

B. INTERPERSONAL NEUROBIOLOGY

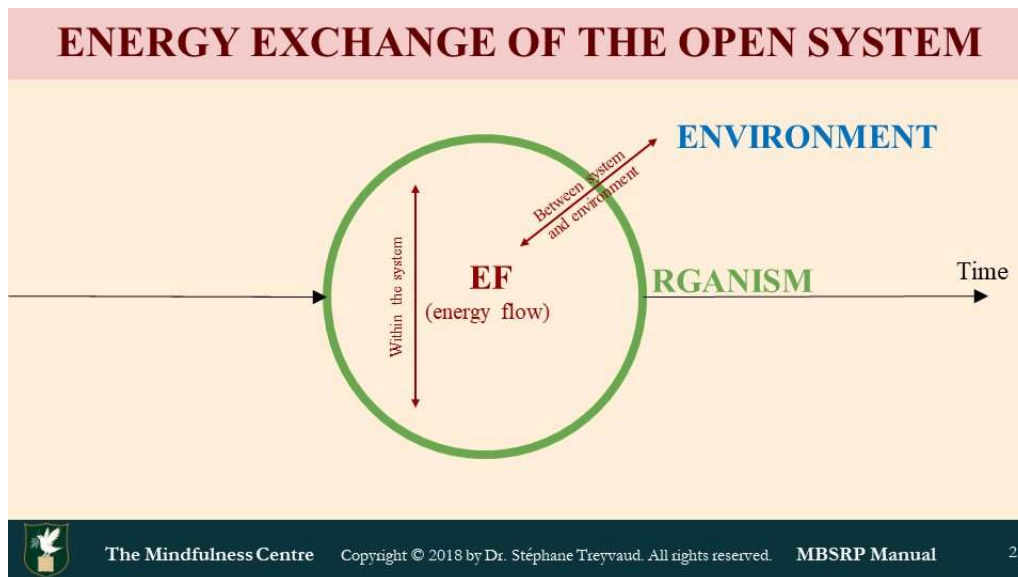
1. OPEN COMPLEX SYSTEMS

Energy flows into and out of many different patterns (session 2). One of these patterns is the human organism, which can be said to be an open complex system.

There are many different open complex systems, and human beings are one example of them. Let's explore what an open complex system is (not so scary as it sounds!). To do that we examine what 'open', 'complex' and 'system' mean.

A *system* is an entity made of parts that interact with each other. A clock, a city, an orchestra, our organism as human beings are all systems. As a whole the system has characteristics that cannot be found in the individual parts. For example, a clock shows the time, but none of its parts do so.

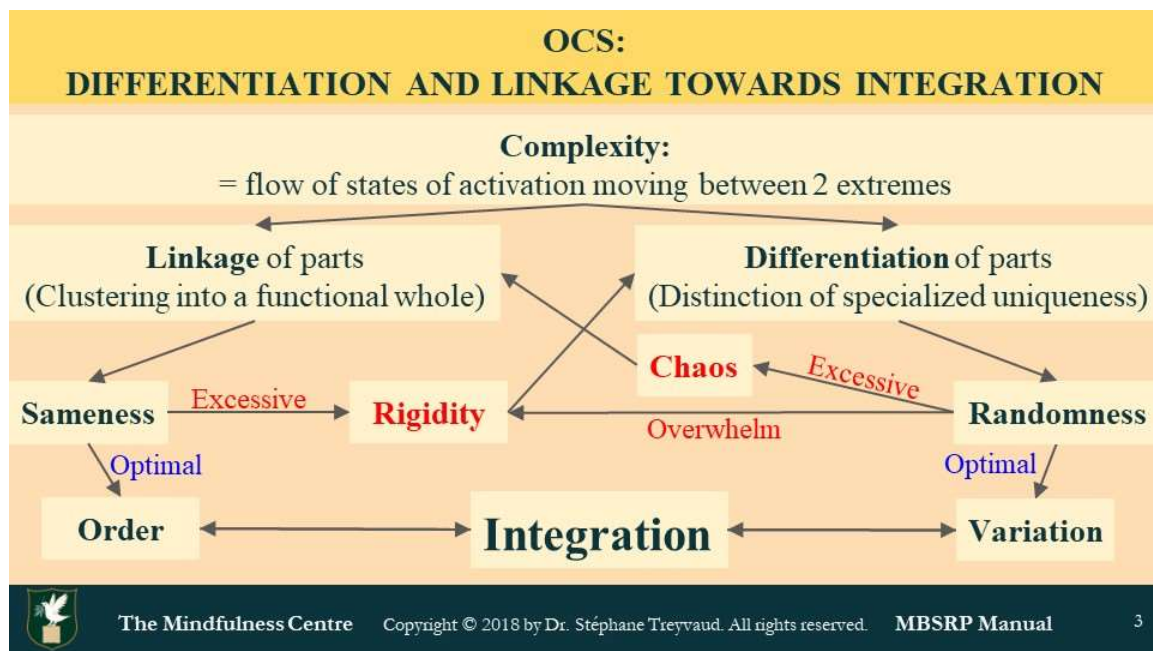
An *open* system means that the system takes energy in from the environment and gives energy out to the environment. We eat food we take from the environment and secrete urine and feces back into the environment.



