

## Theoretical Rationale

People make sense of their lives through stories. Narrative identity provides meaning and continuity to life experiences.

- **Causal inferences** – is the explanations we give for negative events that happened. It may serve as the micro-level building blocks of these macro-level life narratives.
- **Inferential Flexibility** – is the dynamic ability to shift away from a depressogenic inference (i.e., global, stable, internal) to a benign one (external, unstable, specific). It is a key component of resilience (Perlman & Mor, 2022 ; Perlman et al., 2024).

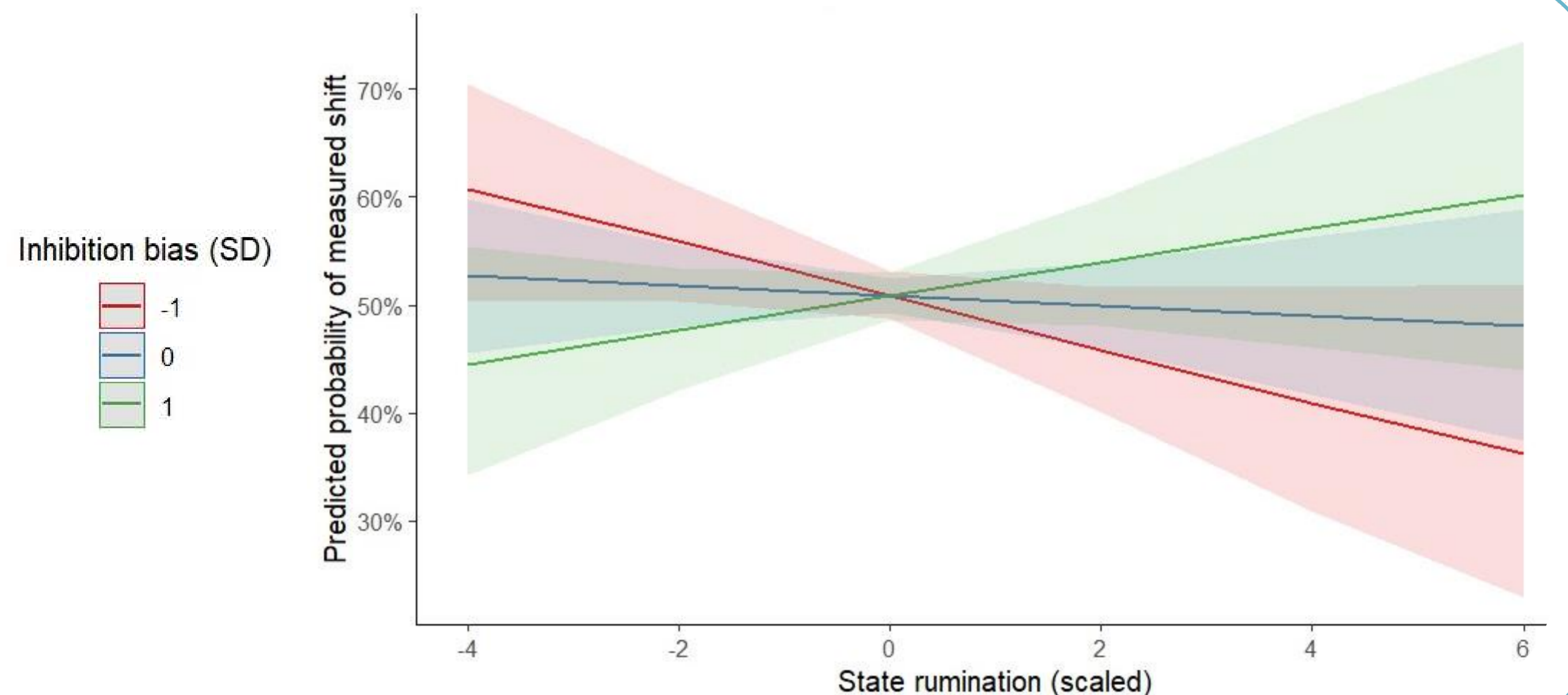
**The Research Gap:** While we understand momentary inferences, it is unclear how these daily shifts accumulate to shape the long-term structure of personal narratives.

## Preliminary Data

**Study Design:** Multi-day EMA (n=155) tracking shifts in causal inferences following daily negative events.

**Key Result:** High state rumination, negative mood, hunger, depression and trait rumination typically reduces inferential shifting.

**The Interaction:** Individuals with stronger cognitive inhibition are better able to disengage from rigid inferences and shift toward benign meanings, even when rumination is high.



## Research Aims

1. Examine how daily inferential flexibility predicts long-term narrative coherence and agency.
2. Identify cognitive mediators: autobiographical memory specificity and prospection.
3. Develop and test a "just-in-time" EMI to foster flexibility during life transitions.

## Planned Experiments

**Set 1 - Daily Link between inferential flexibility and narrative :** Real-time tracking of daily inferences (EMA). Narrative Assessment: Semi-structured life-story interviews coded for flexibility and agency.

**Set 2 - Cognitive Mechanisms:** Lab experiments testing the impact of inferential training on memory recall and future-oriented thinking.

**Set 3 - Clinical intervention:** A Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) testing an Ecological Momentary Intervention (EMI) during meaningful life transitions.

please write a short title describing the most negative event that has happened to you since your last diary entry

I failed the statistics exam

What do you think was the main reason this event happened?

