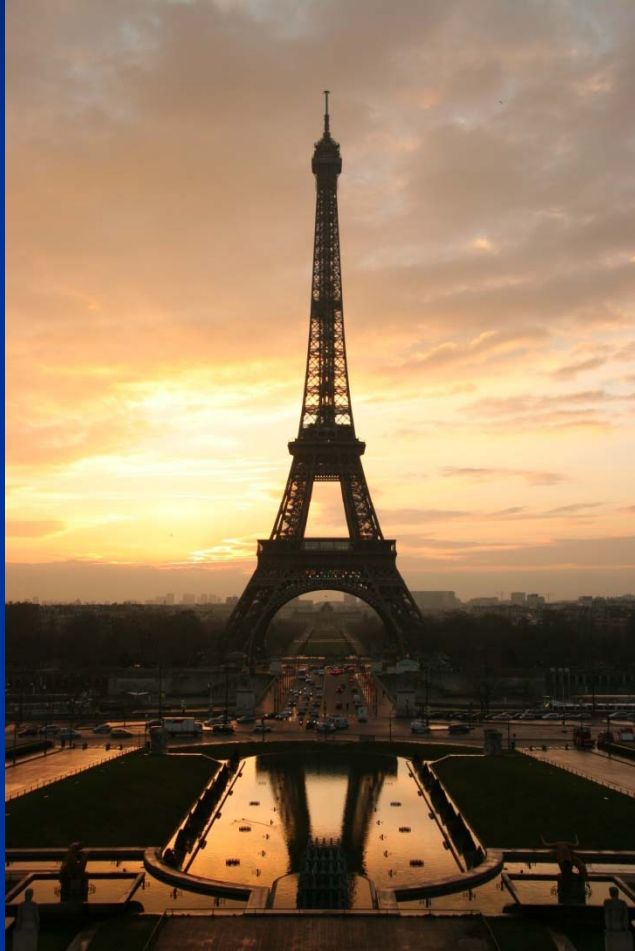




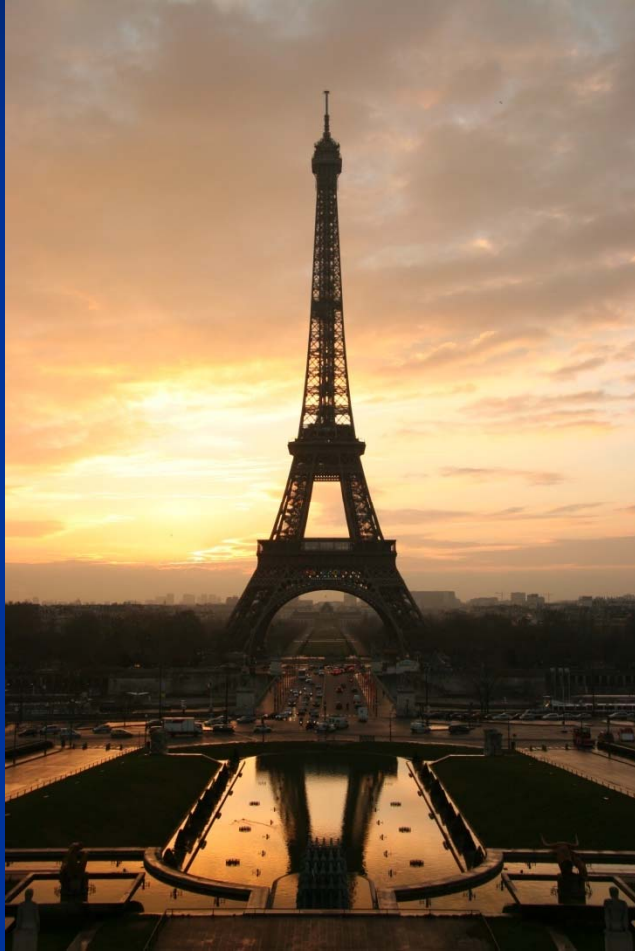
Bad to the Bone: Horrors!--Can Our Genes Help Make Us Act Badly?"