This was the easy part to explain. It is a bit more difficult to explain the *complex* aspect of a system.

Complexity has a few aspects:

1. **Differentiation and linkage:** In order for the system to function well, the parts need to interact well with each other. What does ‘well’ mean? Take yourself as an example: As a system you have parts called organs. They have to function together so that they can each perform their own individual function, yet also be in constant interaction with each other. In other words, they have to be at once separate, different and distinct, and also connected and linked. They have to be on one hand differentiated, which means that these parts (in our case organs) retain their distinction of specialized uniqueness (the liver is uniquely different from the heart), on the other hand they also have to be linked, meaning that they cluster into a functional whole (they work together like dancers dance together). With regards to energy flow in an open complex system in general, the differentiation of its parts represents the way energy can flow randomly, their linkage the way it can flow in similar ways. In other words, under optimal circumstances, the energy flow’s tendency to become random brings variations into the system, while its tendency to flow similarly brings order. A good balance between the two means the system is integrated and healthy.



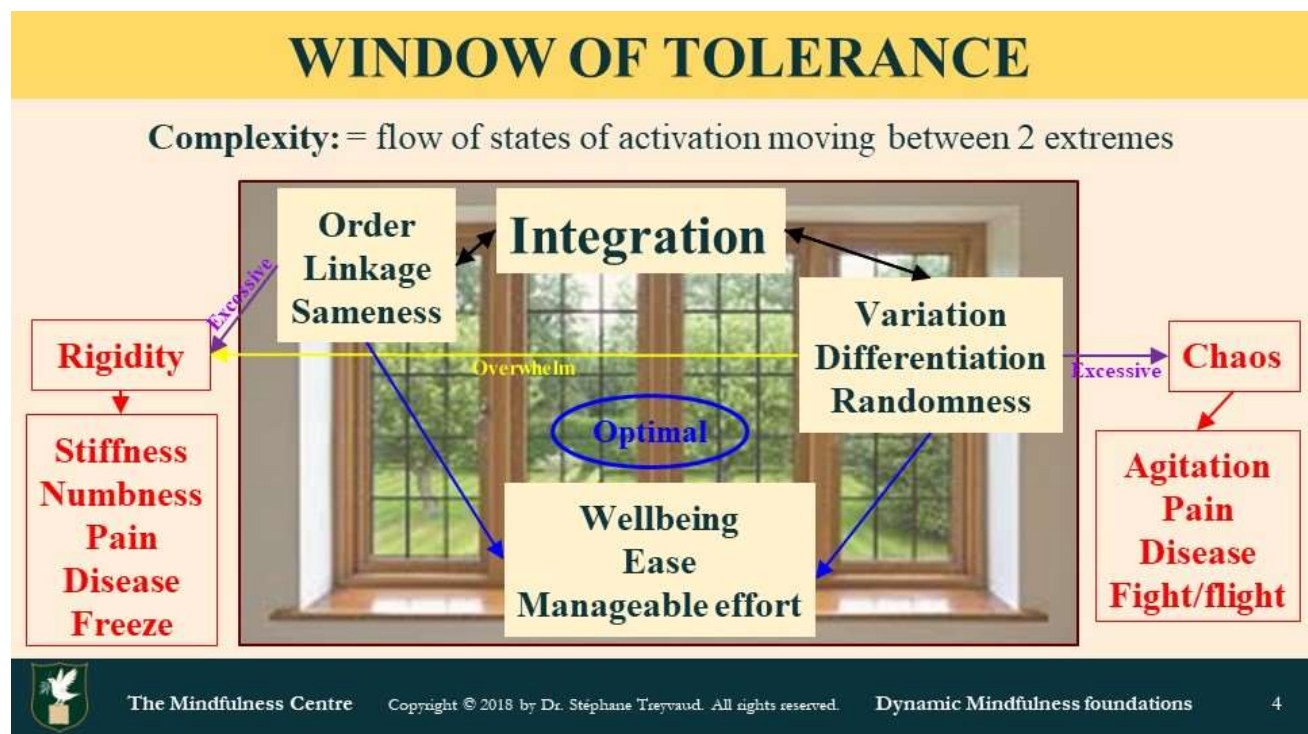
Sometimes the system’s energy flow loses its balance. Its randomness or sameness become excessive. If too random, it becomes chaotic, if too similar, rigid. Overwhelming randomness can also lead to rigidity. Sometimes, when a system gets stuck in chaos, rigidity or a combination of both, over time it becomes diseased. Often, however, it will try to correct that imbalance by bringing more differentiation and randomness into rigidity or more linkage and sameness into chaos, thus restoring its balance.

