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**positive psychology**  
*and health*

# Happiness across the Lifespan

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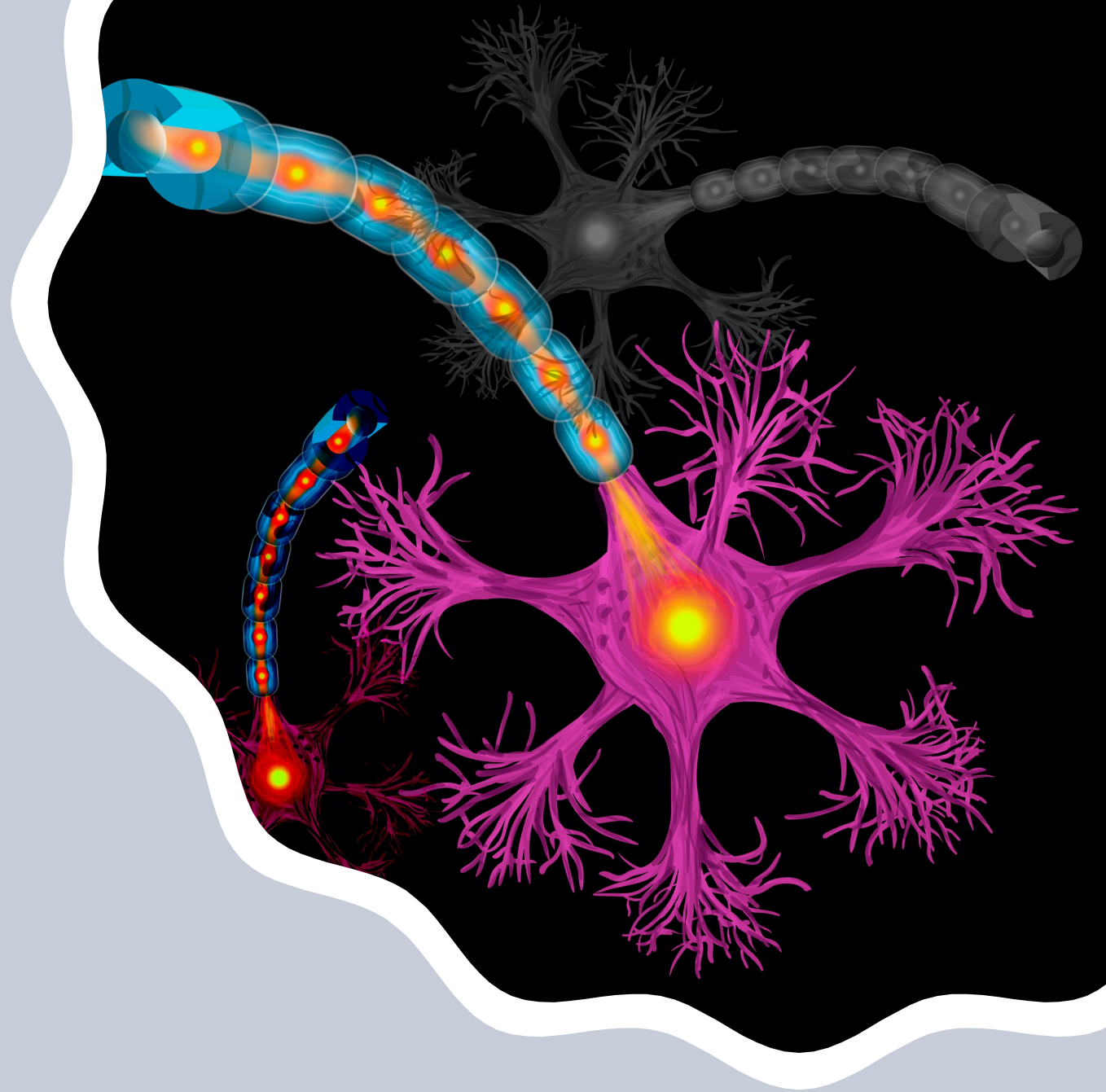
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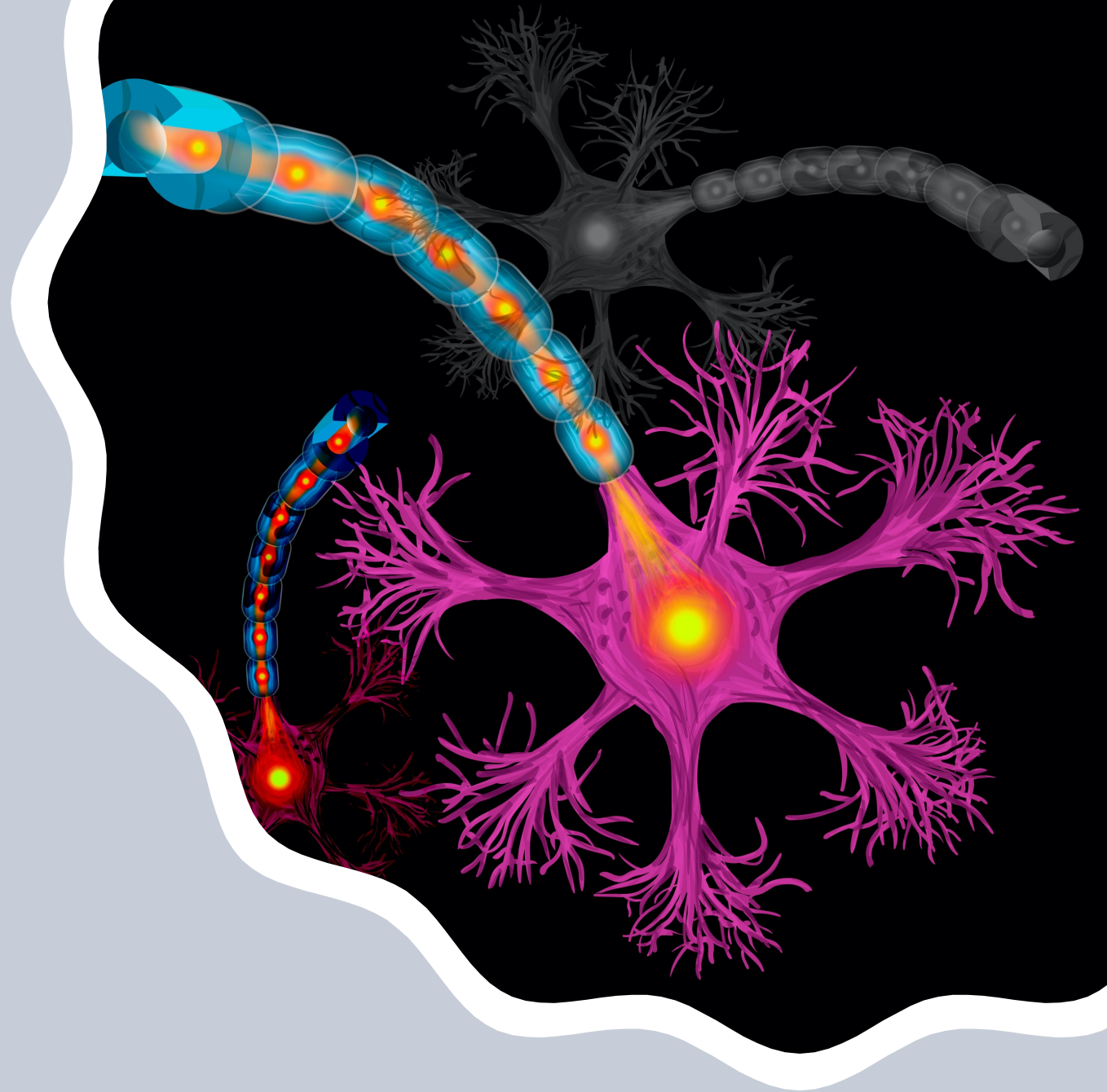
# Neurons