Barbara Oakley, PhD, PE
Associate Professor
Oakland University

Mom's Dream



Mom's Dream



Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia

- Feted as a peacemaker and an all around great guy....



Why?

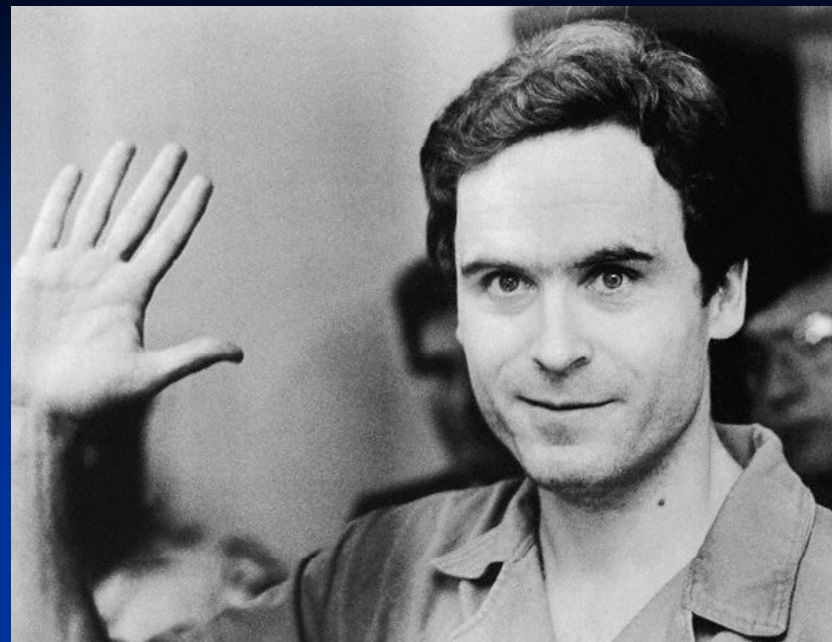
- ~~“Malignant narcissism”~~
- “Clinical diagnosis” solves some problems—and creates others.

