

# INSIGHTS FROM NEUROSCIENCE TO INFLUENCE STAKEHOLDER BEHAVIOR

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PMI CVC Meeting

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# Why are we here?

“The study of neuroscience has provided us with a deeper understanding of why people find change so unsettling. It offers valuable insight into the way people approach new tasks or manage upheaval and *helps us understand how the human brain utilizes mental resources to deal with ambiguity, resolve conflict, or find creative solutions to complex problems.*

– [Why Neuroscience Matters to Executives, Strategy + Business, April 2007](#)



# Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is the practice of interacting with, and influencing project stakeholders to the overall benefit of the project.

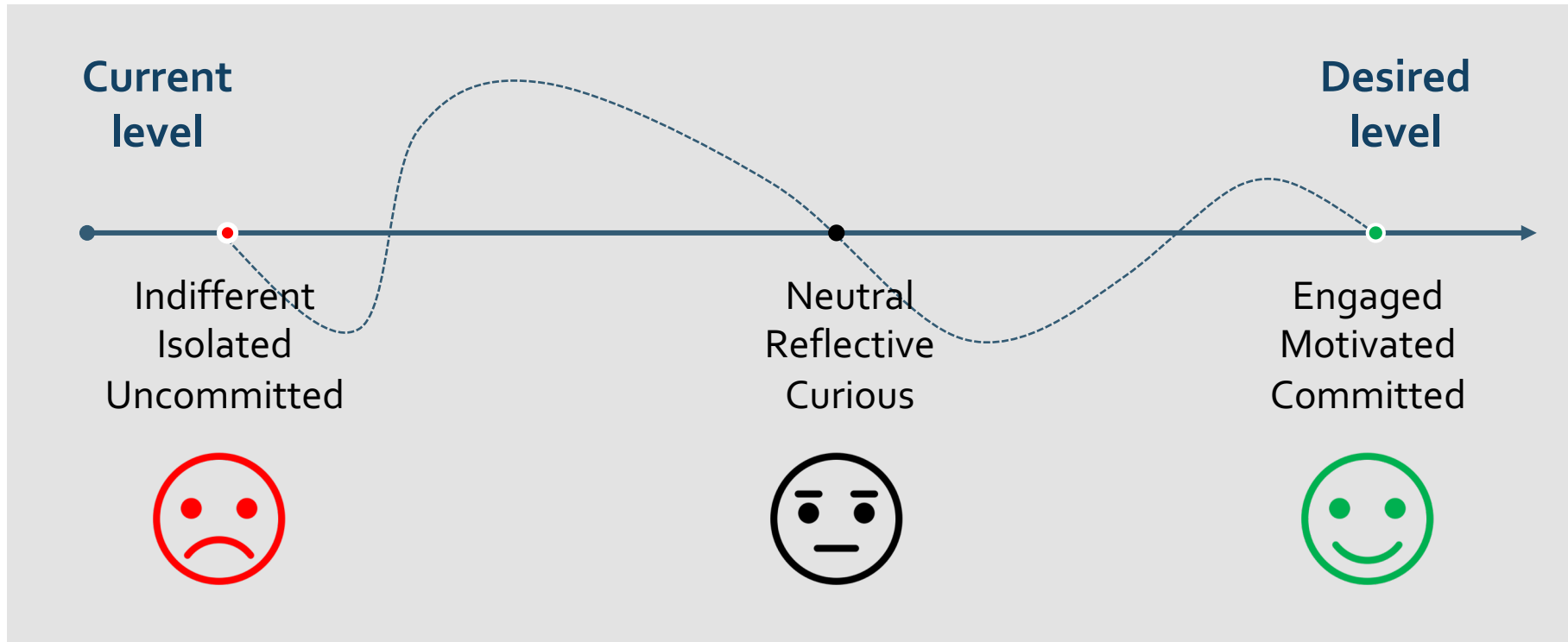
- Association for Project Management (APM)

Engagement: The extent to which a person chooses to apply their talent, energy and care toward any effort.

