

TO TELL THE TRUTH...

Creating a positive work environment

CSSEA 2012

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We work best in an environment where...

- **We have a voice and can make a contribution**
- **Our ideas and contributions are heard and valued**
- **We can collaborate with others to achieve our goals**

Some assumptions

- ✓ You've had communication skills training
- ✓ You've tried dealing with the negative situation with varying degrees of success
- ✓ You are willing to face a difficult issue
- ✓ You recognize this issue goes beyond mere misunderstanding, or lack of effective communication tools
- ✓ You're motivated to try new approaches and consider new perspectives

Some assumptions that can get us into trouble

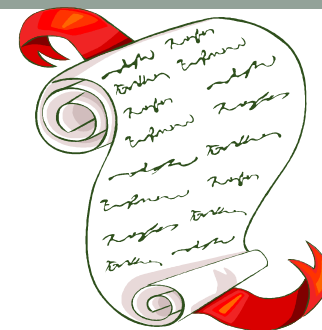
- ✓ Our beliefs are the truth
- ✓ The truth is obvious
- ✓ Our beliefs are based on real data
- ✓ The data we select is the real data.



The purpose of this course is to enable you to

- Explore ways to access your deeper wisdom (beneath the surface of habitual reactions)
- Prepare your mind to go beyond the usual track, to challenge your assumptions and stories and illuminate potential blind spots
- STOP—the thoughts patterns and the behaviour patterns that keep you stuck in a negative dynamic, and to CONNECT with your best intentions and most important goals for your work environment.

Agenda



- ✓ Building on the positive core
- ✓ Practice of dialogue and deep listening
- ✓ The cycle of perception
- ✓ Breaking into the cycle—managing ourselves, rewiring our neural pathways
- ✓ A key to creating a positive workplace
- ✓ A recipe for telling the truth
- ✓ Application: your strategies for creating a positive workplace

On Listening

When you listen to somebody, listen completely and attentively; then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.

J. Krishnamurti

The positive core

What positive difference does the work you do make in the world? What matters most to *you* about the work you do in your organization?



For starters

- What creates a positive workplace?
- What are some of the things that you can do (have done) to deal with negative behaviour or situations?
- What are some of the fears that might stop you from dealing with negativity?
- How can you start a conversation with someone so that you can speak the truth, with honesty and with kindness?
- What are the consequences of
- What are some of your beliefs and attitudes about speaking openly and honestly?

Typically, we handle difficult conversations by:

- Avoiding them
- Facing them and handling them poorly
- Facing them and handling them well

Speaking the truth requires...

Candour

Courage

Compassion

Clarity

Conviction

Commitment



On dialogue...

Most of the time people are caught up in reflexive reactions to what they believe others said, leading to a momentary *self-absorption and blindness*. Dialogue involves learning to let go of these reactions and become aware of a flow of new possibilities. Dialogue is...finding a new way to talk, think, and act together.

Dialogue is often the missing link that frees people to take a quantum leap in vision and action.

William Isaacs

Debate

vs

Dialogue

- Assuming that there is a right answer, and you have it
- Listening to find flaws and make counter-arguments
- Defending our own assumptions as truth

- Assuming that many people have pieces of the answer
- Listening to understand, find meaning and agreement
- Revealing our assumptions for reevaluation

Debate

- Seeing two sides to an issue
- Defending one's own views against those of others
- Searching for flaws and weaknesses in others' positions
- By creating a winner and loser, discouraging further discussion

Dialogue

- Seeing all sides of an issue
- Admitting that others' thinking can improve on one's own
- Searching for strengths and value in others' positions
- Keeping the topic open even after the discussion formally ends

To help promote the art of dialogue, you must be willing to

- ✓ state your own view and ask others for their reactions.
- ✓ be wrong
- ✓ be curious as to why others think what they believe is correct or true
- ✓ accept that you may be unaware of certain facts and be open to new information and changing your mind
- ✓ interpret how others are thinking and reacting and seek to understand their underlying feelings.



Reflection

- ✓ Have I ever given someone else power over me (power to affect my mood, my behaviour, my thoughts)?
- ✓ How did this happen?
- ✓ What did I need to do to take back my personal power?
- ✓ What did you do or think differently? What impact did this shift have on the situation or the other person?

A proposition...