Elements of two common personality syndromes can intertwine

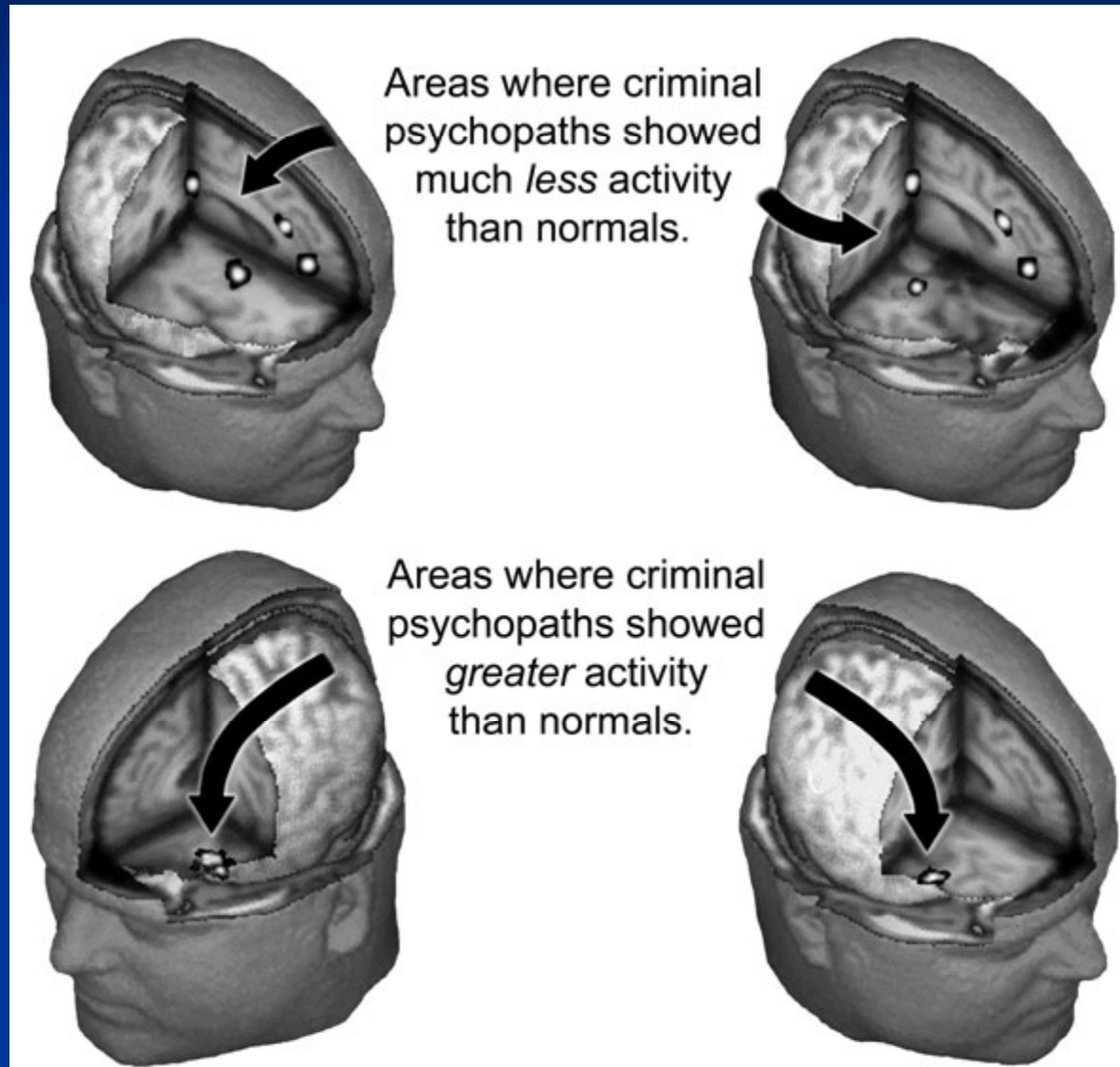
- Psychopathy
- Borderline personality disorder

Psychopaths

- Look normal—*but*
 - Lack of remorse or empathy—can easily rationalize hurting others.
 - Lies and cons others—sometimes just for fun.
 - Irritability, irresponsibility, and aggressiveness—frequent physical fights.



