

# **Complex Trauma, Brain, Mind and Addiction**

## **Ohio Specialized Dockets**

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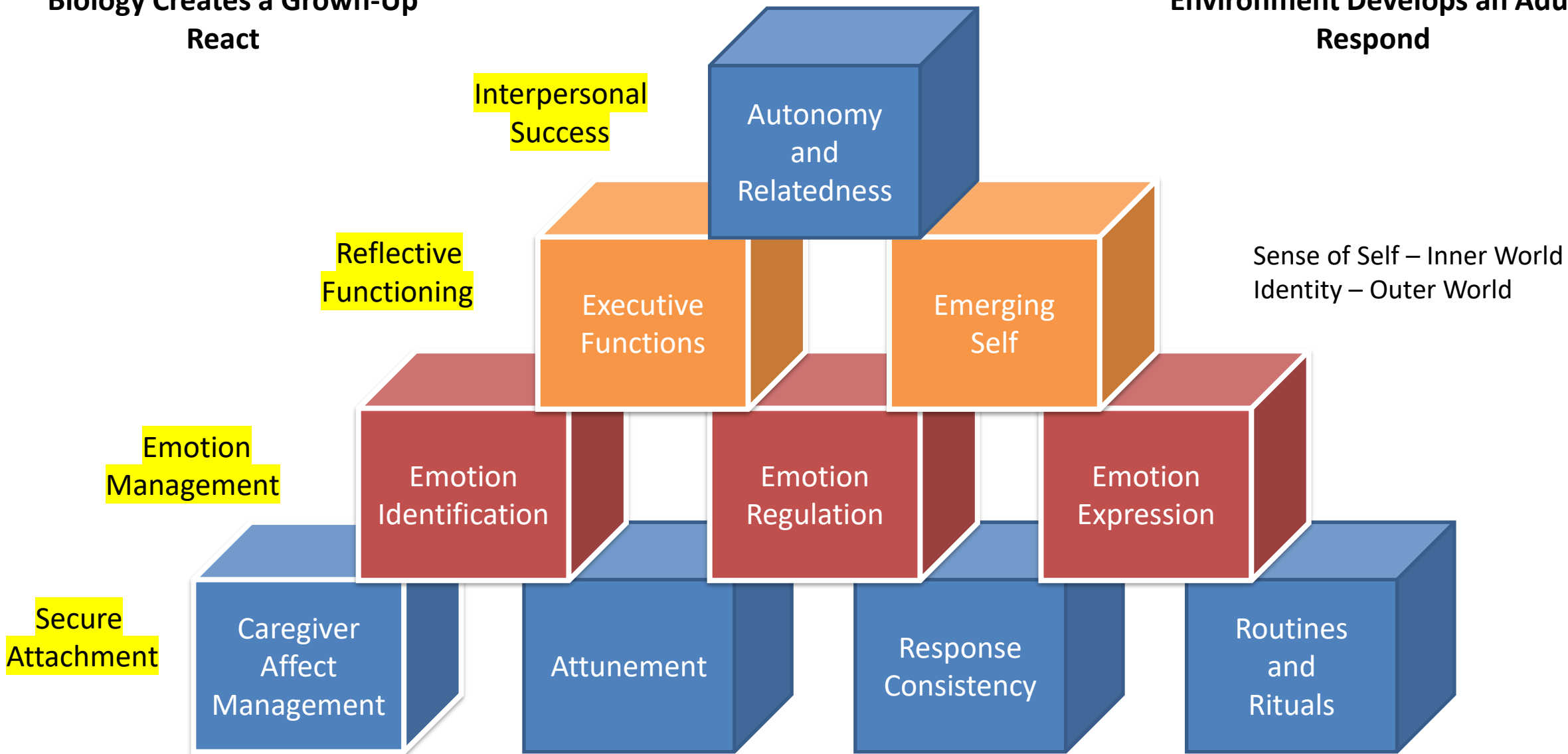
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# Building Blocks of Adulthood Survival of the Securely Attached

**Biology Creates a Grown-Up  
React**

**Environment Develops an Adult  
Respond**



Adapted: Kinniburgh, Blaustein, Spinazzola, & van der Kolk. 2005.


## Important Skills and Traits of Adults

### Transtheoretical, Transcultural and Transgenerational

#### Learned Skills Become Traits

1. Reflective Functioning - Responding vs Reacting
2. Self-Regulation (Physical, Emotional, Cognitive)
3. Interpersonal Conflict Management and Resolution
4. Self/Other Compassion

**Deficits** related to these skills and traits **significantly increase** the probability experiencing physical, emotional, cognitive, and relationship difficulties, and in turn utilizing self-sabotaging/self-soothing behaviors for self re-regulation.  
Addictions, Compulsive Behaviors, Anti-Social Behaviors, Personality Disorders



## What Is Complex Trauma? Consistent, Pervasive

Abandonment, Abuse, Neglect - Physical, Sexual, Verbal, Emotional; Lack of Protection/Safety

