



Episode 171 QD: How to Avoid Amygdala Hijack

Human survival instincts are not limited to life-or-death situations. Our amygdala, the brain structure that processes fear and threat stimuli, can take over during any stress-inducing circumstance. Uncertainty, a sense of not being in control, opposition, or experiencing unfairness can trigger your survival instincts. Responses can include shutting down, running away, or regrettable actions you could avoid.

In this episode, Rachel continues our discussion on how to avoid an amygdala hijack. Together we will explore the remaining factors of David Rock's SCARF® model. Discover what your brain perceives as threats and learn how to focus on rewards instead.

If you want to take control of your life and create an uplifting environment for yourself and others, this episode is for you. Lessen threats and seek rewards to improve your performance and effectiveness.

Podcast links

Check out our [Permission to Thrive CPD membership](#) for doctors!

Explore [Shapes Toolkit](#) for help with taking control over your life.

Learn about the [SCARF Model](#) by David Rock

Join the [Shapes Collective FB group](#).

[Email Rachel](#) or reach her on [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#).



Quote to remember:

'There are some things which are certain to trigger our amygdala - to put us straight into a fight flight or freeze stress zone. And once we're there, it's very difficult to think straight, be empathetic and make good decisions.'

What You Will Learn

The human brain is hardwired to detect threats and choose survival when triggered. David Rock of the Neuro Leadership Institute categorizes perceived threats into the five factors forming the SCARF® model. The first factor, Status, was discussed in the previous episode. In this activity, you will explore Clarity, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness. Understanding them means learning how to label and remove what triggers your amygdala.

The factors of clarity and autonomy relate to personal feelings. The first occurs when you feel lost or uncertain of your next steps. The Autonomy factor connects to the sense of not being in control of your own life or actions. Both can result in stress and trigger an amygdala hijack. Learn actionable steps and mindset shifts towards taking control of your own life.

The factors of relatedness and fairness relate to your connection with the people around you. Relatedness considers who you feel safe around - your brain differentiates friend from foe. The fairness factor is how you analyze differences in treatment between others and yourself. Learn how to establish positive connections and a fair environment so that everyone can strive free of threats.



Activity: Identifying Threats and Rewards with the SCARF® Model.

Recap Question. What is the role of status in perceiving threats and rewards?

Q1. Briefly describe a time at work when you felt lost or unsure of what your task was. What did you do?

Q2. Provide reasons why an individual might avoid asking a co-worker or higher-up to repeat or clarify their tasks and responsibilities. Do you recognise any of these in yourself?

Q3. If lack of clarity is a wide-spread issue among your colleagues, what might help improve the issue?

Q4. How does lack of clarity affect work performance and efficiency? How does it affect people's mindset.

Q5. Briefly describe situations you start to feel a lack of control over your life.



I. What emotions do you experience?

II. What are the thoughts/words that trigger these emotions?

III. What is usually happening around you or in your life?

Q6. How can you shift your mindset towards empowering yourself in these situations? What can you change in your environment to avoid the threat?

Q7. List people in your life who you feel safe around. Who are your 'friends'?

Q8. What impact does a positive relationship have in your mental health and performance? What impact does a negative relationship have?



Q9. What can you do to lessen or build a more positive relationship with your ‘foes’? How can you avoid creating negative relationships altogether?

Q10. Define fairness. Why should people be treated fairly?

Q11. Describe your usual reaction to unfairness. What does it make you feel? What do you do? Do you confront it or ignore it?

Q12. Provide suggestions on how fairness can be promoted and ensured in your workplace.

What is your 5 key takeaways from this episode?



How and where can you get help and support towards lessening threats, seeking rewards and taking control over your life?

CPD time claimed:

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