MODULE OVERVIEW

Six stress reflexes and how to regain control

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Being called out in a meeting, an angry email, and thinking short-circuits: the body reacts as if life were at stake. This module makes these moments understandable. It names the six reflexes that take control, from paralysis to attack, and explains the chemistry of the amygdala hijack described by Goleman. Its key point is counterintuitive: under stress, reasoning with yourself doesn't work; the body must be calmed first.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Understand, using the three-system metaphor, why stress short-circuits thinking and how chemistry explains it.

02 Recognize the three survival reactions (paralysis, destruction, frenzy) in yourself and in others.

03 Spot the three reflexes of the emotional brain when a relationship is at stake: pleasing others, attacking, fleeing.

04 Regain control without blaming yourself: calm the body first, name the emotion, and delay your response.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to keep dialogue open in tense moments and understand themselves better under stress.

- **Prerequisite:** none

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

- Survival reactions (paralysis/destruction/frenzy) and emotional reflexes (please others/attack/flee) – Afthonios method, building on the frameworks of MacLean and Goleman
- Amygdala hijack – Daniel Goleman, "Emotional Intelligence" (1995)
- Triune brain (survival/emotional/thinking) – Paul MacLean, model used as a teaching metaphor

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Daniel Goleman – "Emotional Intelligence" (1995), popularized the concept of the amygdala hijack
- Paul MacLean – "triune brain" model (reptilian/limbic/neocortex, 1960s and 1970s), now a widely used teaching metaphor
- Arnsten, Nature Reviews Neuroscience (2009) – effects of stress on prefrontal functions
- McEwen, Physiological Reviews (2007) – stress responses, adaptation, and the role of the brain

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