



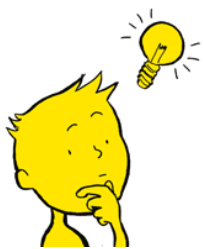
# Talking Mats as a Thinking Tool



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OT Associate

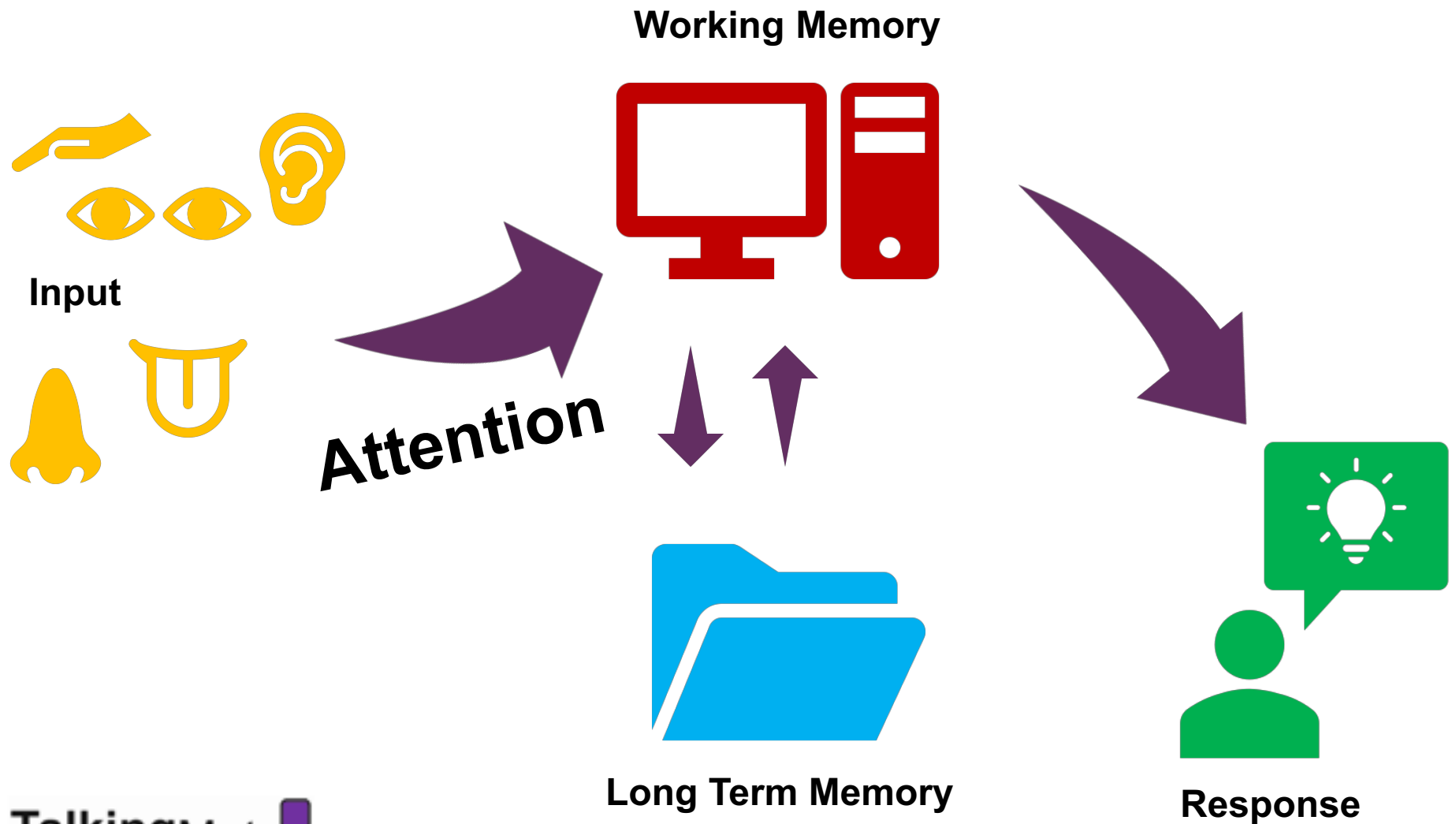


- What is going on in your head at the moment?
- Are you now thinking about what you were thinking?
- So what exactly is thinking .....



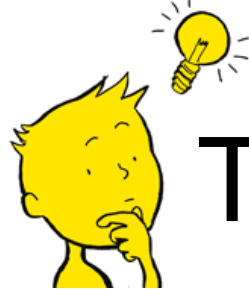
- Do you use words when you think?
- Play through a scene in your mind?
- Imagine with pictures?
- Does it differ if you are thinking about past events, the present or the future?
- Are you guilty of over thinking... what even is that?
- So, is being spontaneous 'under thinking'?
- Is thinking just information processing? a series of neural connections?

# Information Processing



# Information Processing

- Neural connections and circuits
- Developmental
- Building connections
- Pruning
- Development of memory is fundamental for understanding and thinking



# Thinking

- Active process intimately connected with language but not defined by it
- The *work* of the mind is thinking
- In it we are making sense of our experiences by manipulating new and stored information
- Based on our understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live



# Your brain is not a super computer

- Computers take an input, process it and produce an output
- They are quick , have a low error rate and are connected to a wealth of information
- Your brain is slower, prone to error, selfish and not connected to the internet!