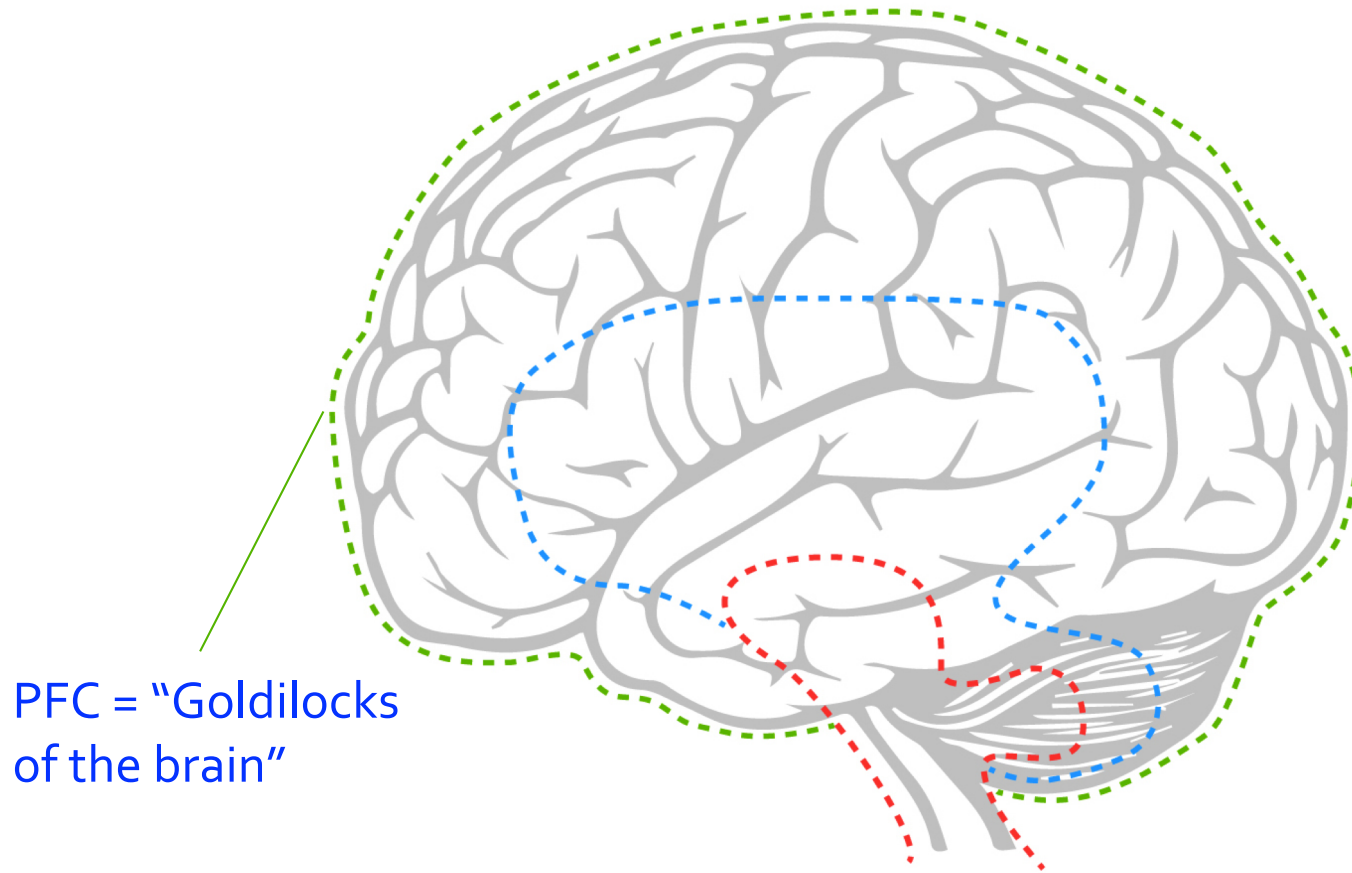
- Association for Talent Development (ATD)



# Stakeholder Engagement Levels



# The Three Brains



## 3<sup>rd</sup>: Rational Brain

Planning, objectivity  
Interpretation and control

## 2<sup>nd</sup>: Emotional Brain

Cooperation, Bonding  
Emotional memory, Empathy

## 1<sup>st</sup>: Instinctual Brain

Survival  
"Kill or be Killed"