A REVOLUTION in neuroscience

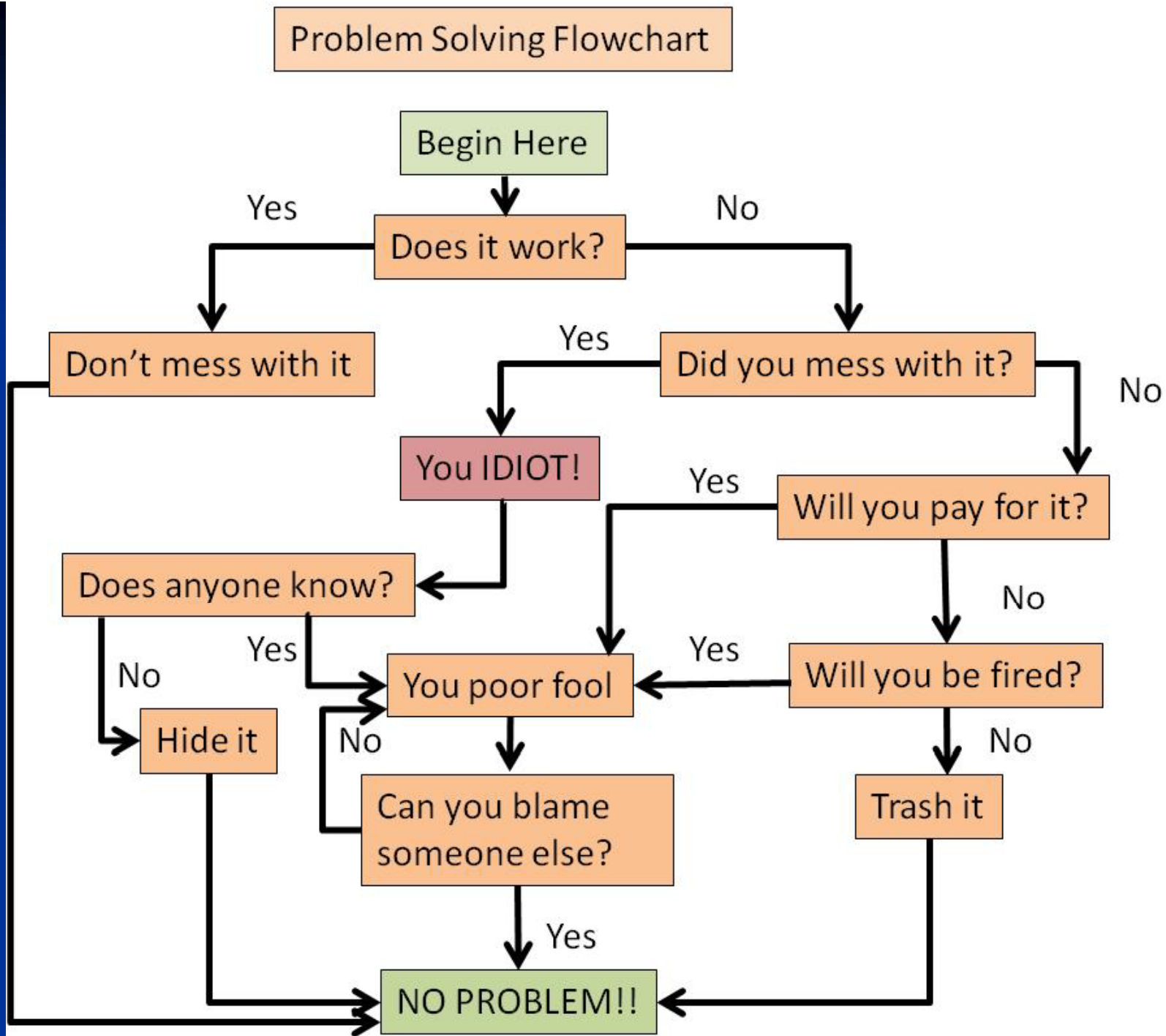


Borderline personality disorder

- A devastating disease of the emotional toolkit
 - poorly regulated emotions
 - impulsivity
 - impaired perception and reasoning
 - markedly disturbed relationships



• Blame-shifting



•Gaslighting



•Narcissism



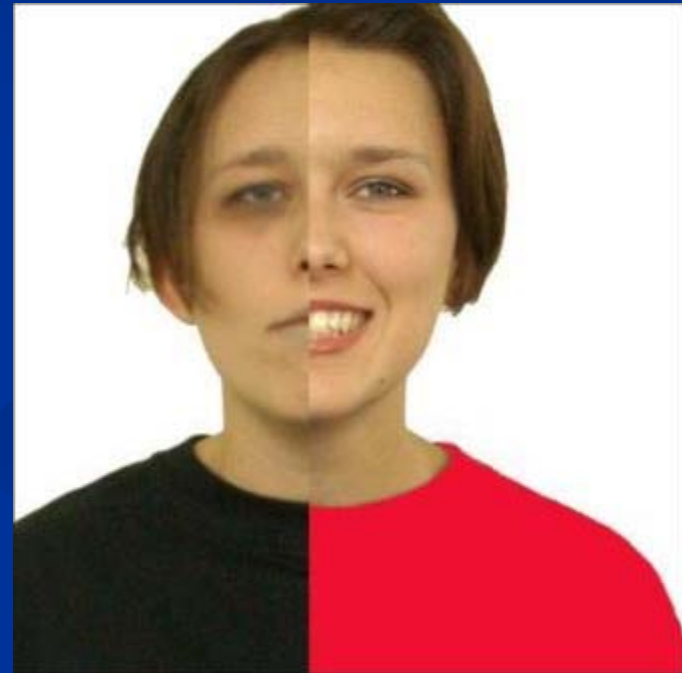
- **Black and white thinking
(splitting)**