Interpersonal/Familial  
Chronic/Repetitive/Cumulative

→ Betrayal Trauma, Hypocrisy, Loss, Shame, Guilt, Grief

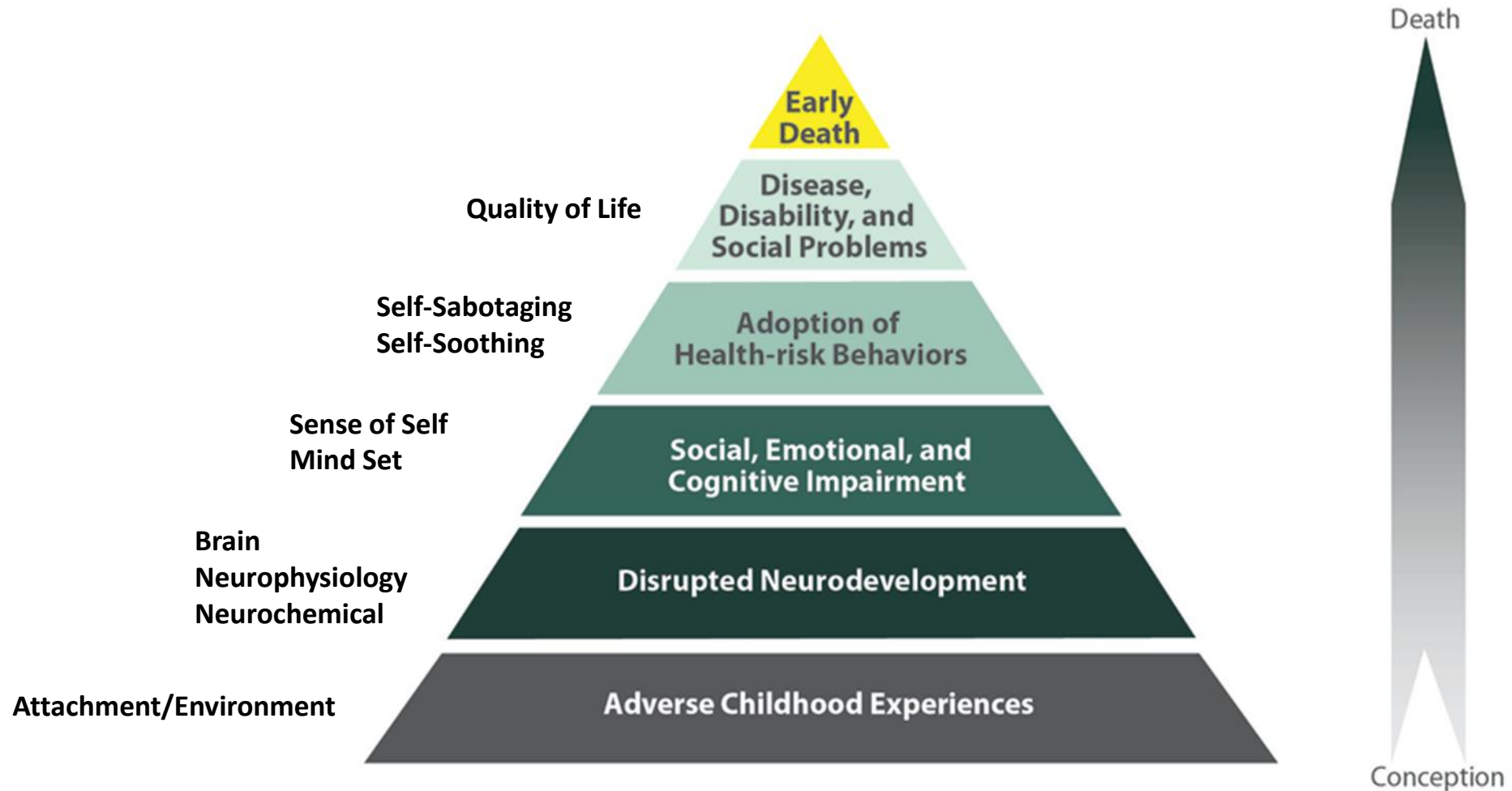
Sense of Self Trauma – Intent to discredit and destroy sense of self. Who I am.

Severely impairs development of healthy sense of self. Who I am and what I deserve.

Creates physical distress (danger), emotional distress (anxiety and fear), cognitive disorientation

Power Over vs Power Sharing No Input and Choice vs Input and Choice

# Adverse Childhood Experiences



Mechanism by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

**Complex Trauma Syndrome**  
**Pervasive Dysregulation**  
**Pervasive Health Issues**

**Emotion Dysregulation**

Affect Phobia, Temper, Impaired Recovery, Psychic Numbing, Expressive Emotion Impairment

**Somatic Dysregulation**

Sleep Disturbance, Eating, Eliminative Functions, Somatoform Dissociation: Pain, Conversion Symptoms

**Attentional Dysregulation**

Heightened Vigilance, Threat-Related Preoccupation or Avoidance of Cues

**Behavioral Dysregulation**

Threat Related Reactive Aggression, Threat Related Reactive Avoidance, Extreme Risk Taking, Self-Sabotaging Behaviors (Solution Becomes the Problem)

**Relational Dysregulation**

Expect Betrayal and Victimization, Physical and Emotional Boundary Diffusion, Expect Irresolvable Attachment Loss

**Self Dysregulation**

Self Hate, Perception of Self as Permanently Damaged

Courtois and Ford 2013



## Complex Trauma Syndrome

### Damaged Sense of Self

Extreme Mood Lability: Unregulated/Dysregulated Emotional Extremes

Social Isolation, Alienation, Detachment

Excessive Self-Sufficiency, Fear Intimacy

Excessive Dependency, Passivity, Superficial Compliance (False Self)

#### **Self-Sabotaging Behaviors (Addictions/Compulsions)**

**Substances, Love, Relationships, Sex, Gambling, Shopping,  
Working, Exercising, Eating Disorders, Self-Injury, Suicidality**