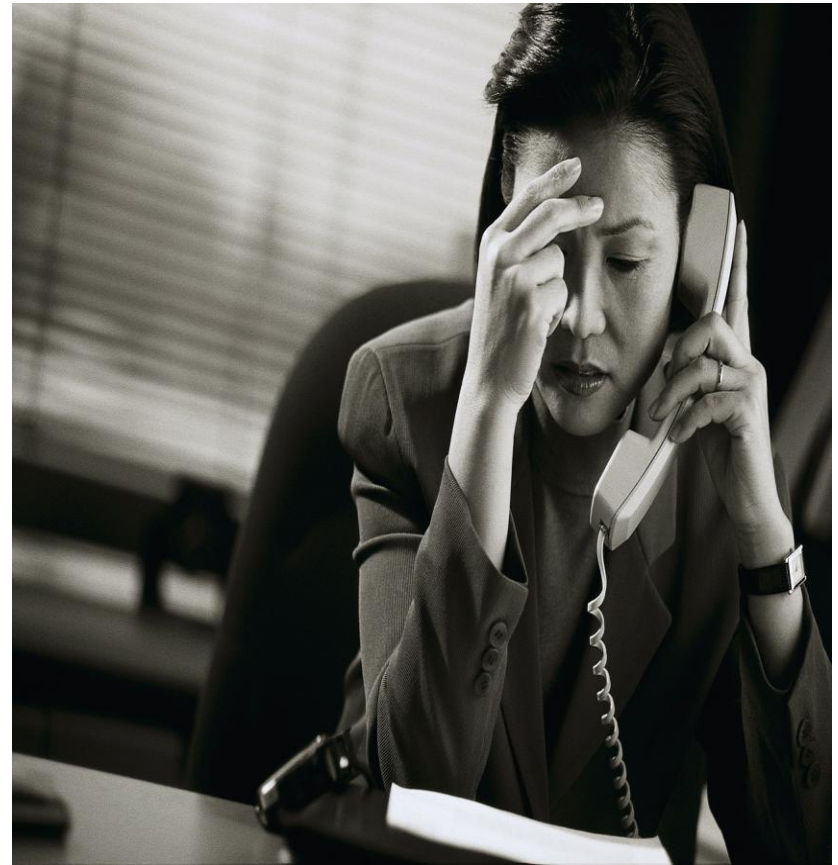
You are the solution to the
negative situation.

Dialogue

In your groups, practice some of the principles of dialogue:

- ✓ Use the “speaking piece”
- ✓ Each person will share their reactions to this statement:
 - In what ways might this statement be true?
 - In what ways might it not be true?
- ✓ Take your time and pay attention to your thoughts and feelings about this

The Physiology of Appreciation and Frustration

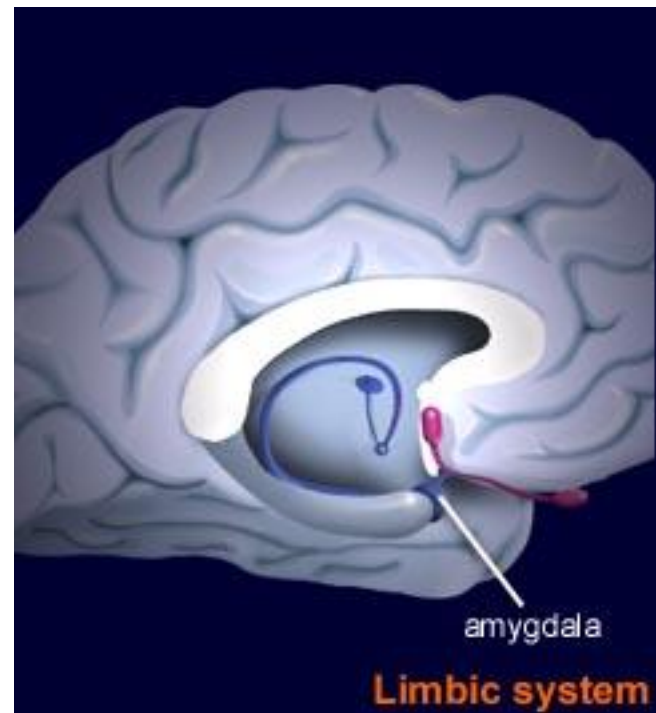


Key understandings

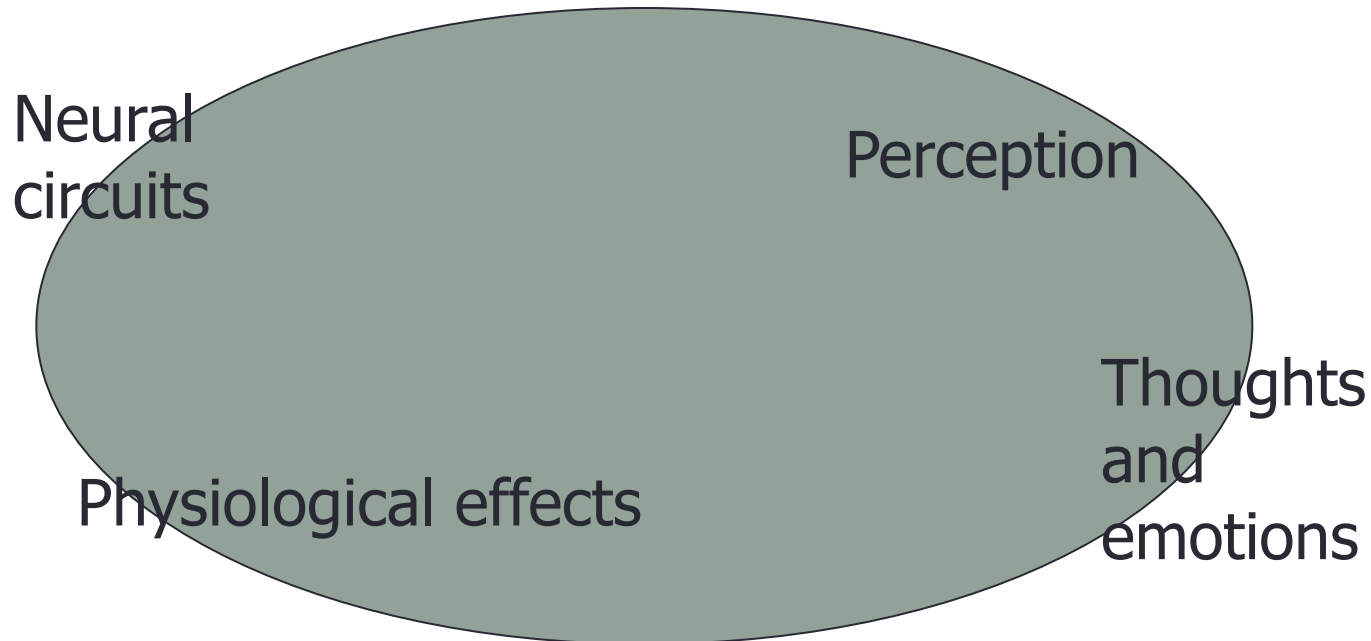
- When we get triggered by negativity, our personal power and sense of self becomes *constricted*.
- The key to facing these risks (in addressing the negative person) lies in our ability to unlock, and access, our intelligence, creativity and wisdom.
- We do this by reconnecting to, and *enlarging* our sense of self and personal power.