•Control issues



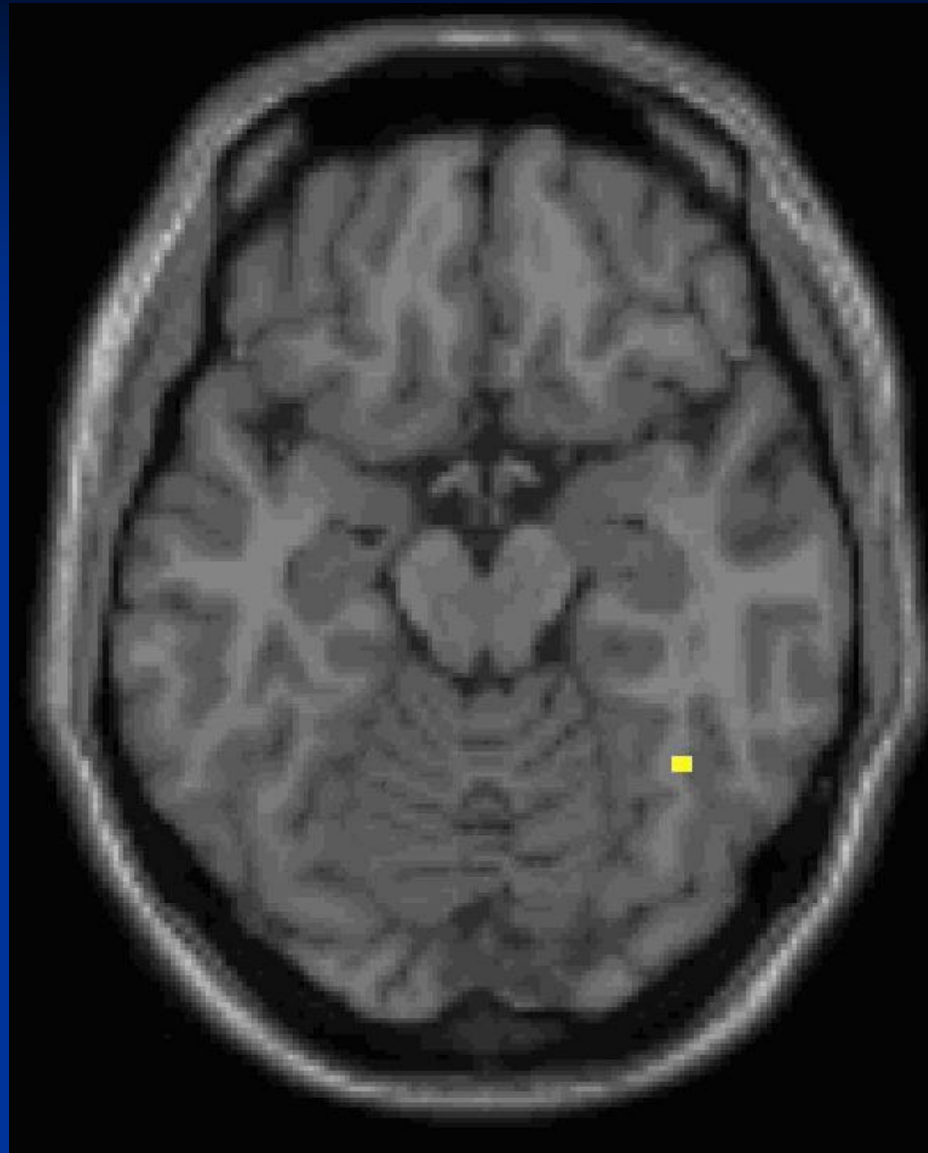
Chameleon behavior



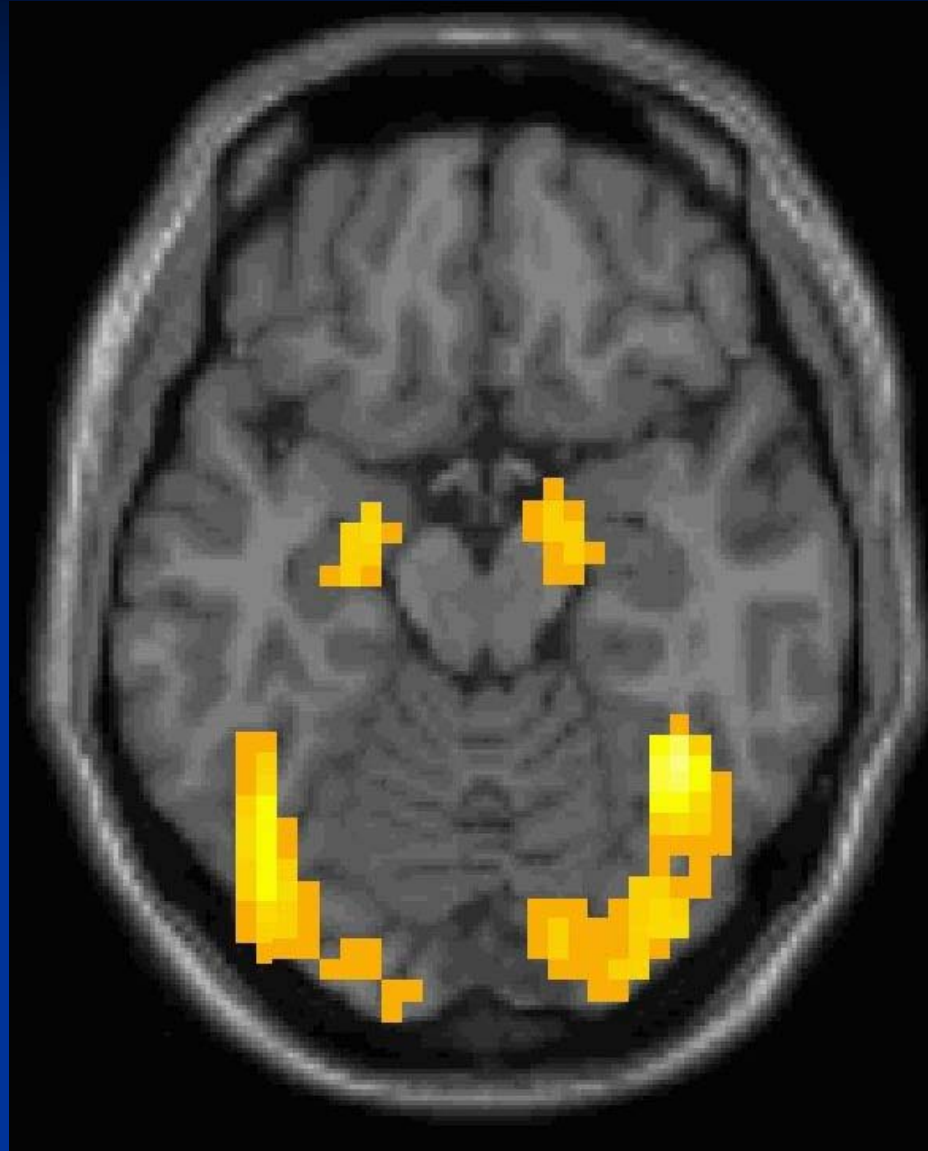