#### **Impulsive, High Risk Behaviors**

#### **Uncontrolled Anger and Aggression (Self/Others)**

Episodes of Cruelty Toward Others/Animals

Dysfunctional/Pathological Relationships

Persistent Dissociation

Social Problems: Suspicion/Mistrust, Lack of Social Skills

PTSD Symptoms: Avoidance/Intrusion

Undiagnosed/Unresponsive Medical Symptoms

Chronic Medical Issues: Autoimmune Disorders

Chronic Low Self-Esteem, Self Hate

#### **Lack of Tolerance/Poor Recovery Mild Stressors**

**Shame, Guilt, Self Blame, Unresolved Grief**

Insecure Attachment Styles (Anxious/Dismissive)

Chronic Feelings of Helplessness, Ineffectiveness

Confusion/Incoherence Re: Personal Events, Life Events

Chronic Hopelessness of Ever Being “Normal”

Information Processing Disorders

Psychotic Like Experiences

## Shame-Disgust Cycle

Traumatic, objectifying relationships more likely to produce affects of shame and disgust.

Thoughts of being disgusting follow feelings of shame. Self-Disgust (I hate myself) is more overlooked than shame.

Persons suffering from severe developmental and relational trauma are more likely to have a disgust-prone implicit sense of self. (Repressed/Preconscious/Dissociated)

A shame-disgust sense of self will become an implicit known “truth” within the survivor’s right hemisphere imagery. (Repressed/Preconscious/Dissociated)

### **Result:**

Hypersensitivity to direct or indirect disapproval, sets off the shame-disgust alarm system. “Thin skinned”

Self and others become rigidly objectified

Result is “splitting”: good self – bad self. “I am what I do, and how well I do it, determines if I am a “good” or “bad” person.

If I am successful in getting positive recognition from attachment figures, “I am good”. (Relief)

If I am unsuccessful in getting positive recognition from attachment figures, “I am bad”. (Shame-Disgust)





## Hostile Criticism and Put Downs

### Physiological and Emotional Assault

Interpersonal world disabled self-efficacy, which negatively effected self-esteem and self-concept.

Intrapersonal world disables self-efficacy, which negatively effects self-esteem and self-concept.

#### **Result:**

Personality traits impair current/future relationships and work experiences.

Seek other people and situations that reinforce a negative sense of self. **(What I deserve!)**

#### **Self-Narratives: What I Learned.**

Mistakes are dangerous, bad. I should be punished for mistakes. I am bad. I am a loser. I am a

failure. I hate myself. I want to die. I need stay in abusive relationships because nobody else

wants me. I don't deserve to be happy, successful. If people really knew me, they would

dislike/hate me. I need to do what others say, give others what they want so they will like/love me.



## **Complex Trauma Syndrome Relationship Themes**

Continuous, repeated involvement in emotionally upsetting relationships with other grownups.

Sudden, dramatic change in opinion/feelings for another person.

Unrealistic expectations of others, easily let down, feeling betrayed.

Fearful another person doesn't like or love you as much as you do them.

Afraid someone will leave you when they find someone better.

The closer I get to another emotionally, the more anxious, and angry I feel.



## Intergenerational Legacy of Complex Trauma

**You can't change what was done to you, however you can change what you do to yourself and others because of what was done to you.**

Reacting (Attack/Ignore/Withdraw) - Responding (Reflect, Approach, Engage)

Narrow Zone of Emotional Tolerance - Wide Zone of Emotional Tolerance

Interpersonal Unresolved Conflict - Interpersonal Resolved Conflict - Harmony


Self-Disowning, Self-Loathing - Self-Acceptance, Self-Compassion

Self-Sabotaging/Self-Soothing Behavior - Self-Enhancing/Self-Soothing Behavior

Intrapersonal Unresolved Conflict (Self Separation) - Interpersonal Resolved Conflict (Self Integration)

