

IS YOUR SCARF SUFFOCATING YOU?



For any individual to make changes, decisions or to create they need to be in a positive mindset. Many times we want to find a new solution to a problem but we simply are not able to. We get stuck. The reason for our "stuckness" is that our brain is experiencing negativity, which you may or may not be aware of.

The negative state of the brain can be attributed to your SCARF. SCARF relates to your brains' (limbic) responses to every situation that you are presented with. Should your SCARF be aroused due to a threat, whether real or perceived, it will place your mind in a negative, or away state. This will make it hard to make clear decisions, think creatively, or implement new processes.

SCARF is an acronym for Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, Fairness.

When we refer to your Status we relate to your "importance" compared to those around you and the impact this has on your emotional state. To explain, think of your initial response when you walk into a room full of strangers. You most often feel vulnerable and the first thing you do is to scan the crowd (hoping to see someone you may know). What your brain is doing in that instance is subconsciously measuring you against all the other people. You must understand that your brain does this on perception, not fact. If people are perceived to be "more" or "better" than you, your limbic system will be aroused advising you of the perceived threat and you will experience a negative response to the surroundings and would want to withdraw. Once you actually make your way through the crowd and start associating with the people you find common interests with and a sense of acceptance or belonging, which then quiets the limbic response.

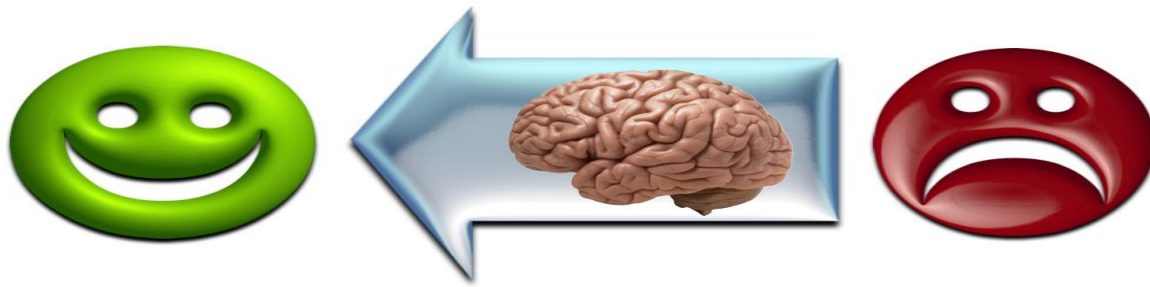
Certainty is the second factor that triggers our limbic response which can leave us feeling weak, vulnerable and stuck. This relates to the brains ability to predict the near future. If the brain is not able to predict the near future with certainty it arouses our limbic system that there is threat and this causes us to experience the negative or away emotion which hinders our ability to create or think. I will use an example again to demonstrate. When you are going for job interview which you are sure of getting as your friend organised the position for you and the interview is just a formality, you will go through the interview with confidence and certainty. If however you had to go for a job interview you have no idea if the job is yours or not, you are more likely to be anxious and nervous which can lead to decreased confidence which impacts the interview negatively.

Autonomy relates to power over a situation or person. One's limbic or threat response is activated when you feel that you are not in control, or have no power over a situation. This creates the away or negative response in the brain that impacts our confidence and abilities. We can all think of a situation we were in where we felt the other party was superior to us or held power over us. When we find ourselves in such a situation, our limbic or threat response system make us feel disempowered and threatened. If we look at another scenario, let us say a parent disciplining a child, the parent has autonomy and controls the situation feeling empowered and in control.

Relatedness is that part of our human composition where we need to fit in. We are always looking for something that we have in common with others to make us feel that we are part of and fit in. When we find ourselves in a situation where we do not have common interests or goals with other people, our limbic systems recognises this as a threat and we start to experience an away sensation. We feel that we don't belong and the automatic human response is to withdraw from the situation we find ourselves in.

Fairness is the last impacting factor we consider. When we perceive a situation to be unfair our limbic system recognises this as a threat and prompt us to respond negatively to remove us form the situation. Our responses would vary: anger, frustration, disappointment, resentment, emotional distress. All negative responses which prompts you to remove yourself or withdraw from the situation.

The brain: seeks pleasure and avoids pain



This is all very interesting to know but to what use? When we cannot identify the cause of the negative or away emotions our brain experiences increased levels of distress. This leads us to react out of our emotions, instead of responding with clear information. The benefit of knowing the emotional triggers we have as humans helps us in our daily lives to cope with and manage situations as they arise. They help us in our business and personal relationships. When we can identify why we are experiencing a negative or away emotion, it helps us to calm the distress experienced in the brain. Once we can identify and label the cause of the negative response, example uncertainty, the brain can then clearly label the threat and in so doing, calm the limbic brain and then rationally judge the situation and respond appropriately.

Many times people who set themselves goals to achieve fail as they are paralysed by SCARF. Whether the threat is real or perceived, the brain responds the same. When we experience negative or away emotions our brain cannot function optimally to think clearly, create new ideas or find alternative means. Through the coaching process threats are identified and dealt with allowing the individual to move along their path to reach their goal.

I trust you will find this article to be of benefit and that it will assist you in your daily life.

Yours in service,

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