- Situational competence



Peering into
the brains of
borderlines



Peering into
the brains of
borderlines



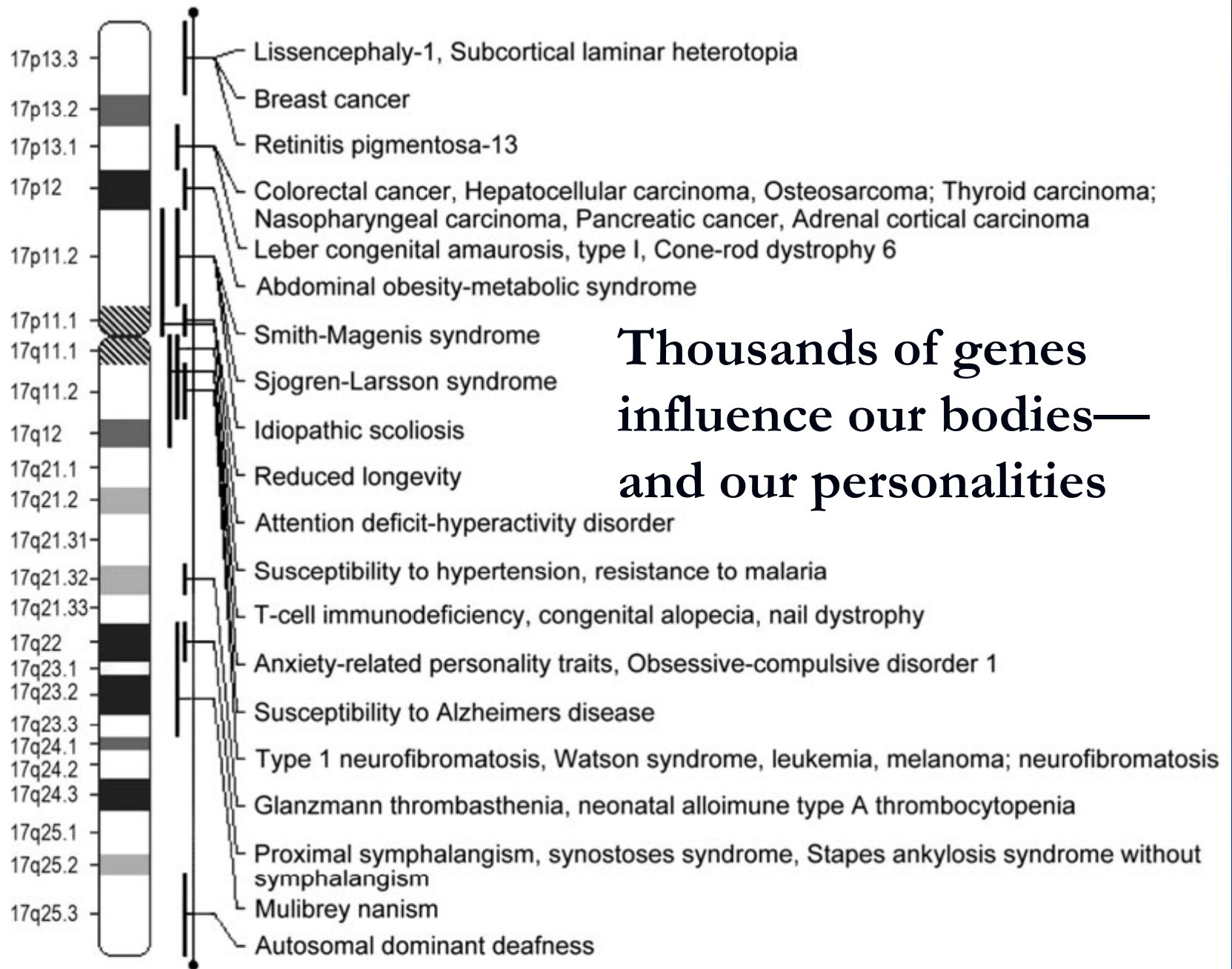
Often regret their troubled, hurtful behavior