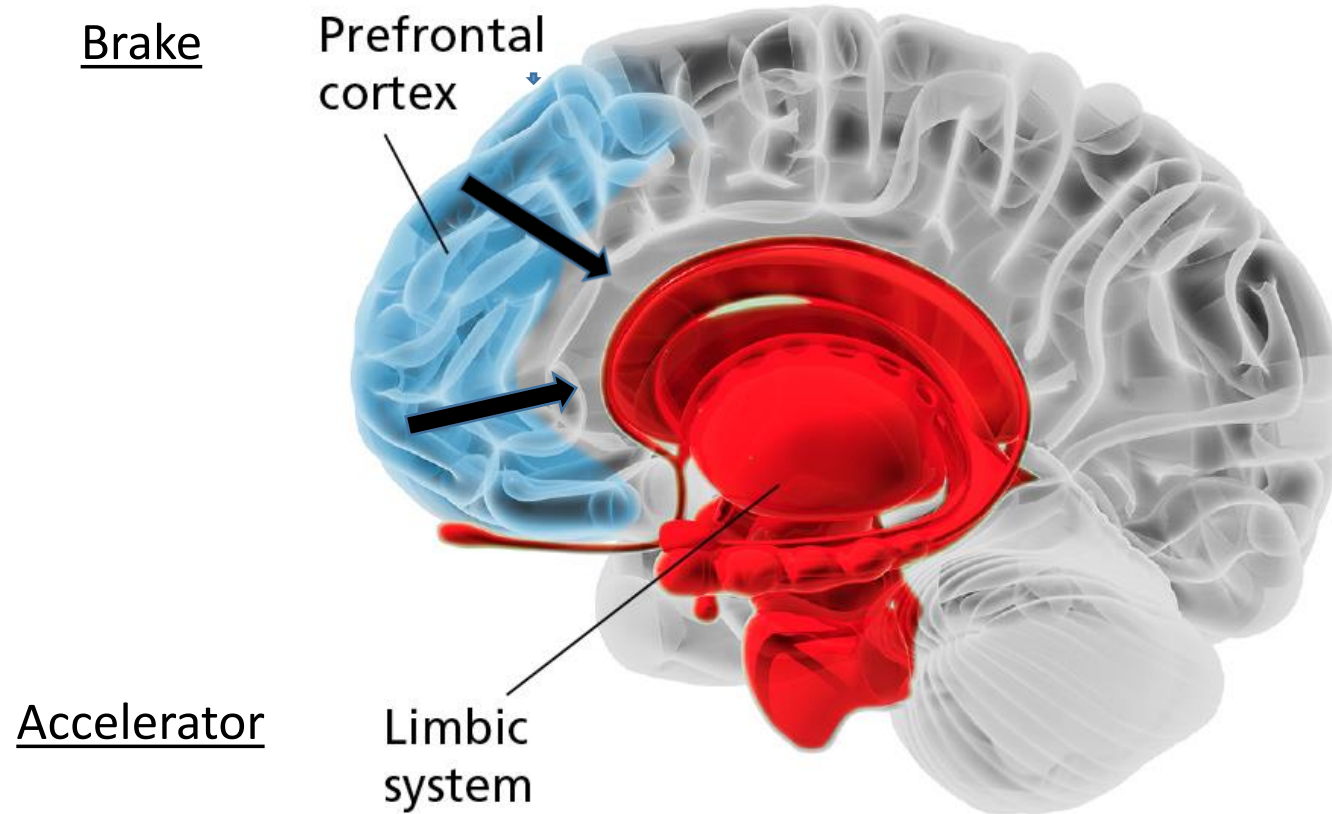
Self-Alienation (Repression, Dissociation-Not Me) - Self-Integration (Me)

Haunted Mind - Peace of Mind



**Self-Regulation Efficiency**  
**Quality of Developmental Environment**

“Humans are anxious, fearful little creatures.”  
Hurt 2020



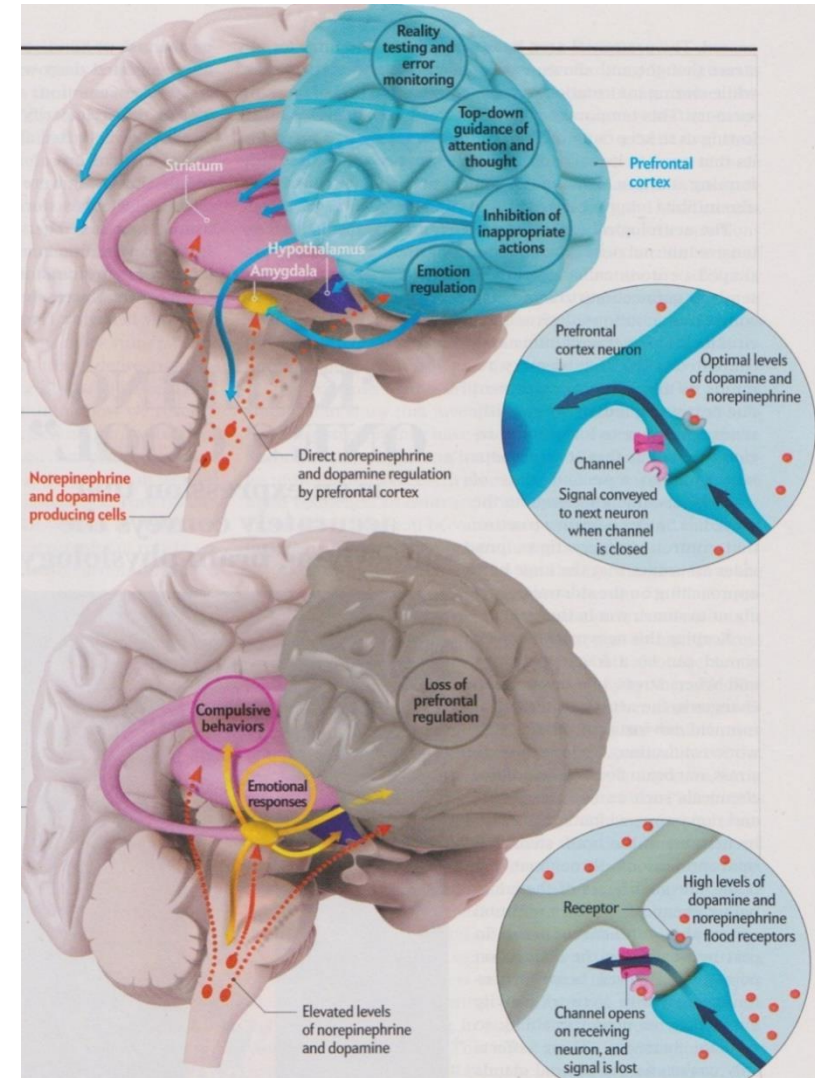
## Top-Down Processing

**Prefrontal cortex** regulates **dopamine** and **norepinephrine** production (**brain stem**). Moderate levels engage receptors that strengthen connections to **prefrontal cortex**.