Higher energy  
consumption

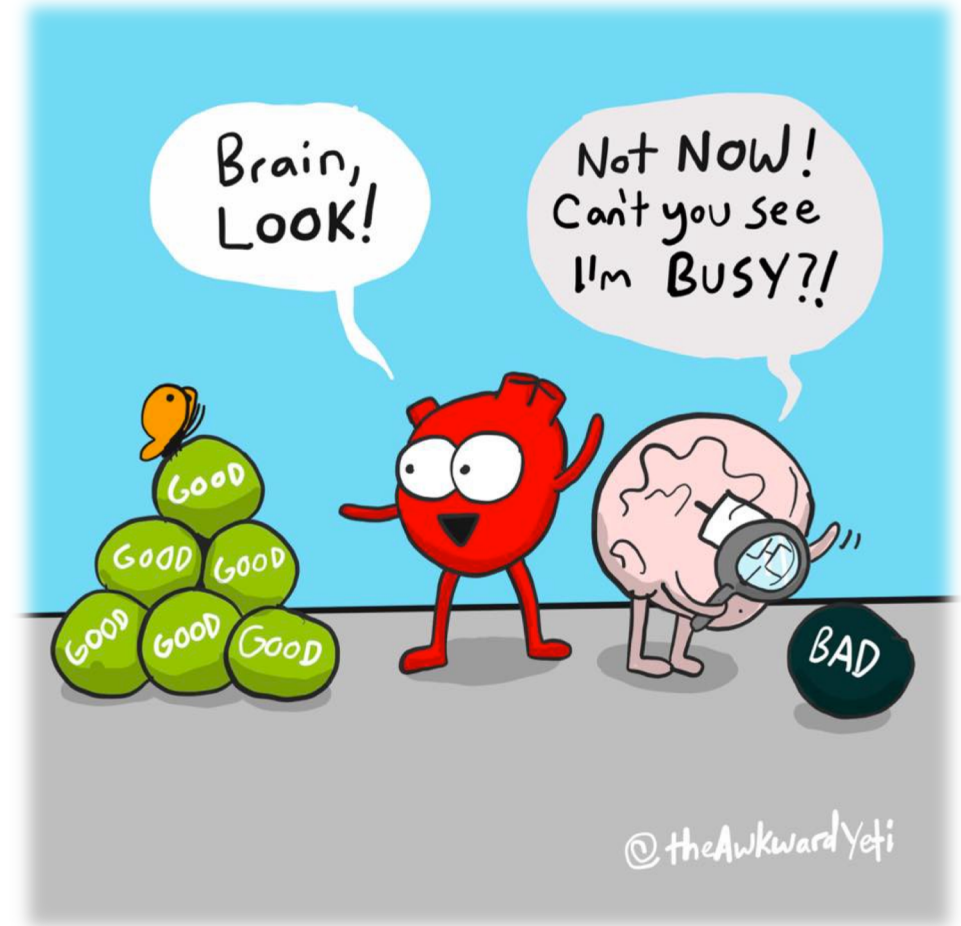
Faster response  
time



The brain is the world's most sophisticated survival organ. – John Medina

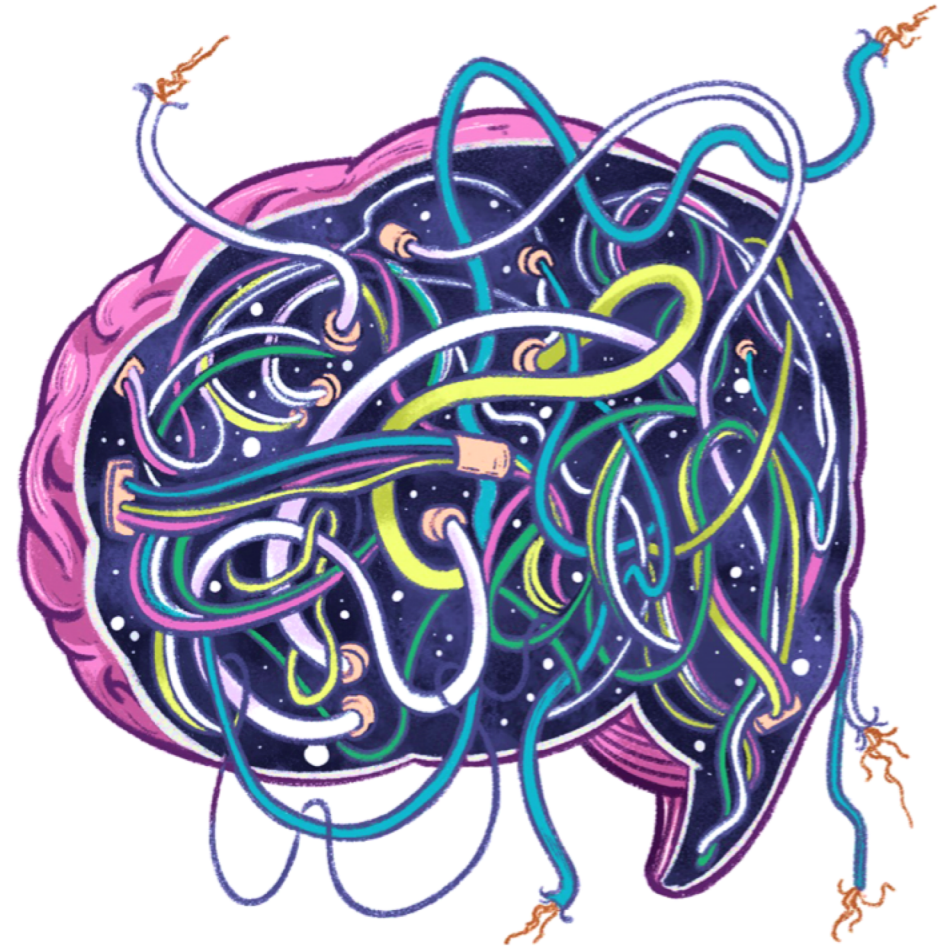
# Insights about the brain

- No two brains are alike
- The brain is a connection machine
- It hardwires *everything*.
- Hardwiring drives perception and is difficult to override
- It has a *negativity bias*



# Neuroplasticity

- “Neurons that fire together, wire together.” ~ Hebb’s rule
- Neuroplasticity refers to the brain’s ability to restructure itself in response to the environment through persistent training or practice.
- “Neurons that fire apart, wire apart.” ~ Corollary to Hebb’s rule

