MODULE OVERVIEW

Deciding under pressure: Choose, don't react

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Many decisions made "rationally" are not: fear or hidden emotions decide, and the mind then builds the case to convince us we are right. The most rational people are often the most at risk, precisely because they believe they are in charge. This module takes apart the biased mechanism of decision-making, drawing on neuroscience. It then builds a space of awareness and a three-step reflex that can be used in moments of high tension to decide with clarity.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Recognize three reaction systems: the survival system freezes us, the emotional system drives us, and the neocortex reasons.

02 Spot after-the-fact rationalization, when reason becomes our emotions' lawyer instead of their judge.

03 Decide with awareness: observe what is going on inside us without letting fear, emotion, or certainty decide for us.

04 Practice the three-step reflex—name, breathe, choose—before responding, committing, or making the call.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone whose days demand quick decisions and who wants to choose, not react.

- **Prerequisite:**
  Six stress reflexes and how to regain control

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1 **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.

2 **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.

3 **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.

4 **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.

5 **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- The Afthonios three-step reflex "Name, breathe, choose": the "name" step draws on affect labeling and Daniel Siegel's "name it to tame it"
- The metaphor of a ball on rough water – an Afthonios variant of Haidt's "elephant and the rider"
- The three-brain (triune brain) model: survival system, emotional system, and neocortex – inspired by Paul MacLean's "triune brain"
- After-the-fact rationalization – Jonathan Haidt's social intuitionist model

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Roger Sperry – split-brain research (Nobel Prize 1981)
- Jonathan Haidt – "The Righteous Mind" (2012): the metaphor of the elephant and the rider
- Lieberman et al. (UCLA, 2007) – "Putting Feelings Into Words": affect labeling (fMRI)
- Noback, Strominger, Demarest & Ruggiero – "The Human Nervous System" (2005): the neocortex makes up about 76% of the human brain

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