## Bottom-Up Processing

**Amygdala** commands production of excess **dopamine** and **norepinephrine**. This shuts down **prefrontal cortex**, strengthens activity in the **amygdala**. This weakens **prefrontal cortex** control over emotions and impulses.

## Calm Brain



## Stressed Brain

**Corpus Callosum**  
Bi-Lateral Bridge  
Implicit Separation

**Left Hemisphere**

Identity - What

Separation  
Didactic  
Learning

Verbal  
Explicit  
Memory

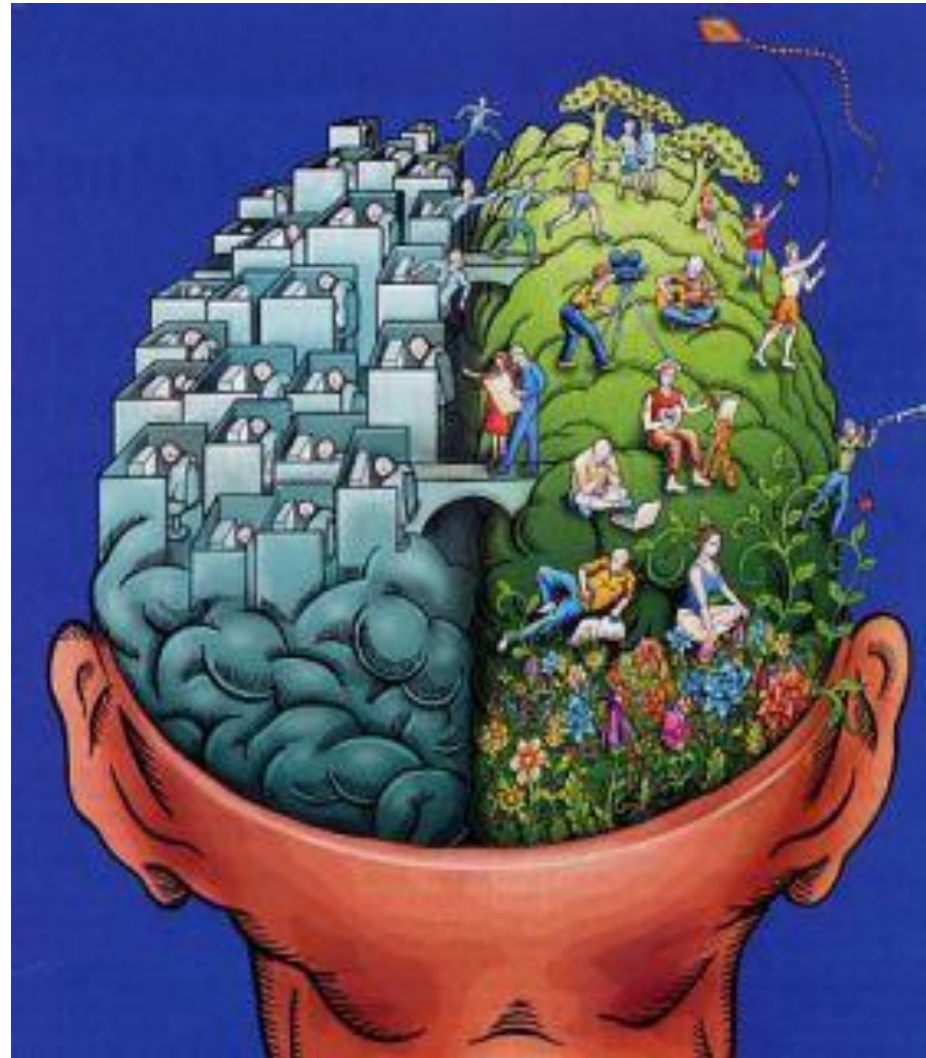
Logical  
Social Language

Known/Conscious  
Reflective

Intellectual  
Truth

Here and Now

Anti-Symptom



**Right Hemisphere**

Self - Who

Integration  
Immersion  
Learning

Non-Verbal  
Implicit  
Memory

Body/Emotion/Imagery  
Inner Language

“Unknown” Known  
Reactive

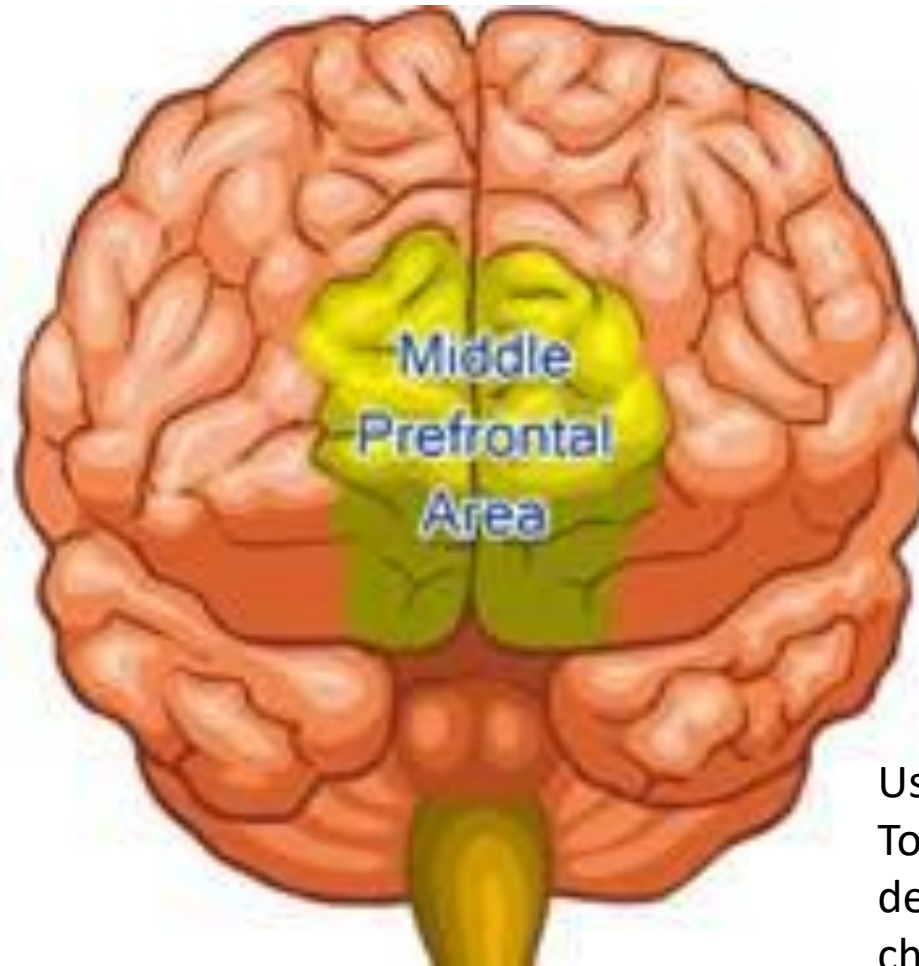
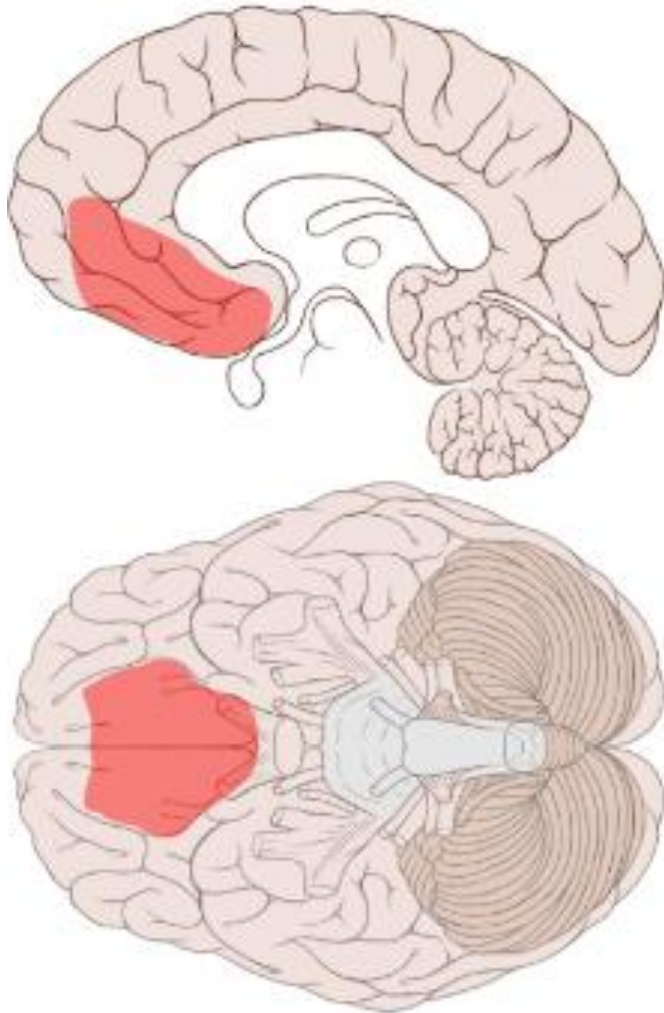
Emotional  
Truth

There and Then

Pro-Symptom

Adapted  
McGilchrist 2009, 2019  
Schoore 2012

# Middle Prefrontal Cortex MPFC



Horizontal and Vertical Integration  
Coordination Structures

Body Regulation  
Attuned Communication  
Emotional Awareness/Balance  
Fear Modulation  
Response Flexibility  
Insight  
Empathy  
Morality  
Intuition

Use internal cues (emotions, incentives).  
To regulate attention and action for  
decision making and self-regulation under  
changing circumstances.  
Social Cognition

## Our Present, Past and Future Essence of Treatment

### **A Conversation We All Need To Observe**

My past, my present and my future met in a room for the first time.  
(It was tense and uncomfortable.)

### **My Past said to My Present:**

“I am going to make you choose relationships, make decisions, and behave in certain ways, and you won’t know why.”


### **My Present said to My Past:**

“That’s OK because I am just going to make stuff up to hide the fact I don’t know why I am choosing to be in unhealthy relationships, make poor decisions, and behave in ways that creates trouble for me.”