Some things you should know about your amygdala

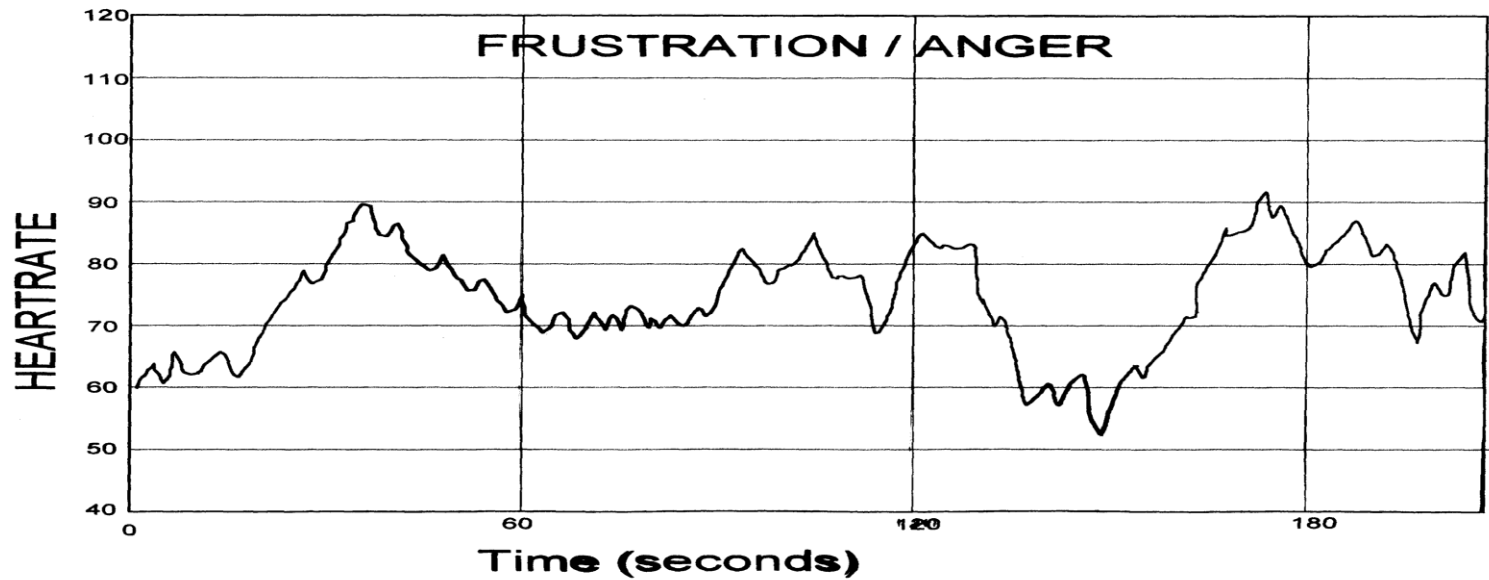
- It's a storehouse of emotional memory
- One of its key roles is to compare incoming information and find a match.
- The match doesn't have to be precise—the amygdala lets the rest of the brain know a match has been found
- The result--you're about to be “emotionally hijacked.”



