

Emotional Systems

Affective Neuroscience

Neal Anderson - November 2014

Affective Neuroscience

- ❖ Affective neuroscience is the study of the neural mechanisms of emotion. It combines neuroscience with the psychological study of personality, emotion, and mood. Jaap Panksepp has identified seven primal emotional systems that evoke emotional behaviours and produce affective experience.

CARE, SEEKING AND PLAY systems give rise to well-being chemicals.

LUST systems give rise to pleasure chemicals.

RAGE, FEAR AND PANIC systems give rise to stress hormones.

- ❖ Well-being, happiness and success can be considered a consequence of being balanced, congruent and authentic with emotional awareness and management and enjoyment.

We Have Three Brains

Rational (Neo-cortex) Brain

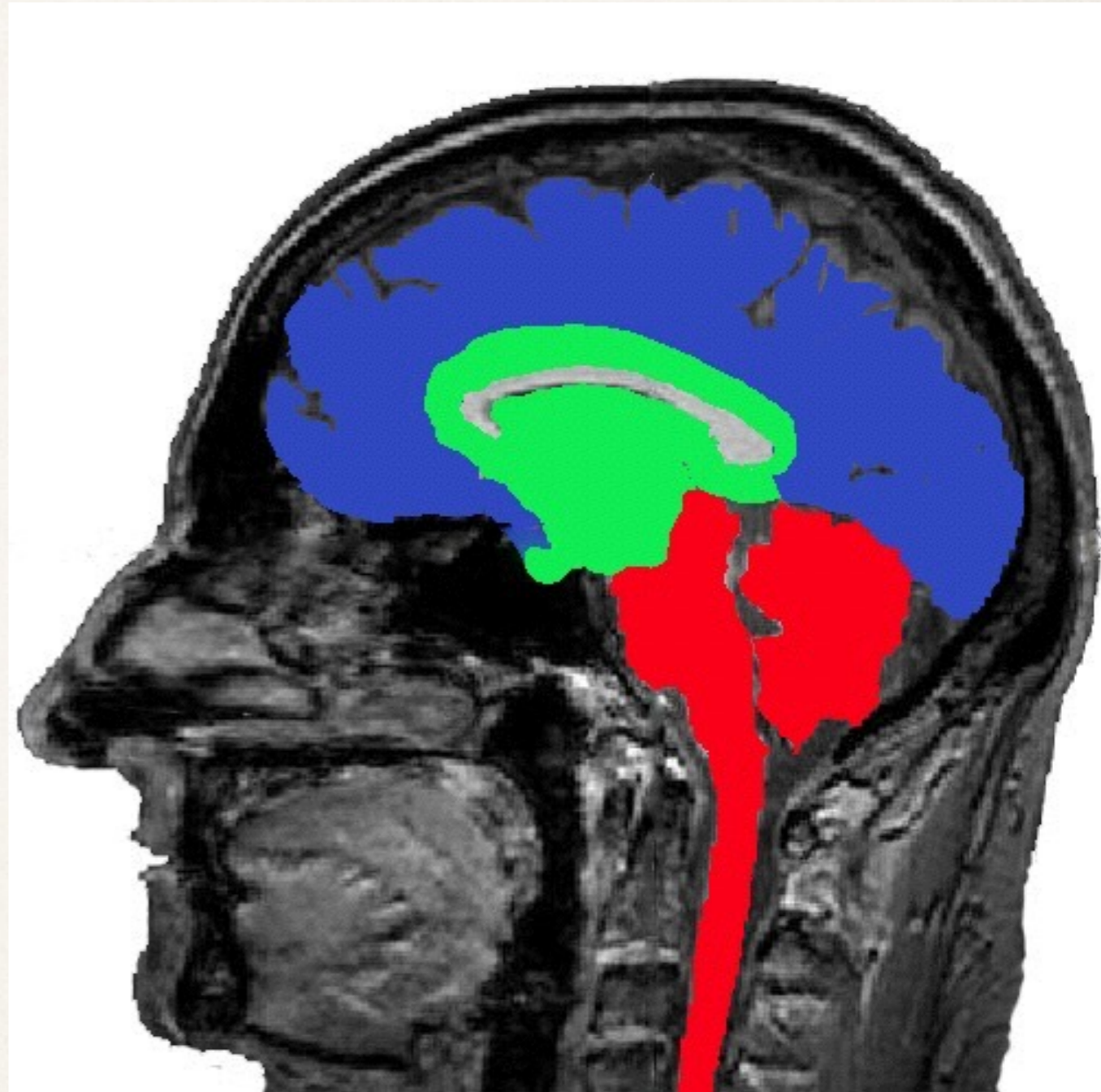
- ❖ Imagination, creativity, reasoning, problem solving, consciousness

