents felt a need to stay in them for longer

... we are not allowed any amount of time to be able to stand there and take it all in. We can't walk through those areas, feel the grass, smell the flowers, so do not reap any benefit to those areas being there.

Some frustrations...

Reluctance to move away from favourite images

I know of people being upset when asked to move [to another accommodation unit] simply because they feel so connected to an image on their wing. Men hate to admit these things, but yes they have an impact.

Conclusions

- Does nature contact in prison enable directed attention to restore?
 - In this example, **yes**
 - In line with research in other contexts about the benefits of green spaces/nature

Conclusions

- What might this mean?
 - If nature contact in prison fosters ‘reasonableness’, it may act to lower levels of violence against the self and others.
 - Since nature contact brings no harm*, prisons should maximise availability of and access to nature contact via green space and nature images, for the benefit of both staff and prisoners

**other than to hayfever sufferers without medication...*

Future work

Ongoing project using GIS
(geographical information
systems)

Analysing the % greenspace
within and immediately
beyond prison wall fence, and
any relationship with levels of
self-harm, suicide and
assault, for all prisons in
England and Wales

Are 'greener' prisons less
violent?



d.moran@bham.ac.uk