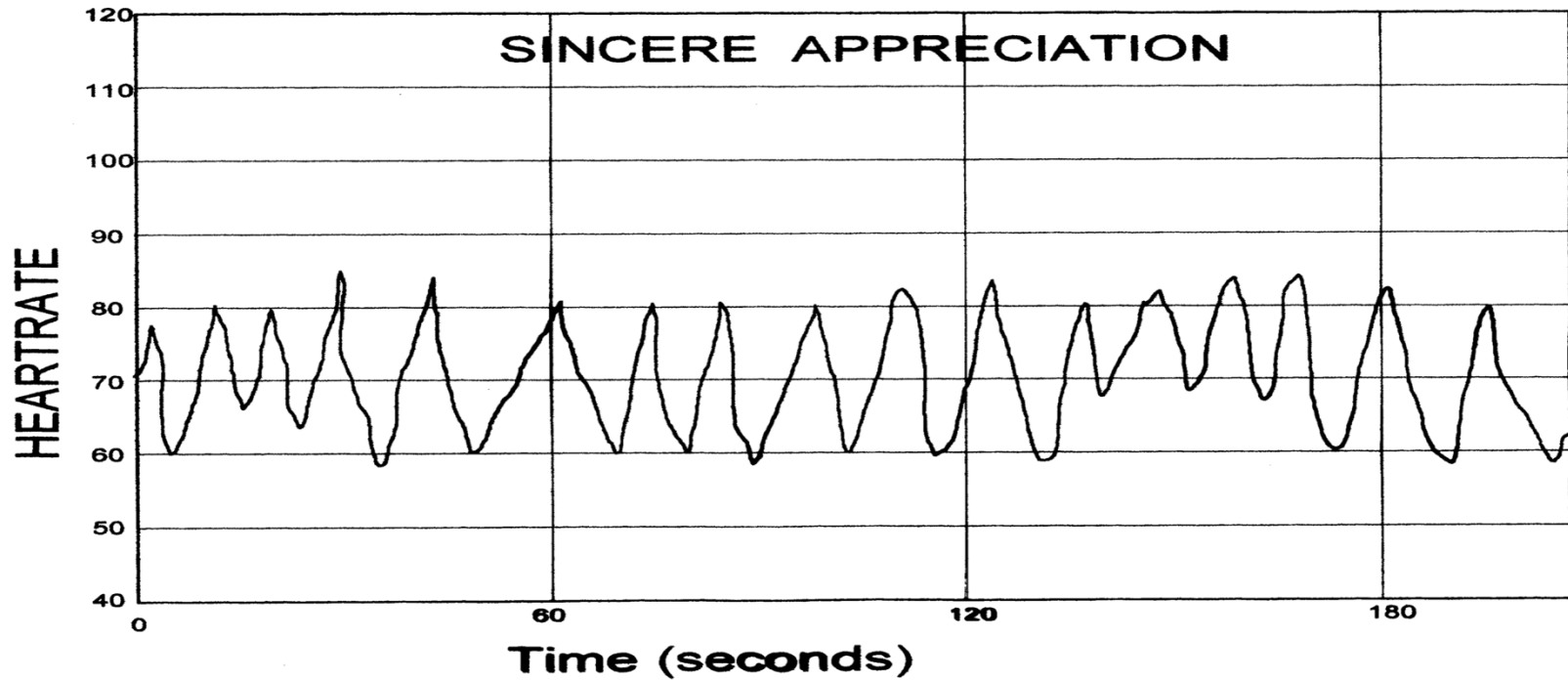
By changing your perceptions you change your experience of your body and your world:



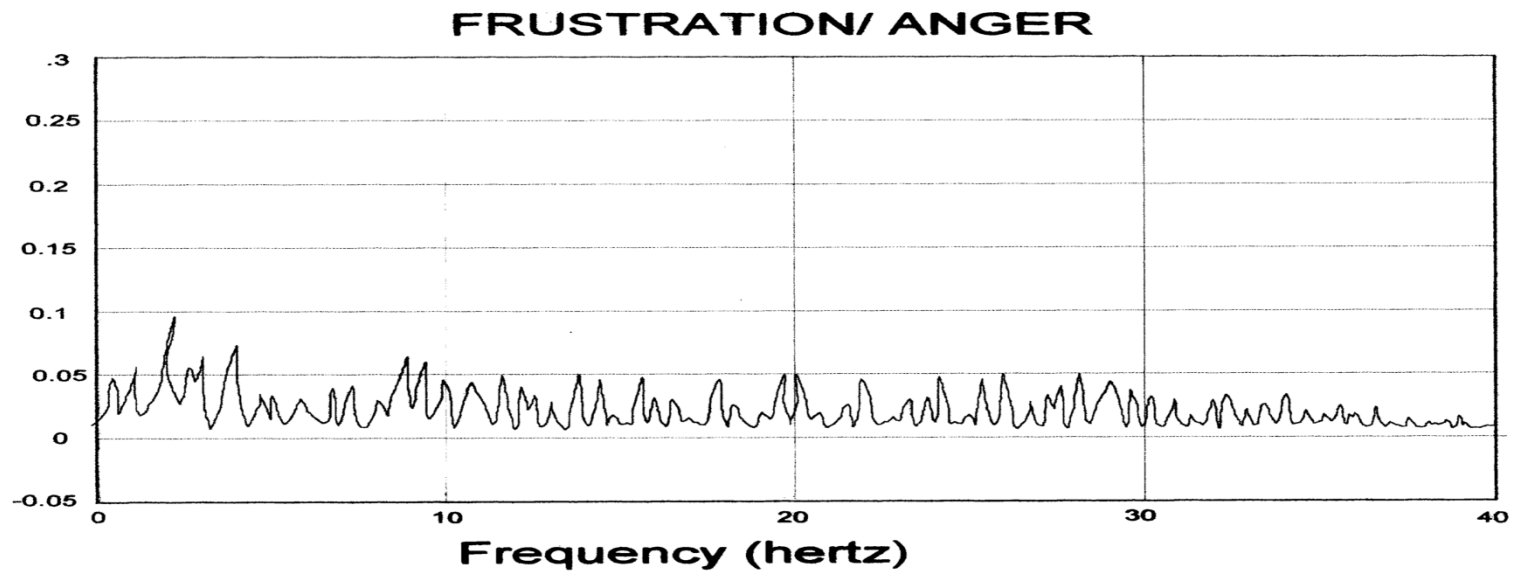
Erratic heart rate variability



Harmonious heart rate variability

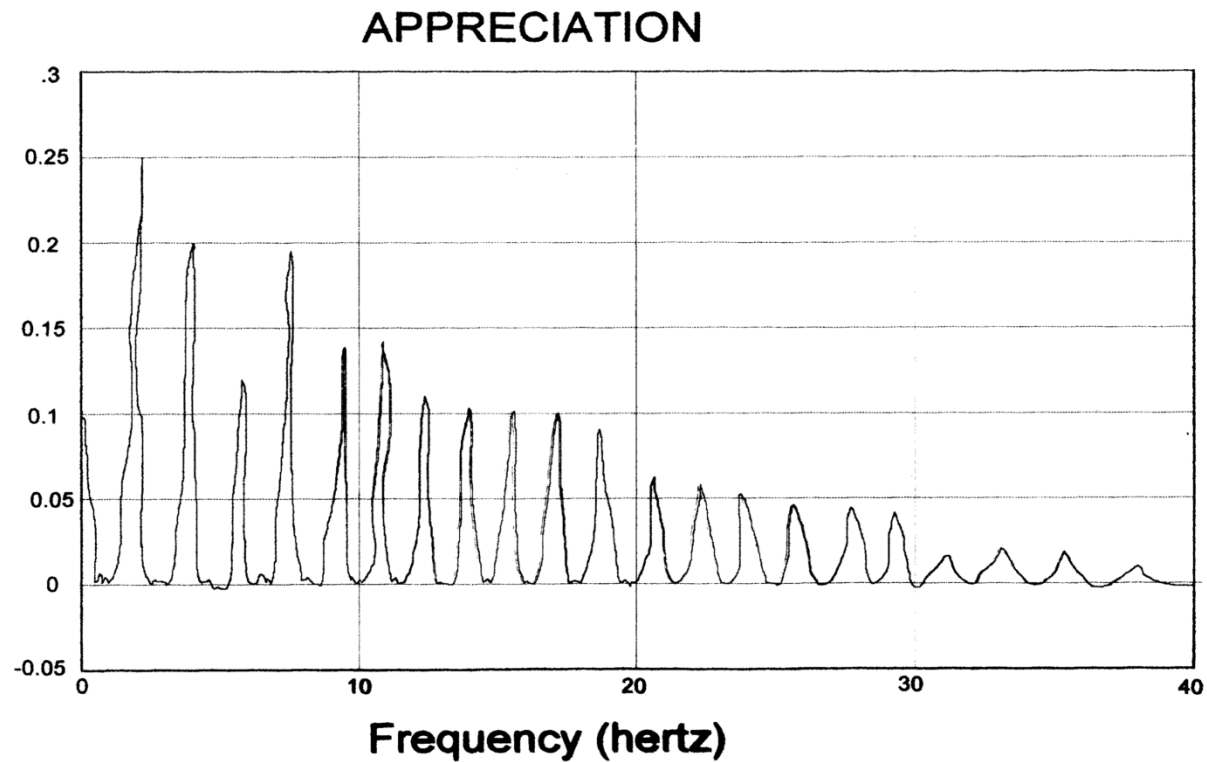


Erratic electrical wave patterns



ECG: Incoherent Spectrum

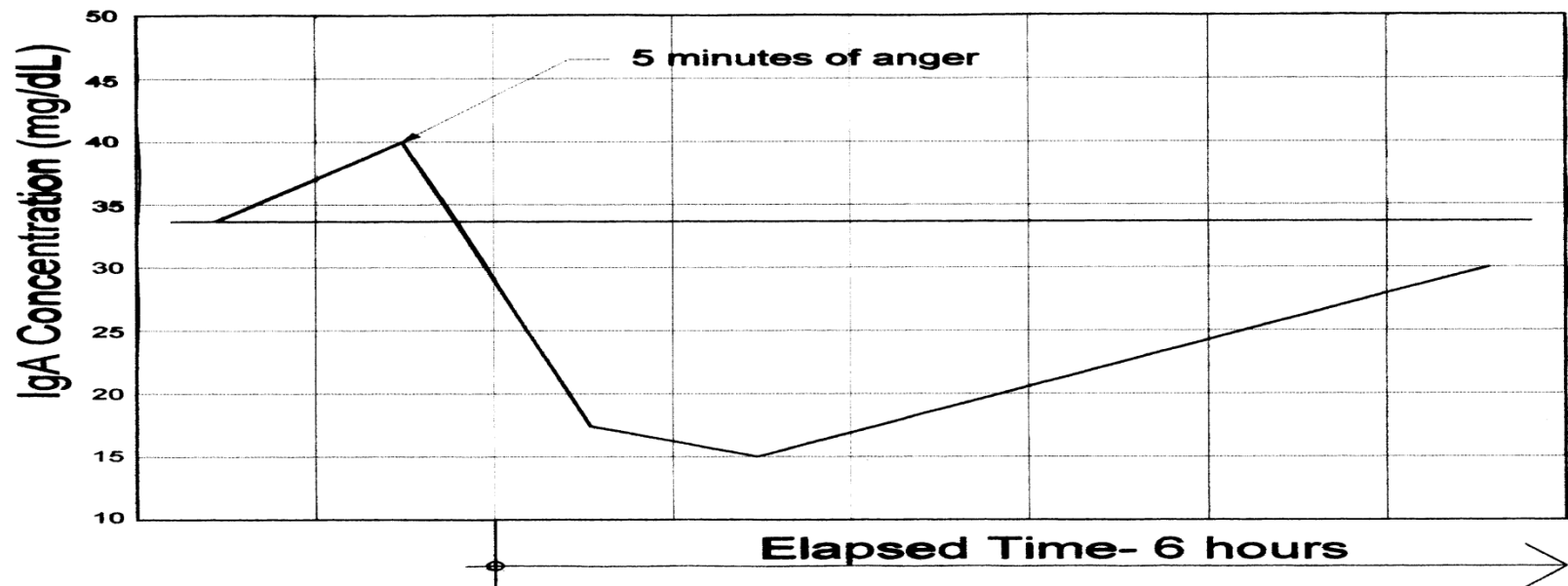
Harmonious electrical wave patterns