Mammalian (Limbic) Brain

- ❖ Emotional systems, memory, connection to others

Reptilian Brain

- ❖ Safety, instincts, hunger, breathing, fight-flight-freeze, territory



Seven Emotional Systems

The primal operating systems of the brain

SEEKING

PLAY

CARE

LUST

RAGE

FEAR

PANIC

- ❖ These emotional systems are are hard wired into a our brain.
- ❖ They are all rewarding or *aversive*.
- ❖ They influence our memories, thinking, feelings and actions.

SEEKING System

- ❖ Leads to feeling **enthusiastic**, eager anticipation, desire and the quest for everything. The SEEKING system drives expectancy, persistent exploratory inquisitiveness and confirmation bias. It helps us survive.
- ❖ SEEKING + positive emotions leads to sense of purpose, feelings of interest, drive, euphoria.
- ❖ SEEKING + unfulfilled needs can lead to feelings of frustration or craving.
- ❖ Too much SEEKING can lead to mania, obsession or addiction.
Too little SEEKING can lead to depression.

PLAY System

- ❖ Leads to feeling **joyous**, full of glee, happy playfulness. The 'rough and tumble' of PLAY assists healthy development and allows testing of the emotional circuits. The PLAY system is one of the main sources of friendship.
- ❖ PLAY is expressed by bouncy lightness of movement and promoted by touch, a secure base and feeling confident and at ease with play-mates.
- ❖ PLAY + winning at all costs can activate the FEAR and RAGE emotional systems.
- ❖ Too much PLAY can lead to mania.
Too little PLAY can lead to ADHD

CARE System

- ❖ Leads to feelings of **tenderness, loving** and attraction. It can be activated by touch. CARE makes the task of nurturing the young a profound reward.
- ❖ The CARE system supports the development of relationships between mother-infant, families, teams and between couples.
- ❖ The CARE system is important for social cohesion and well-being and concern for the environment and the planet.
- ❖ Too much CARE can lead to addiction, dependency.
Too little CARE can lead to attachment disorders, aloofness.

LUST System

- ❖ Leads to erotic feelings, being **horny**, sexual desire and the need to procreate. The LUST system drives 'courting' activities and a desire to move towards the joining of bodies with a receptive mate.
- ❖ LUST is one of the sources of love. Long lasting sexual relationships can also activate the CARE system.
- ❖ Too much LUST can lead to fetishes and sexual addictions. Too little LUST and the species is likely to die out.

RAGE System

- ❖ Leads to feeling **pissed-off**, angry, irritable, full of contempt or hatred. RAGE has a strong forward propulsion or drive towards confrontation.
- ❖ For many people their main trigger to the RAGE system is an invasion of physical or psychological territory. The RAGE system is linked to a fight-flight survival response and is largely out of date in the modern world.
- ❖ Activating the CARE system can act as an antidote to the RAGE system.
- ❖ Too much RAGE can lead to aggression, psychopathic tendencies or personality disorders.

