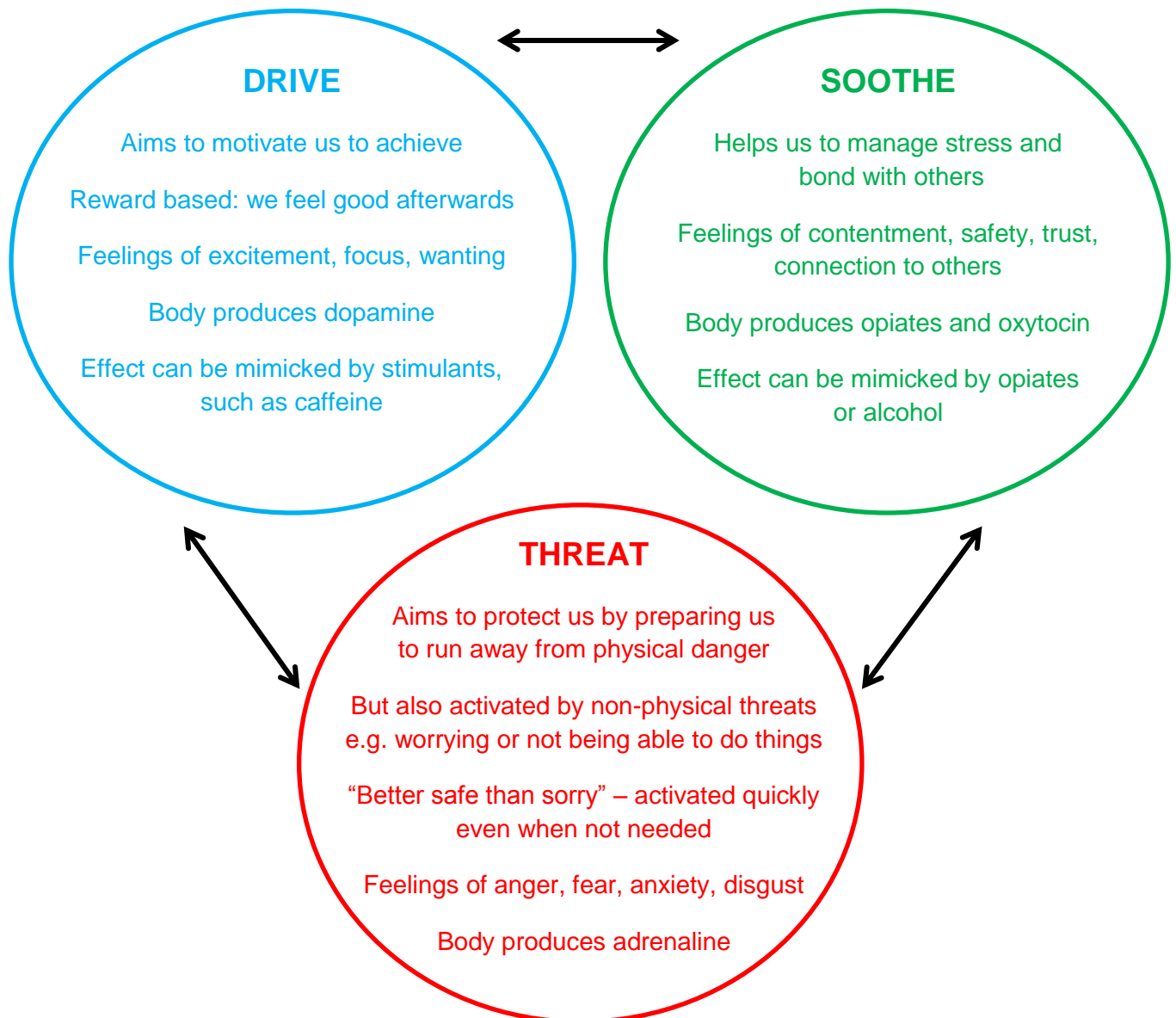


Worksheet 5.3

Threat / drive / soothe system

The model below (proposed by Paul Gilbert) is based on the idea that we switch between three systems to manage our emotions. Each system is associated with different brain regions and different brain chemistry. Stress and distress are caused by imbalance between the systems, often associated with under-development of the soothing system.



If one system dominates the others, this can have negative consequences:

- If **threat** dominates, we can often feel ‘on guard’, ‘under threat’ or anxious constantly
- If we spend most of our time in **drive**, then when something stops us from achieving (e.g. persistent symptoms) we often become distressed and self-critical – this can then push us into threat mode
- If we spent all of our time in **soothe**, we would never get anything done!

Worksheet 5.3

Threat / drive / soothe system

Many of us have highly active threat and drive systems, but rarely use our soothing system. By investing more in our soothing system it can help us to pace more effectively and improve our wellbeing. We can invest in our soothing system by spending time on activities that make us feel contented, safe or cared for.

What activities trigger your own systems? How much time do you spend in each of these systems? What can you introduce to work towards a better balance between the systems?