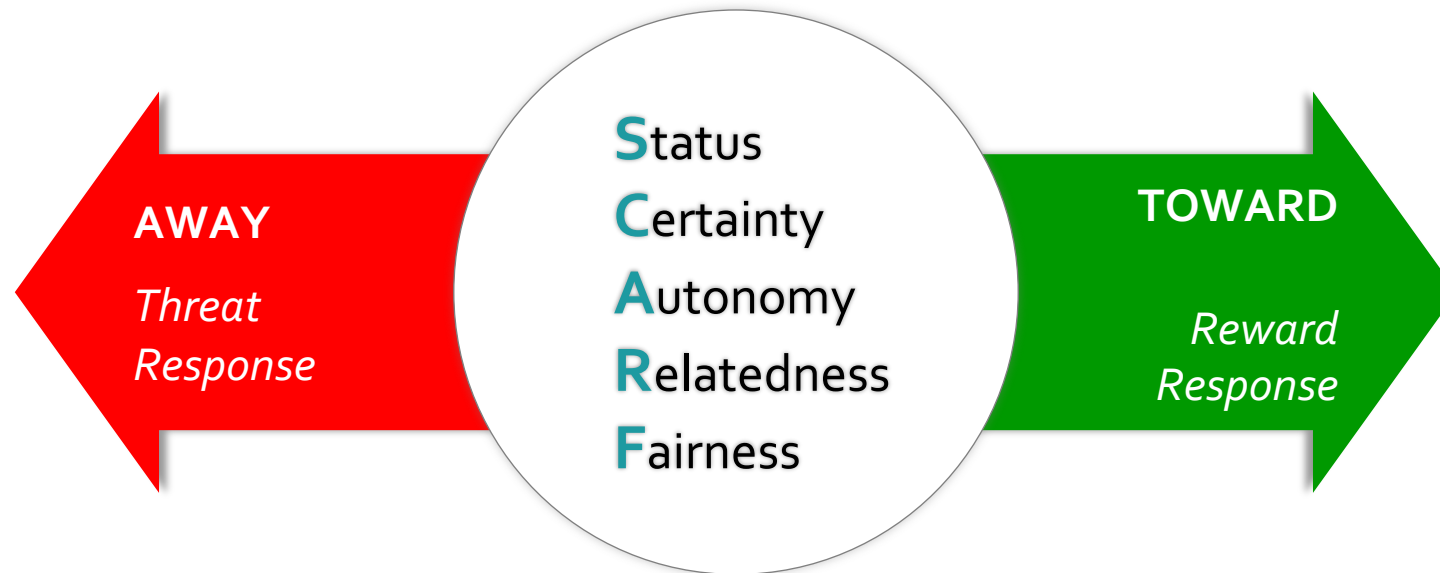


# HOW CAN YOU OPERATIONALIZE THESE INSIGHTS?

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# The SCARF Model

- Brain-based model for collaboration and influence by Dr. David Rock and Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz defines five main domains (S.C.A.R.F.) that drive human behavior.
- “...the same **neural responses** that drive us toward food or away from predators are **triggered by our perceptions** of the way we are treated by other people” ~David Rock



# Meet our stakeholder personas

Status Steve

Certainty Seth

Autonomy Oscar



Relatedness Rene

Fairness Freda

# Status



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# Status Steve: Needs

- **Needs**
  - Relative importance
- **Behaviors**
  - Challenges decisions
  - Corrects others
  - Name-drops



# Status Steve: Rewards



## Increase rewards by

- Creating new connections
- Playing down title
- Creating shared goals, “in group” mentality
- Promoting learning and improvement
- Generating positive reinforcement

# Certainty



# Certainty Seth: Needs

- **Needs**
  - Stability & predictability
- **Behaviors**
  - Wants to limit scope
  - Wants all details before commencing work
  - Analysis paralysis



# Certainty Seth: Rewards

## Increase rewards by

- Providing clear plans and strategies
- Establishing clear expectations
- Providing structure in chaos
- Focusing on short term goals



# Autonomy



# Autonomy Oscar: Needs

- **Needs**
  - Freedom & choice
- **Behaviors**
  - Becomes controlling in other areas
  - May cause scope creep