FEAR System

- ❖ Leads to feelings of **anxiety**, worry, foreboding or psychic trauma. The FEAR system generates a negative affective state from which all animals wish to escape.
- ❖ It creates tension in the body and a shivery immobility ("freeze response") at the milder levels of arousal. When the FEAR system arouses the SEEKING system it leads to a strong "flight" response.
- ❖ The FEAR system helps avoid pain and ensure survival.
- ❖ Too much FEAR can lead to phobias, PTSD, generalised anxiety.

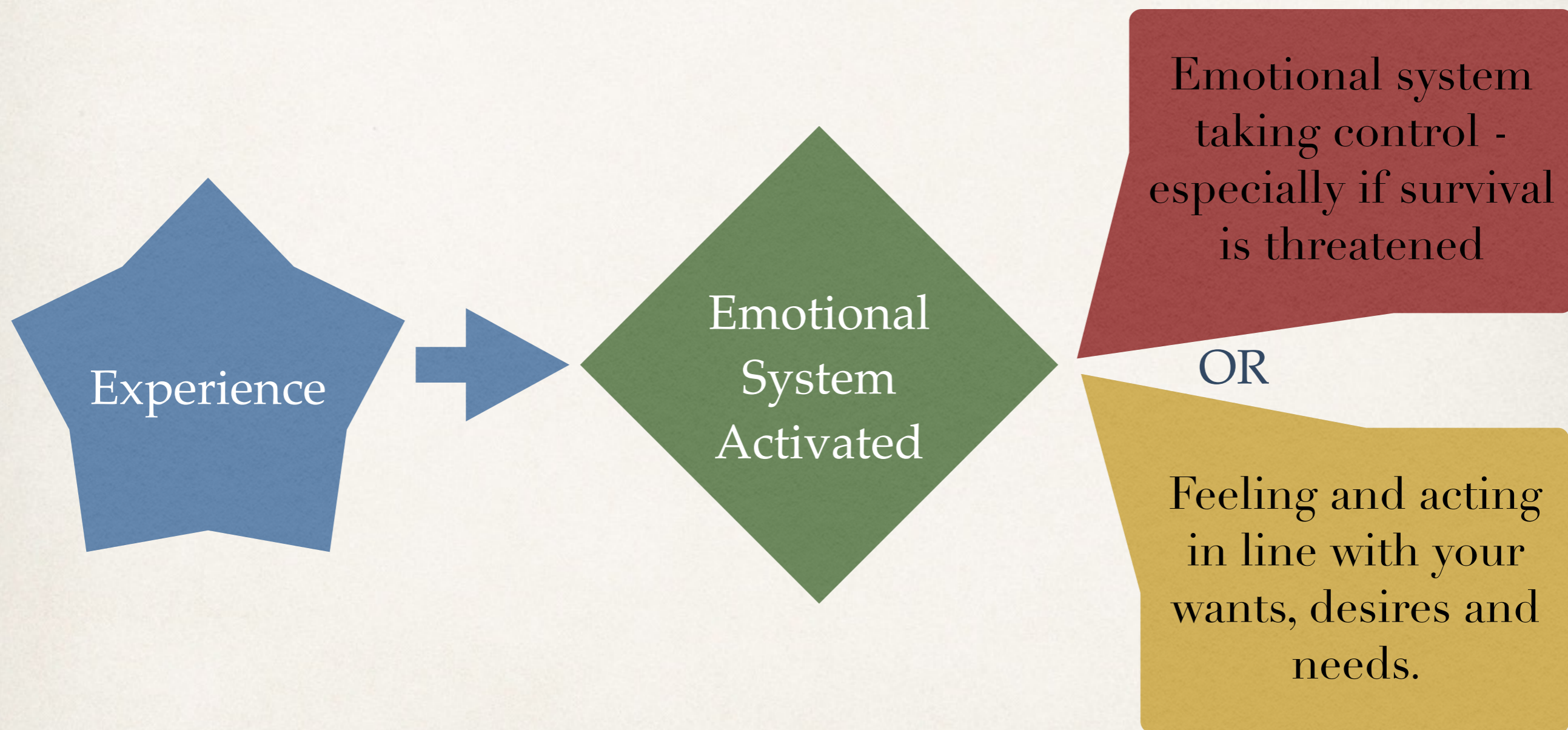
PANIC System

- ❖ Leads to feelings of **grief**, separation distress, sadness, guilt, shame, shyness, embarrassment. Gives the experience of a deep psychic wound - an internal psychological experience of pain that has no obvious physical cause.
- ❖ Separation anxiety or fear of social loss can trigger the PANIC system. PANIC arousal may be a main source of psychic pain that promotes depression.
- ❖ Activating the CARE system with touch, nurturing, a comforting voice / sound or music can be an effective antidote to the PANIC system.
- ❖ Too much PANIC can lead to panic attacks, depression, agoraphobia, social phobias.

Most people can benefit from finding ways to enhance their seeking, play and care emotional systems and learn how to better manage their fear, rage and panic systems.

Personal well-being and happiness comes from emotional systems working in balance.

How Our 3 Brains Work Together



Emotional Thinking

Signs Of When an Emotional System is Driving Thinking

Jumping to an opinion

Thinking in black and white

Being paranoid, suspicious or mistrusting

Being catastrophic and over-reacting

Reaching irrational or illogical conclusions

Judging without mercy

Emotional Hijacking

- ❖ To find out if you are doing something as the result of an emotional hijack ask yourself...

DO I WANT TO BE
_____ RIGHT NOW?

- ❖ If the answer is no, then you are likely to be caught in emotional thinking.



Awareness, Acknowledgement, Ownership, Management.

Once emotional thinking is activated it cannot be simply turned off. That's a bit like saying if you notice yourself breathing then stop breathing. The first steps to restoring balance in emotional systems are awareness, acknowledgement and ownership of emotions.