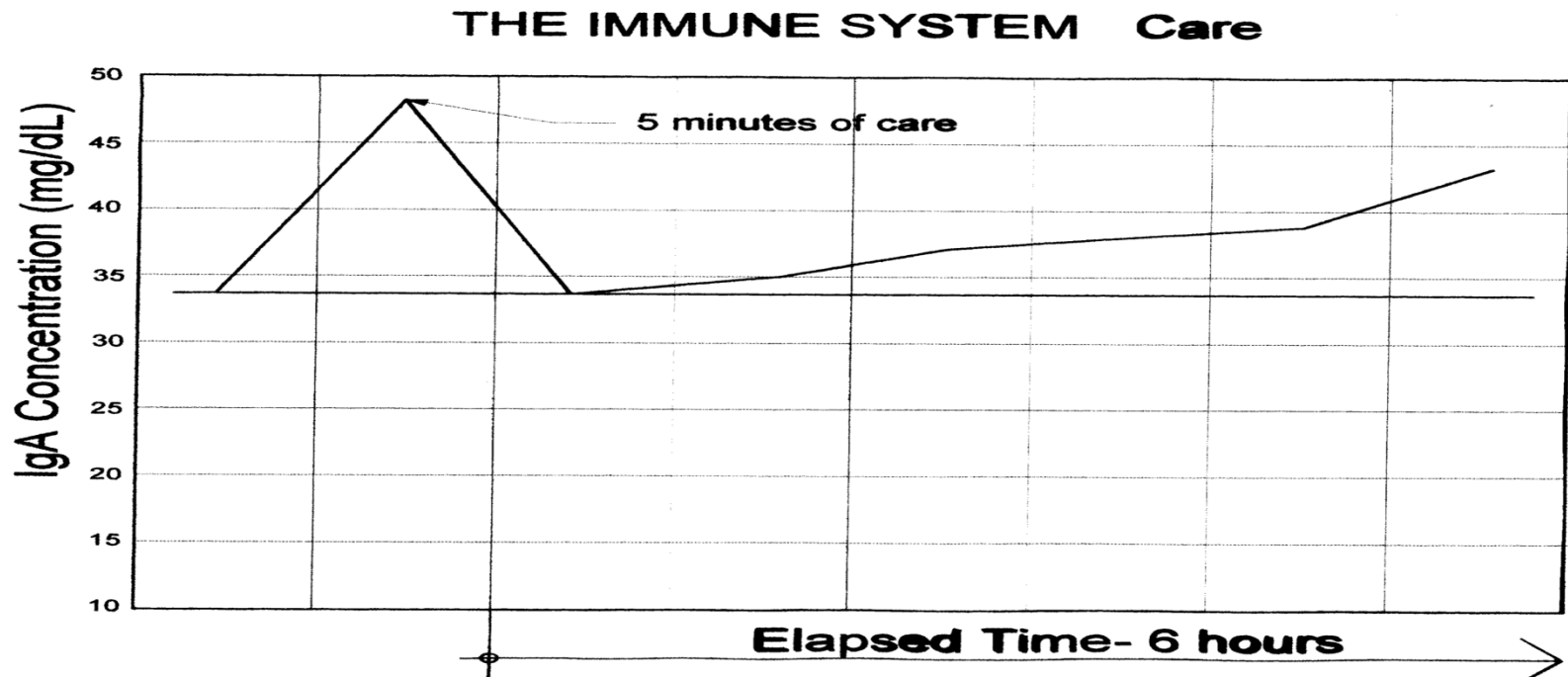
ECG: Coherent Spectrum

IgA levels after recalling feelings of anger

THE IMMUNE SYSTEM Anger



IgA levels after recalling feelings of care



When you experience (or recall) positive emotions such as love, care or appreciation...