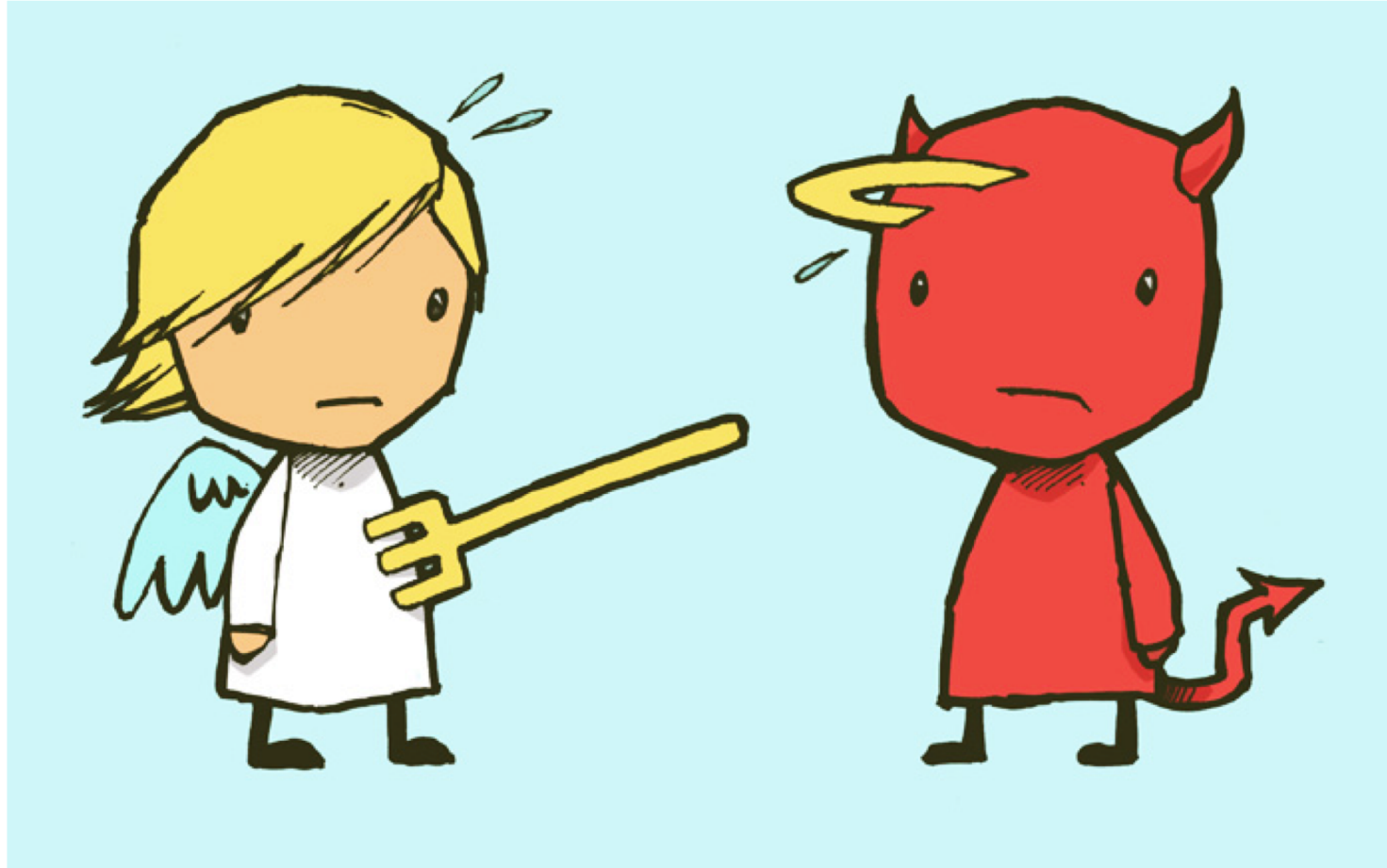
# Autonomy Oscar: Rewards



## Increase rewards by

- Not micromanaging
- Giving choices, decision making capabilities
- Negotiating norms
- Listening, soliciting opinions
- Providing ownership

# Relatedness



# Relatedness Rene: Needs

- **Needs**

- Affiliation & belonging

- **Behaviors**

- Conforming and deferential
- Doesn't contribute to conversations
- Maybe a group thinker