But nothing's wrong with *me!*

- Those with subclinical (and even clinical) personality disorders often *do not come in for treatment.*

“Borderpaths” exist in small percentages in all social structures and populations

- Good looks
- Charm
- Memory



**Thousands of genes
influence our bodies—
and our personalities**



Long/long serotonin genotype



Long/long serotonin genotype

Nature or nurture?

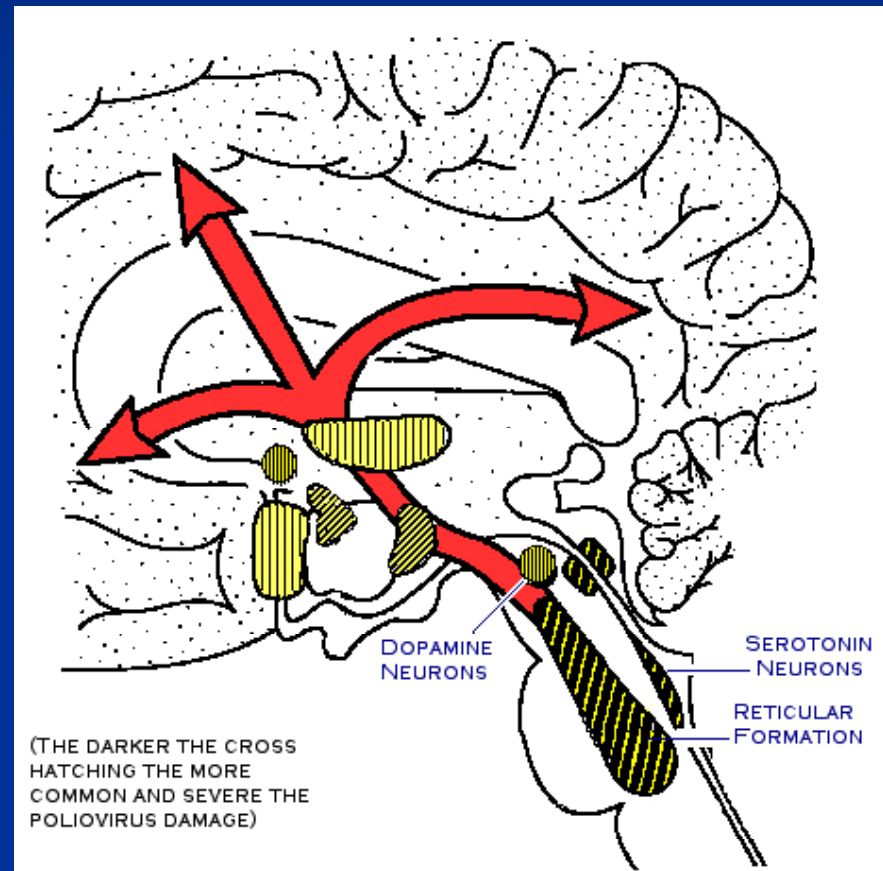


The brain's “wiring” profoundly affects every aspect of our personality

Some people have more free will than others...



Environment and genes act *together* to influence personalities



We *Can* Change Our Brains!

- Sadists don't come in for treatment!
- *Motivation* is the catch-22.
- We can't change them—we can only change ourselves.

6

Don't take it personally!

- Izzy Kalman's "The idiot game"
- Even though we ourselves can't diagnose people, dysfunctional behavior may sometimes have its roots in quirky brain function. Becoming upset or lashing back at such a person is never productive.
- Empathetic acknowledging
- Reconsidering your definition of authority

In closing

- It is empowering to recognize “one of the ego's evil little lies: That all our behavior is decided by us.”
- —Gavin de Becker