I'm stupid

Think about the cause you wrote

Is this cause more about you, or more about others/circumstances?

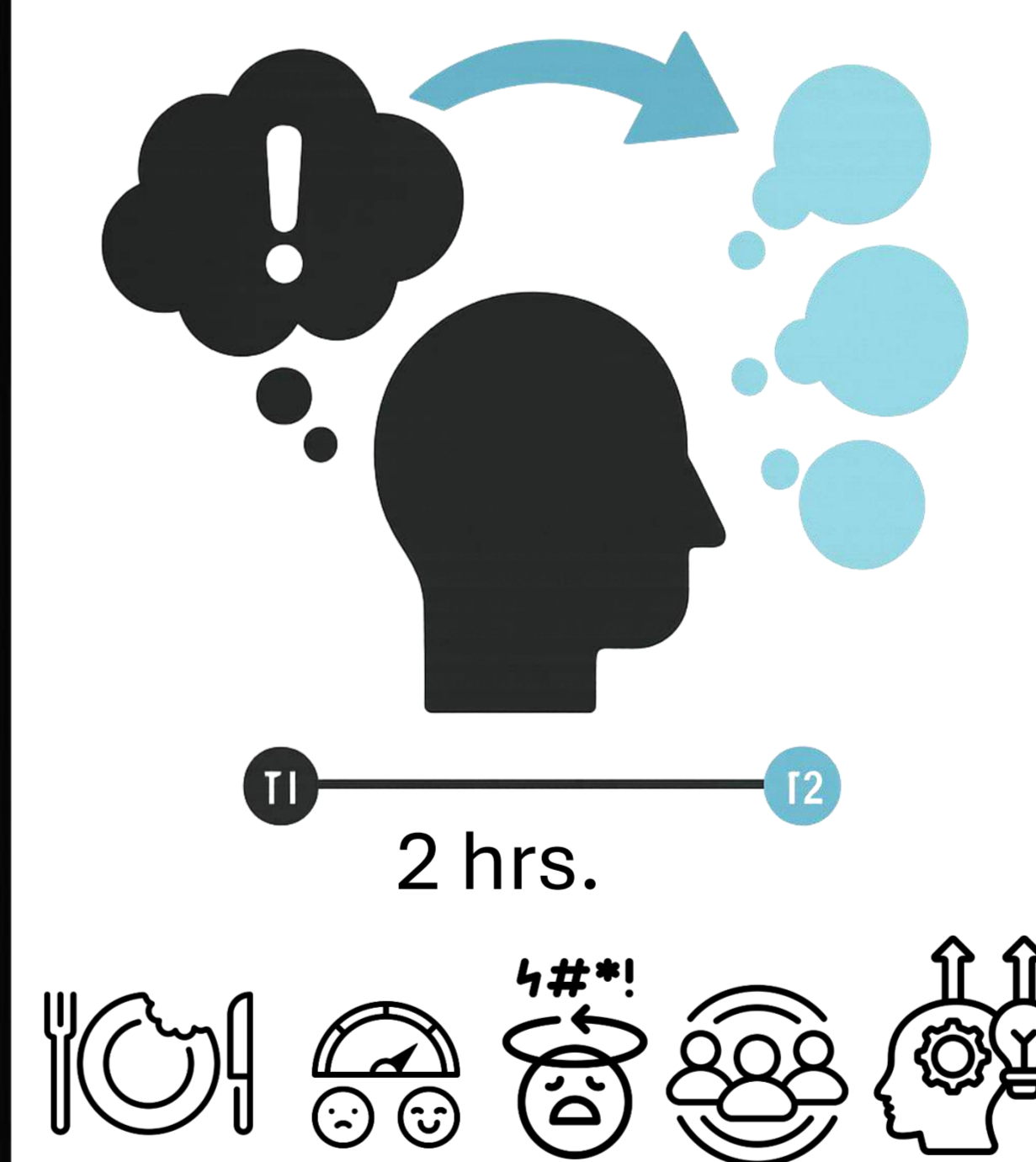
me ———— other

Does this cause affect only this situation, or also other parts of your life?

Only this ———— Other parts

If a similar situation happens again, would this cause lead to the same result?

Same ———— different



In your previous entry you wrote: 'I failed the statistics exam.' What do you think is the main reason this event happened right now?

I find statistics particularly difficult for me

Think about the cause you wrote

Is this cause more about you, or more about others/circumstances?

me ———— other

Does this cause affect only this situation, or also other parts of your life?

Only this ———— Other parts

If a similar situation happens again, would this cause lead to the same result?

Same ———— different

Last time you said the cause was 'I'm stupid.' Is your answer now the same or different?

Same Different

## Expected Impact

**Theoretical:** Integrating micro-level cognitive dynamics with macro-level identity formation.

**Clinical:** Informing scalable, digital interventions aimed at fostering resilience and treating depression.

## References

Perlman, B., Burg, G., Avirbach-Shabat, N., & Mor, N. (2024). Shifting away from negative inferences affects rumination and mood. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 181, 104604.

Perlman, B., & Mor, N. (2022). Cognitive bias modification of inferential flexibility. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 155, 104128.

Image: Flaticon.com