### **After watching this conversation My Self thinks:**

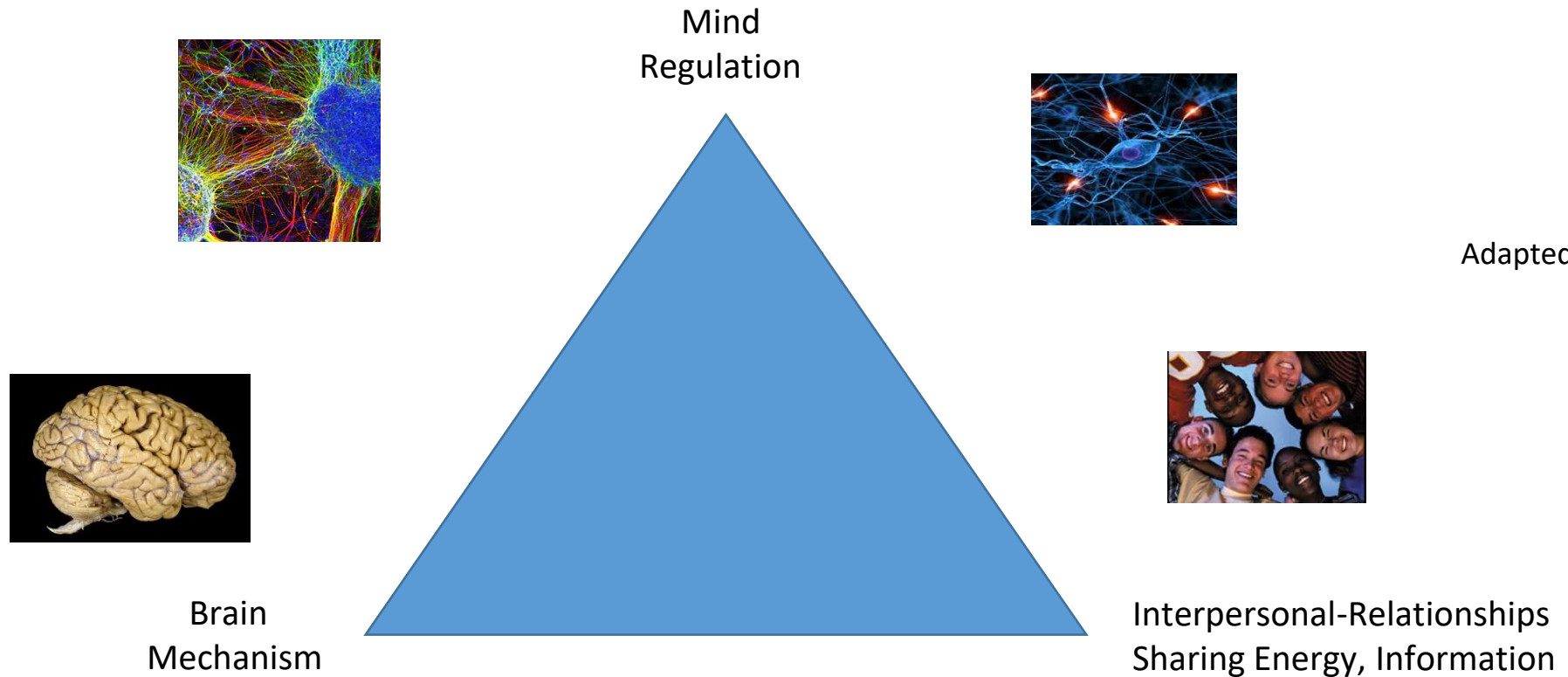
“If I don’t find a way to teach these two how to communicate honestly and respectfully, I am trapped.”

**Present** is conscious and anti-symptom. **Past** is unconscious and pro-symptom.





## How Did I Become Who I Am?



Adapted Siegel - 2012

**A child's experience, expression, and management of emotion develops in the family.** The family is the **earliest, most powerful** interpersonal context, and provides the developmental foundation for sense of self development and the four critical adult skills and traits.

## Sense of Self/Mind Characteristics

Self – Private experience of a unique mind. Identity – Public reality related to titles, roles etc.

Reflective Awareness – Duality, Imagination

Self-Efficacy – Sense of Vitality

Self Compassion – Other Compassion

Feeling of Well-Being – Preconscious (Warmth, Intimacy)

Coherence - Inner/Outer World Integration – Stable/Organized/Adaptive Process  
Related to values, principles, expectations

Consistency – Inner/Outer World Integration - Predictable, adaptive responses across situations  
and environments

Cohesion – Maintenance of Coherence and Consistency Under Internal/External Duress

Healthy sense of self provides stable “grounding” for internal/external world engagement.



## Characteristics of CTS Effects on Mind Set

### **Alteration in Regulation of Affect and Impulses**

- Affect Regulation
- Modulation of Anger
- Self-Destructive
- Suicidal Preoccupation
- Difficulty Modulating Sexual Involvement
- Excessive Risk Taking

### **Alterations in Attention or Consciousness**

- There/Then and Here/Now Blended
- Amnesia
- Transient Dissociative Episodes
- Depersonalization
- Derealization \*
- Dissociative Identity Disorder \*

### **Alterations in Self-Perceptions**

- Ineffectiveness
- Permanent Damage
- Guilt and Responsibility
- Shame
- Nobody Can Understand
- Minimizing

### **Alterations In Relations With Others**

- Inability to Trust
- Re-Victimization
- Victimizing Others
- Everything is My Fault \*
- Nothing is My Fault \*

Pelcovitz, van der Kolk et. al. 1997



## Characteristics of CTS Effects on Mind Set

### Somatization/Compartmentalization

Digestive System  
Chronic Pain  
Cardiopulmonary Symptoms  
Conversion Symptoms  
Sexual Symptoms

### Alterations in Systems of Meaning

Despair and Hopelessness  
Loss of Previously Sustaining Beliefs  
Expectations

Pelcovitz, van der Kolk et. al. 1997

### **Mind Set: Learned Expectations and Lack of Agency**

People do things **to me, not for me**. If they do things **for me**, they are **setting me up** to do something **to me**.

People talk **at me, not with me**. I only experienced **power over me**, not **shared power**.