- ✓ Your nervous system becomes more balanced and efficient
- ✓ The stress hormones go down, and the anti-aging hormones go up
- ✓ Your immune system becomes stronger
- ✓ Your brain and heart electric waves become synchronized
- ✓ Your heart rate variability (HRV) becomes coherent
- ✓ You have greater access to your cognitive and emotional intelligence and are more likely to make better business decisions.

Breaking into the cycle

Breaking into the cycle

physiology
behaviours
thoughts
emotions



Rewire the circuitry

- ✓ Shift your attention away from thoughts about the negative situation or person, by bringing attention into the plexus of the heart-brain region. It may be useful to imagine breathing into this area.
- ✓ Now recall a time where you experienced feelings of love, caring and appreciation. Recall and re-experience the *feelings*; do not just visualize the situation. Spend a few moments in this experience of appreciation, love and/or caring.

Your situation

On the paper provided, please write a one or two sentence summary of a challenging or “negative situation” you are currently dealing with or have had to deal with in the past.



Common themes

1. Negativity arising from issues regarding change
2. Low morale due to poor or changing lines of communication
3. Difficult/negative manager
4. Management/organization/ decisions perceived as negative
5. Lack of role clarity and boundaries
6. Ineffective team functioning due to triangulation, negativity of some team members, etc.
7. Not letting go of the past
8. The negative individual

Partial stories

- Victim Stories – *“It’s Not My Fault”*
- Villain Stories – *“It’s All Your Fault”*
- Helpless Stories – *“There’s Nothing Else I Can Do”*

From **Crucial Conversations: tools for talking when stakes are high**
By Patterson, Grenny, McMillan and Switzler

More complete stories...

- Turn victims into actors
 - *Am I pretending not to notice my role in this problem?*
- Turn villains into humans
 - *Why would a reasonable, rational, and decent person do what this person is doing?*
- Turn the helpless into the able
 - *What do I really want? For me? For others? For the relationship?*
 - *What would I do right now if I really wanted these results?*

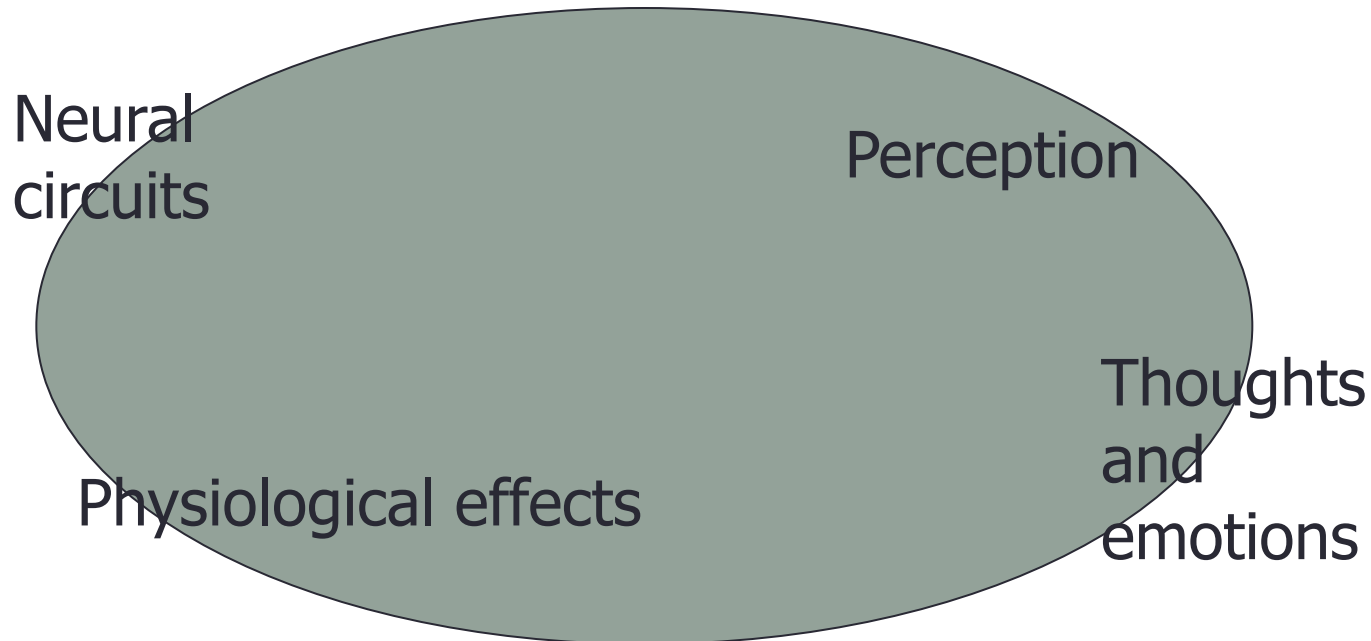
What's my story?