- Our brain has billions of nerve cells called “neurons”
- Neurons communicate through making connections with each other in a network
- The neurons connect with one another and with other cells in the body
- The pattern and strength of these neurons are the base of our knowledge and skills
- Research shows we have ”neuroplasticity” – the ability of the neurons in the brain to change and grow through learning.



# Purpose and Meaning

- Purpose in life is linked to sustained ventral striatum activation. High levels of activity in the ventral striatum also predict lower levels of cortisol output.
- Studies suggest that purpose may have a neuroprotective effect on what is known as cognitive reserve. Researchers believe that people with more cognitive resilience (“cognitive reserve”) at baseline are able to withstand more brain injury before developing neurologic symptoms (Boyle, Buchman, Barnes, & Bennett, 2010; Boyle et al., 2012; Hartanto et al., 2020)



# Healing versus Cure as we age

- We want to feel a sense of continuity of self and our life (Atchley, 1999)
- We need to use compensatory strategies or be flexible to achieve this continuity as we age
- The use of compensatory strategies depends on one's willingness to accept alternative methods for accomplishing tasks.
- Also involves changing our definitions of success
  - Strawbridge et al. (2002) found that older adults who were experiencing chronic disease and declining functionality continued to view themselves as successfully aging and to enjoy well-being

# Homework

- Reflect on things you love to do now
- Imagine things new things you might do (even badly...if something is worth doing it's worth doing badly to begin with)
- Remember things you loved to do when you were younger
- Be bold...design your life adventure
- Invite your children to join you and make mistakes together

# Resources

Daniel Levitin – Successful Aging

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcx83Nc4dt4>

Dan Gilbert – Synthesizing Happiness

- [https://www.ted.com/talks/dan\\_gilbert\\_the\\_surprising\\_science\\_of\\_happiness?language=en#t-71113](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_the_surprising_science_of_happiness?language=en#t-71113)

Lisa Mosconi – How menopause affects the brain

- [https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa\\_mosconi\\_how\\_menopause\\_affects\\_the\\_brain](https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_mosconi_how_menopause_affects_the_brain)

Carl Honore – Why we should embrace aging as an adventure

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcx83Nc4dt4>



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