I have a narrow zone of emotional tolerance. (NZOET)

My interpersonal world (attachment environment) was/is chaotic, dangerous, abusive and neglectful.

My intrapersonal world is chaotic, dangerous, abusive and neglectful.

**What was done to me, will be done to me. I will do to me, what was done to me. and/or ...**

**I will do to others what was done to me.**

My interpersonal world (attachment experiences) developed my expectations, and mindset.

My intrapersonal world maintains my mind set (expectations).

My mind (house) is haunted! I do not want to go in there!

Hurt -2015

**It works quickly!**

**It works every time!**

Self-Harm

Alcohol-Drugs

Food - Sugar

Anti-Social Behavior

Exercise

# Addiction

Gambling

Sex

Working

Shopping

Pornography

**I can depend on it!**

**It gives me a break!**



## Emotion and Motivation

“The attempt to regulate affect – minimize unpleasant feelings and to maximize pleasant ones – is the **driving force in human motivation.**”  
Damasio – 2012

“Restoring homeostasis (physical-emotional safety and calm), **even temporarily**, is the cornerstone of life management.”  
Damasio – 2012

“One reason so many individuals become addicted to drugs and alcohol, has to do with the **pressures of homeostasis.**”  
Damasio - 2012

“**If drugs did not change feelings there would be no addiction.**” Panksepp - 2010

“The **nonconscious** homeostatic demand is in natural control and can be **opposed only by a well-trained and powerful counterforce.**” (Awareness)  
Damasio – 2012

Feelings are labels which are the result of conscious reflection on emotions.

We need to be taught how to “elevate” emotions to feelings.

Emotions influence reactions. Feelings influence responses.



## Language is Powerful

### Linguistics-Semantics

**A label can become the diagnosis and prognosis.**

Labels amplify symptoms and reify (make real) what is only a concept.

We are inclined to live up to labels even though labels do not help us understand who we are, how we became who we are, and why we do, what we do, when we do it.

If you accept a label, you may be looking for an identity, and/or a “concrete”, simplistic explanation for behavior you lack the understanding of how to control and change.

Labels can be self-limiting. Freedom from labels are self-liberating.

**It is much harder to change a label (identity) than to change behavior.**



## **Self-Sabotaging – Self-Soothing Behavior The Solution Becomes Another Problem**

### **The Problem:**

Experience of Emotional Dysregulation (Dis-Ease).  
Self-Disorganization

### **The Solution:**

Emotion Rejection-Avoidance (Emotion Phobia)  
Emotional-Regulating/Self-Sabotaging Behaviors  
Behaviors providing immediate, temporary emotional regulation.

### **Self-Sabotaging Responses:**

Any behavior engaged to the point that other necessary and important aspects of my life is ignored, harmed or destroyed.

Substances, Self-Mutilation, Anti-Social Behavior, Eating Disorders, Relationships, Sex, Love, Gambling, Shopping, Exercising, Working etc.

### **Result:**

Continued Self-Disorganization





## Self-Enhancing – Self-Soothing Behavior The Solution Resolves the Problem

### **The Problem:**

Experience of Emotional Dysregulation (Dis-Ease)

### **The Solution:**

Emotion Awareness-Acceptance

Emotional Regulating/Self-Enhancing Responses

Reflective, delayed responses resulting in emotional regulation.

### **Self-Enhancing Responses:**

Any response that returns person to a regulated state, restoring and enhancing necessary, important aspects of life.

Reflective Functions: mindfulness, mentalization, passive and active meditation.

Approach Responses: problem solving, attachment repairing interactions.

### **Result:**

Self-Maintenance



# Process of Recovery

## Narrow Zone of Emotional Tolerance

Managing, Discharging or Avoiding Emotional Distress

Aggression Eating Disorders	Fragmented Self <i>CHAOS</i> Impulsive Behavior	Substance Abuse Self-Harm
<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Awareness</i>
Inner/Outer World Integration Relationship Success	Coherent/Consistent Self and Identity <u>Safe and Calm</u>	Mentalization Mindful Self-Regulation
<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Awareness</i>	<i>Awareness</i>
Self-Criticism Rumination Panic	Depleted Self RIGIDITY Avoidant Behavior	Social Inhibition Attention Problem Concentration Issues

Least efficient neuronal connections between the limbic system (emotional brain), hippocampus (memory), and prefrontal cortex (thinking, evaluating brain).

# Process of Recovery

## Widening Zone of Emotional Tolerance

Managing, Discharging or Avoiding Emotional Distress

Impulsive Behavior	Chaos	Impulsive Behavior
Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Inner/Outer World Integration Relationship Success	Coherent/Consistent Self and Identity <u>Safe and Calm</u>	Mentalization Mindful Self-Regulation
Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Avoidant Behavior	Rigidity	Avoidant Behavior

Developing neuronal efficiency between the limbic system (emotional brain), hippocampus (memory) and prefrontal cortex (thinking, evaluating brain).

# Process of Recovery

## Wide Zone of Emotional Tolerance

Managing, Discharging or Avoiding Emotional Distress

Impulsive Behavior	Chaos	Impulsive Behavior
Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Inner/Outer World Integration Relationship Success	Coherent/Consistent Self and Identity <u>Safe and Calm</u>	Mentalization Mindful Self-Regulation
Awareness	Awareness	Awareness
Avoidant Behavior	Rigidity	Avoidant Behavior

Highly developed neuronal efficiency between the limbic system (emotional brain), hippocampus (memory) and prefrontal cortex (thinking, evaluating brain).

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