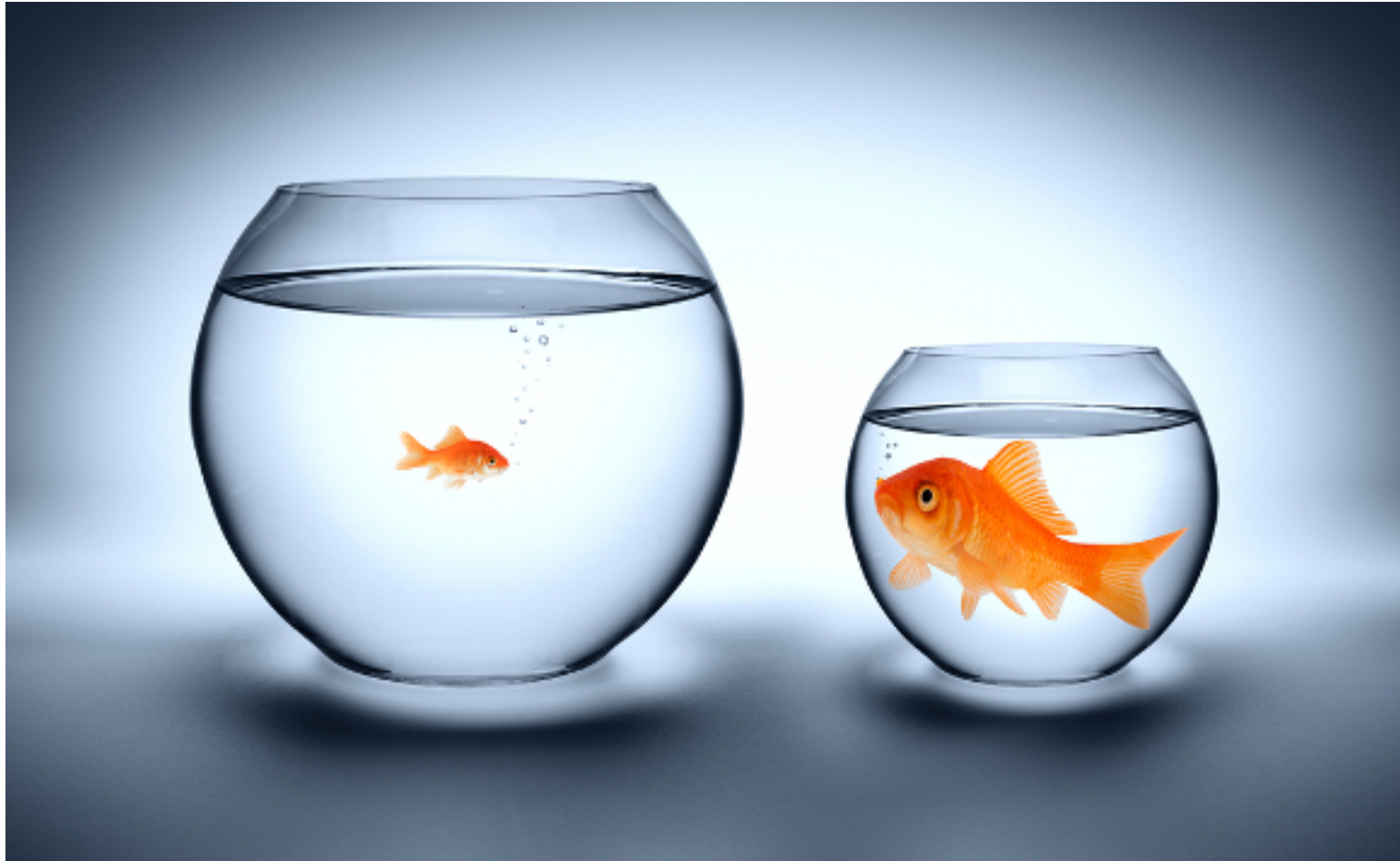
# Relatedness: Rewards



## Increase rewards by

- Sharing personal stories
- Creating buddy systems, mentoring or coaching programs
- Creating tribes or communities of practice

# Fairness



# Fairness Freda: Needs

- **Needs**

- Wants to understand the “why”
- Seeks equitable treatment

- **Behaviors**

- May cling to old narratives
- Gets defensive
- Turns bitter and resentful



# Fairness: Rewards

## Increase rewards by

- Providing greater transparency
- Allowing teams to establish rules, initiatives
- Fostering self directed teams



# Engaging Stakeholders using SCARF



## Threat Response

- Distracted, anxious
- Reduced memory impacts thinking
- Poorer performance
- Weakened immune system
- ***Emotional dysregulation and disengagement***

## Reward Response

- + More focused and positive
- + Increased cognitive resources
- + Innovative and creative
- + Willing to get involved and collaborate
- + ***Increased resilience***

# Revisit our stakeholder personas

I feel important and valued because leaders recognize my ability to contribute.

– **Status Steve**

I know why we must change. I know as much as anyone can know about the changes that are coming.

– **Certainty Seth**



Being invited to participate in the change process has given me a sense of control.

– **Autonomy Oscar**

My sense of relatedness has increased because of being connected to others at work.

– **Relatedness Rene**

I feel represented and involved. I understand the process and it seems fair.

– **Fairness Freda**

# Extending the SCARF Model



“Human beings have an innate inner drive to be **autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another**. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives.”