- Less than 50% of the data between the images is different
- Yet, we understand what each means
- We don't just learn...we understand





# What is happening in the brain when we think?

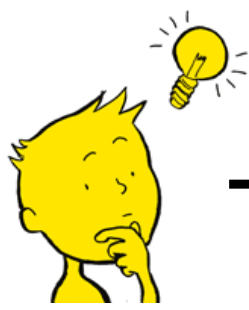
- “Bottom up” processing – data driven, slow but accurate
- “Top down processing” – concept driven, fast but prone to error



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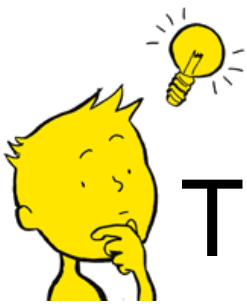


# Thinking is like a melody

- The brain is like an orchestra... when you look at it you have no idea as to what melody it will play
- The melody emerges when the musicians start to play and synchronise
- A thought emerges as the brain cells interact and synchronise with each other

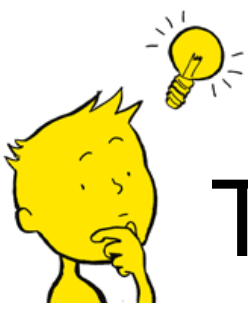
Dr Henning Beck, Neuroscientist, What is a thought?

- People live in moments...



# The development of thinking

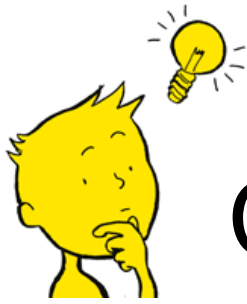
- The ability to learn - attention and memory
- Thoughts are a way of dealing with and making sense of feelings
- Understanding of ourselves and the world around us. From object permanence and conceptual understanding to cultural and social rules



# The development of thinking

- Understanding of cause and effect. Logic and reasoning
- Being able to ask the *what if's*? Creativity and problem solving
- To reflect on our past experiences and to imagine a future





# Creative thinking

- How do you know if a good idea is a good idea?
- We have the capacity to be rule breakers, game changers
- The *mistakes* in our thinking allow us to change the rules



# What does the brain need to think?

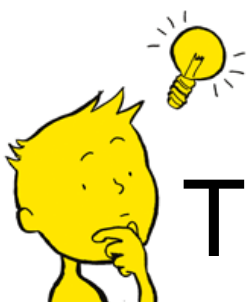
- Energy
- Neural connections
- Ability to store and then access information
- The ability to manipulate that information and make sense of it
- 75% of people have a good idea in the shower...  
I thought it was only me!!





- *“Thinking is a virtual space in which we can work out, in the safety of our minds what to do in relation to reality, before we actually put solutions into effect. In short: thoughts are interposed between feelings and actions.”*

Professor Mark Solms, Chair of Neuropsychology, University of Cape Town



# The power of a Talking Mat

- It creates the space to think
- It limits other distractions
- The process becomes familiar.... same structure, no surprises 🧠 ❤️ Energy efficient
- The top scale gives structure... helps us to organise and make connections
- The card sets do the work for us... 🤔
- The images convey meaning to help memory recall and reduce reliance on language



# A picture is formed.....

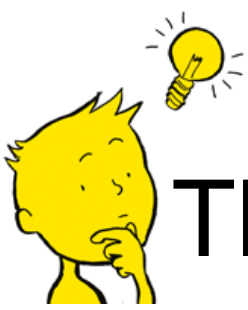
- A CT scan creates an image of our body...
- Is a Talking Mat the image of our thinking?



# Talking Mats as a Thinking Tool

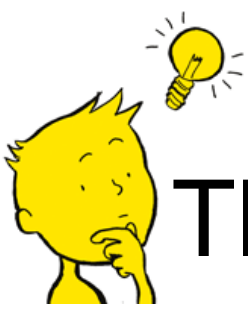
Thinking about:

- Learning and Thinking skills whilst at school
- Moving up to secondary school
- Going to university
- Health and wellbeing
- Preparing for death
- Coping skills whilst at work



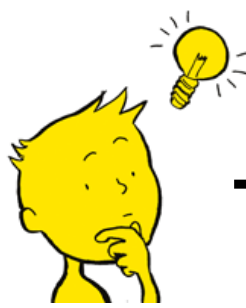
# Thinking spaces for therapists

- *“I verbalised more in that session than I have in other supervisions put together - because of the prompts that it gives and that it raises topics instead of having to think of them.”*
- *“It feels unthreatening which is really refreshing. It feel like nothing is loaded with a preconceived idea- follow the cards and you’re having an honest conversation.”*
- *“It lends itself to a safe and supportive conversation.”*



# Thinking spaces for therapists

- *“I much preferred this, the one to one talk we usually have can become a bit boring and monotonous as we know what sort of questions to expect, I now have a visual to compare and to refer to if needed...”*
- *“It made me think of things in a different way, and it encouraged me to explore why I was feeling a specific way and look at things with a different perspective.”*



# The challenge

*“The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”* Albert Einstein

Talking Mats was created 21 years ago as a product of Joan Murphy’s thinking.

It’s use and development into the next 21 years will require our thinking... are you ready for the challenge?