Without awareness there can be no options.

Without acknowledgement there can be no choices.

Without ownership there can be no influence.

Emotions need to be treated with care and respect. They can be thought of as being five times stronger than you are and so, if your emotions don't want you to do something, you won't do it.

Emotional Flexibility

3 Ways to Manage Emotional Hijacking

1. Experience and Express
2. Explain and Educate
3. Choose a Change

Emotional Flexibility

Ways to Manage Emotional Hijacking

1. Experience and Express

- ❖ A feeling only has one ambition in life and that is it wants to be felt.
- ❖ Find someone who can listen to you let off steam without judgement or expectation
- ❖ Don't bottle it up any longer then necessary.

Emotional Flexibility

Ways to Manage Emotional Hijacking

2. Explain and Educate

- ❖ Use your thoughts and actions to manage the feeling with compassion and understanding.
- ❖ "I understand that you are feeling pissed-off at the moment. That's a perfectly natural emotional reaction to have but right now we have something equally important to achieve and we need you to be present and ready to take on the next challenge"
- ❖ Don't get upset or angry with yourself.

Emotional Flexibility

3 Ways to Manage Emotional Hijacking

3. Choose a Change

- ❖ Take action before emotional thinking has time to get started and take over in an unhelpful way.
- ❖ Redirect the hijack by activating the **seeking, play or care** systems.
- ❖ Don't let emotions take over if it's not what you want.

2 Quick Choices

Ways to Work With Anxiety and Stress

- ❖ **Breathe in, breathe out, relax**
- ❖ **Interrupt the pattern; do something unexpected**

References

- ❖ The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotion, 2012, Jaap Panksepp & Lucy Biven
- ❖ **The Science of Emotions: Jaak Panksepp at TEDx Rainer, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65e2qScV_K8**
- ❖ The Chimp Paradox: The Mind Management Programme to Help You Achieve Success, Confidence and Happiness, 2012, Steve Peters
- ❖ The NLP Coach Companion, 2012, Neal Anderson

"The helping hand you need
is often found at the end of your own arm"

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