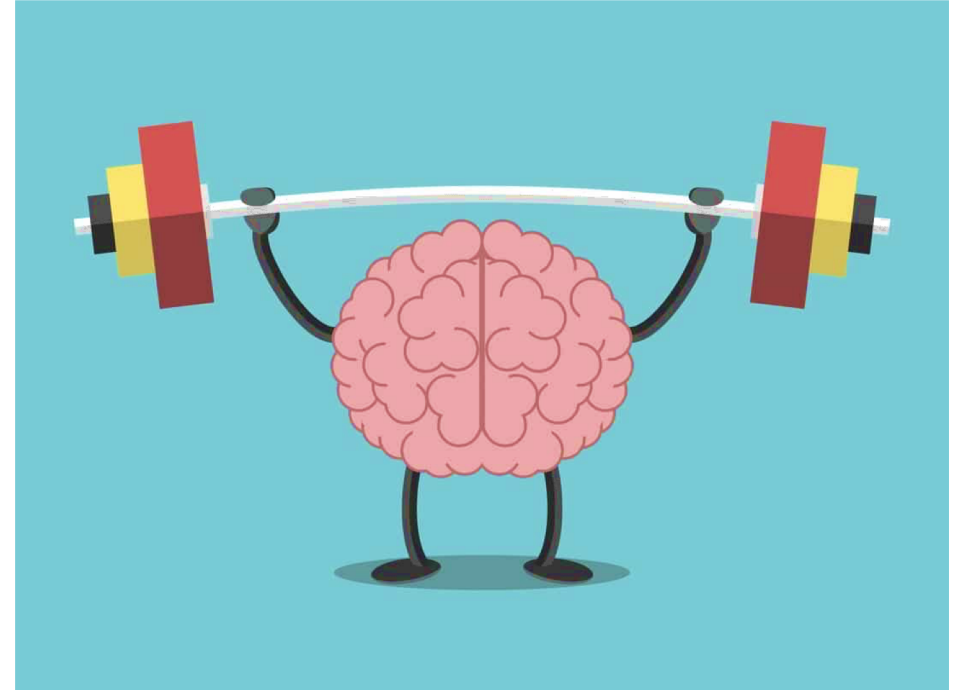
~ Dan Pink, Drive

# Recap

The anatomy of the brain

Insights about how the brain responds to change

Practical techniques to influence stakeholders, reduce resistance and increase resilience







# Homework: Assess Your Stakeholders

- Identify stakeholders to whom you can apply the SCARF Model
- Explore what they might be experiencing
- Use the SCARF worksheet provided to capture insights

THE SCARF® MODEL

	Status	Certainty	Autonomy	Relatedness	Fairness
<b>Threat Response Triggers</b>	Perceived loss of status	Fear of the unknown	Loss of control	Lack of connection with others in the group	Favoritism or Incongruity
<b>Reward Response Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Play down status</li><li>• Create shared goals</li><li>• Promote learning and improvement</li><li>• Generate positive reinforcement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide clear plans and strategies</li><li>• Establish clear expectations</li><li>• Provide structure in chaos</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't micromanage</li><li>• Give choices, decision making capabilities</li><li>• Negotiate norms</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share personal stories</li><li>• Buddy systems, mentoring or coaching programs</li><li>• Create tribes or communities of practice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Greater transparency</li><li>• Allowing teams to establish rules, initiatives</li><li>• Fostering self-directed teams</li></ul>
<b>Questions to Ask Yourself as a leader</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you preserve people's status?</li><li>• Can you provide positive feedback?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you provide some degree of certainty?</li><li>• Can you share high level plans or at least milestones?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you offer people control or areas of autonomy over aspects of the change?</li><li>• Can you engage more broadly in planning and execution?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you embrace connections and create feelings of inclusion?</li><li>• Can you create shared goals between people?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How can you demonstrate fairness and transparency in the decisions you make?</li><li>• How can you involve others in the decision-making process?</li></ul>

ASSESS YOUR STAKEHOLDER

Name or Description of Stakeholder	Describe the situation you are encountering	What is your stakeholder's threat response trigger?	What action can you take to create a reward response?

# Resources

## SCARF Model:

- [SCARF Self-Assessment](#)
- [YouTube Video](#)
- [NeuroLeadership Article](#)

## Books:

- [Your Brain at Work](#), David Rock
- [Quiet Leadership](#), David Rock
- [Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School](#), John Medina

## Other:

- [Backwards Brain Bicycle](#): Neuroplasticity Video
- [Three Brains in One](#) and [Brain Facts](#)

## Organizations:

- [Society for Neuroscience \(SfN\)](#)
- [Cognitive Neuroscience Society \(CNS\)](#)



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[www.brainbasedchange.com](http://www.brainbasedchange.com)