- ✓ What is the story I tell myself about the negative dynamic or person or situation in my organization?
- ✓ What data do I draw on to create this story? Where do I get this information?
- ✓ What assumptions might I be making here?
- ✓ What kinds of feelings do I experience when I tell myself this story?
- ✓ Have I been in a situation before that has given rise to similar feelings?
- ✓ How does telling myself this story help or hinder my ability to deal with the situation effectively?
- ✓ What part do I play in this story?

Skills and tools

- ✓ Asking good questions
- ✓ Co-creative dialogue and authentic communication
- ✓ Effective confrontation
- ✓ Giving and receiving feedback
- ✓ Reframing
- ✓ Collaborative conflict resolution

By changing your perceptions you change your experience of your body and your world:



About intention

Rather than "accepting reality," we see that what we call "reality" is defined by what we choose to see, what we choose to think and talk about, what we choose to act upon. It follows that we have the capacity to *create* the kind of future we desire.



**WHAT DOES A GOOD
QUESTION DO?**

Characteristics of great questions

Great questions are:

- ✓ Stated in the affirmative: build on the assumption that the glass is half full
- ✓ Give a broad definition to the topic. (they give room to swim around)
- ✓ Are presented as invitations to tell stories
- ✓ Convey unconditional positive regard
- ✓ Evoke essential values, aspirations and inspirations.

The Art of the Question

- What's the biggest problem here?
- Why did I have to be born in such a troubled family?
- Why do you blow it so often?
- Why do we still have those problems?

Or

- What possibilities exist that we have not thought about yet?
- What's the smallest change that could make the biggest impact?
- What solutions would have us both win?
- What makes my questions inspiring, energizing and mobilizing?

You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers

You can tell whether he is wise by his questions.

Naguib Nahfouz

The image shows the Chinese characters for 'wisdom' (智) written in a bold, expressive calligraphic style. The character is composed of two parts: '知' (to know) on top and '日' (sun/day) on the bottom, which together mean 'wisdom'.

WISDOM

Notes for telling the truth:

I think I see things differently. Let me describe how.

- **S**hare your facts
 - *Start with the least controversial, most persuasive elements from your path to action*
- **T**ell your story
 - *Explain what you are beginning to conclude*
- **A**sk for others' paths
 - *Encourage others to share both their facts and stories*
- **T**alk tentatively
 - *State your story as a story – don't disguise it as a fact*
- **E**ncourage testing
 - *Make it safe for others to express differing or even opposing view*

**From Crucial Conversations: tools for talking when stakes are high
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Retrace Your Path

- Notice your behavior, take an honest look
- Get in touch with your feelings
- Analyze your stories
- Get back to the facts
- Watch for incomplete stories
 - Victim
 - Villain
 - Helpless
- Tell the rest of the story

Ideas into action

- ✓ Review the common theme your group is working on
- ✓ Brainstorm a list of all the strengths, resources, skills, abilities, etc that you and/or your organization have at your disposal
- ✓ Create a common vision of what it will look like with negativity gone
- ✓ What specifically needs to happen to make this a reality?

A recipe for telling the truth

1. *Create a positive tone and environment*
 - ❖ Express motivation to communicate, invitation
 - ❖ Choose a comfortable meeting place
 - ❖ Choose a convenient time
 - ❖ Eliminate/acknowledge power differential
 - ❖ Listen attentively
 - ❖ Establish ground rules
 - ❖ Be respectful
 - ❖ Keep an open mind

A recipe continued...

2. *Clarifying the Issue*

- ❖ Specify issue (impact of behaviour, concern, values), state point of view
- ❖ Present issues in way that doesn't assign blame (I-statements)
- ❖ Ask for others' points of view
- ❖ Combine issues into an agenda
- ❖ Check with each other for clarity
- ❖ Listen actively to ensure understanding – ask open questions, paraphrase, acknowledge emotions
- ❖ Get agreement on problem definition

A recipe continued

3. *Exploring Common Interests*

- ❖ Give and receive information about what is important and why in relation to the issues
- ❖ Identify goals, beliefs and hopes as well as concerns and fears.
- ❖ State assumptions
- ❖ Present and summarize your interests

A recipe continued

4. *Reaching Resolution*

- ❖ Brainstorm mutually satisfying ways to resolve issue based on interests
- ❖ Evaluate the options
- ❖ Choose an option that works for both parties
- ❖ Form an action plan with time frames for review
- ❖ Decide how to evaluate

Regarding the recipe..

- ✓ Why is this step important?
- ✓ What are some of the challenges you might encounter in this phase?
- ✓ How can you address those potential challenges?

Giving feedback

- ✓ Be immediate if possible (timing should be appropriate)
- ✓ Describe specific behaviours: be specific, concrete, non-judgmental
- ✓ Discuss the effects (on you, on others) (again, be specific and concrete)
- ✓ Specify what you'd like to happen
- ✓ Ask questions to get their side of the story
- ✓ Listen, paraphrase and clarify assumptions
- ✓ Agree to a solution
- ✓ Define follow up

The power of paraphrasing

- ✓ You show the other person that you are really interested
- ✓ You will probably learn something about them you didn't know
- ✓ It exposes your assumptions
- ✓ It generates goodwill and improves your relationship
- ✓ It helps keep you in a neutral place, a place of curiosity
- ✓ It keeps defensiveness at bay (because you're choosing to stay curious and neutral)