There has to be a balance between differentiation and linkage of its parts for the system to become **integrated** and function properly. Applied to yourself as an organism, when there is

such an integrated balance, you experience it as wellbeing, which in medicine may manifest as health. Alternatively, if there is too much linkage between certain parts, there is rigidity (ex. depression, sclerosis), and when there is too much differentiation, chaos (ex. anxiety, inflammation). All medical and psychological conditions or diseases can thus be described as energy flow between certain parts of your organism that have become either too rigid, too chaotic or both.

Differentiation + linkage = integration.
Integration means wellbeing and health.

This has **practical relevance** and a **practical application** in the way we manage our energy flow, not only during formal practice, but also in everyday life in general. When there is integration with balanced, or at least not excessive differentiation and linkage, our energy flow is within the safety of the window of tolerance as we explained in session 2 (illustration #2 in ch. 2.A.2.). We find ourselves in the green or orange light zone. If chaos and rigidity arise, we enter the red light zone. The following illustration combines the process of differentiation and linkage of an open complex system with the notion of the window of tolerance.



2. **Emergence:** The whole system of interconnected parts exhibits properties that are not obvious from the properties of the individual parts. Let's take the example of an orchestra: The symphony you hear cannot be heard by listening to any single player alone. It is only the sum of all these players playing together that allows the symphony to emerge. Every player is a differentiated part of the whole system, linked together with all other players to form the orchestra that gives rise to the symphony. No organ in itself has any of the properties that you have as a human being, but put together in this complex way, the sum of all these organs in the form of a whole organism gives rise to all the properties of a human being.

Emergence means
 (1) that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and
 (2) the interactions of the system's parts yield something new not present in the parts.

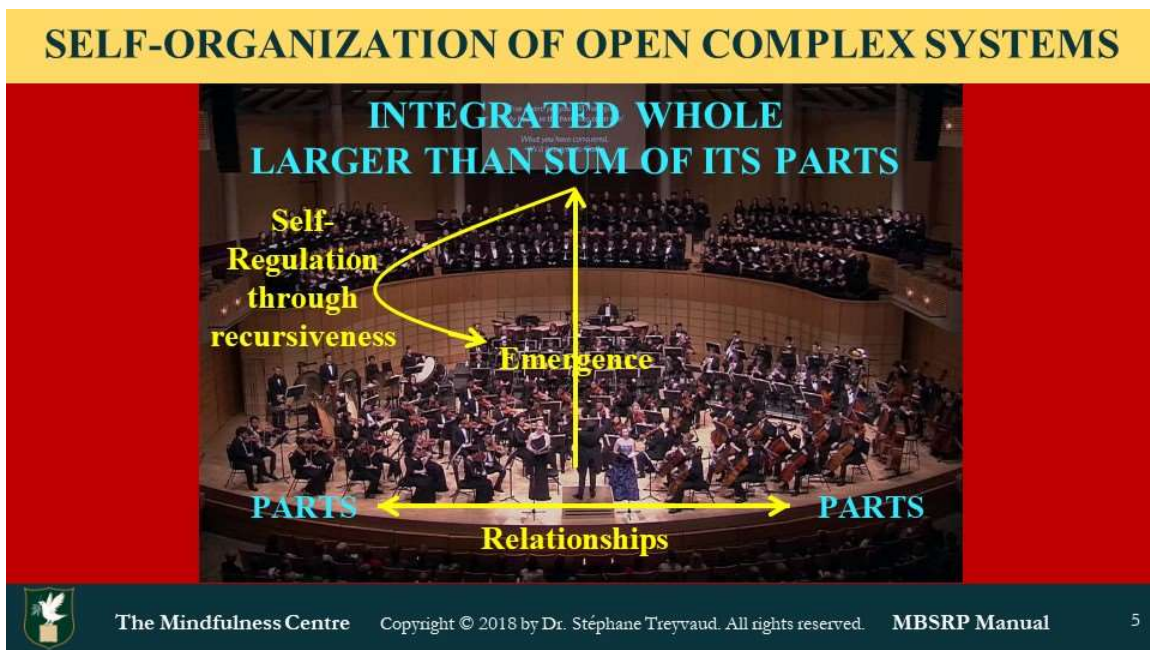
In other words, complex systems are energy flow organizations, in which differentiated parts link together to form a whole, the characteristics of which are not found in the individual parts. **The whole is greater than the sum of its parts** and the **interactions of the system's parts yield something new not present in the parts**.

3. **Recursiveness:** Take the Toronto Tafelmusik ensemble, which most of the time plays without a director. While the orchestra plays, every player listens to the music that is being created in the moment, immediately adjusting their play in accordance with what they hear as they play. The players create music and the music they create gets immediately evaluated by the players, who then adapt their playing in accordance with what they just heard being created. In other words, as the system creates, what it creates recursively affects the very process of creation itself. This means that **complex systems simultaneously create and consolidate themselves**. What the system produces immediately gives feedback to the system, which modifies its production according to the feedback.

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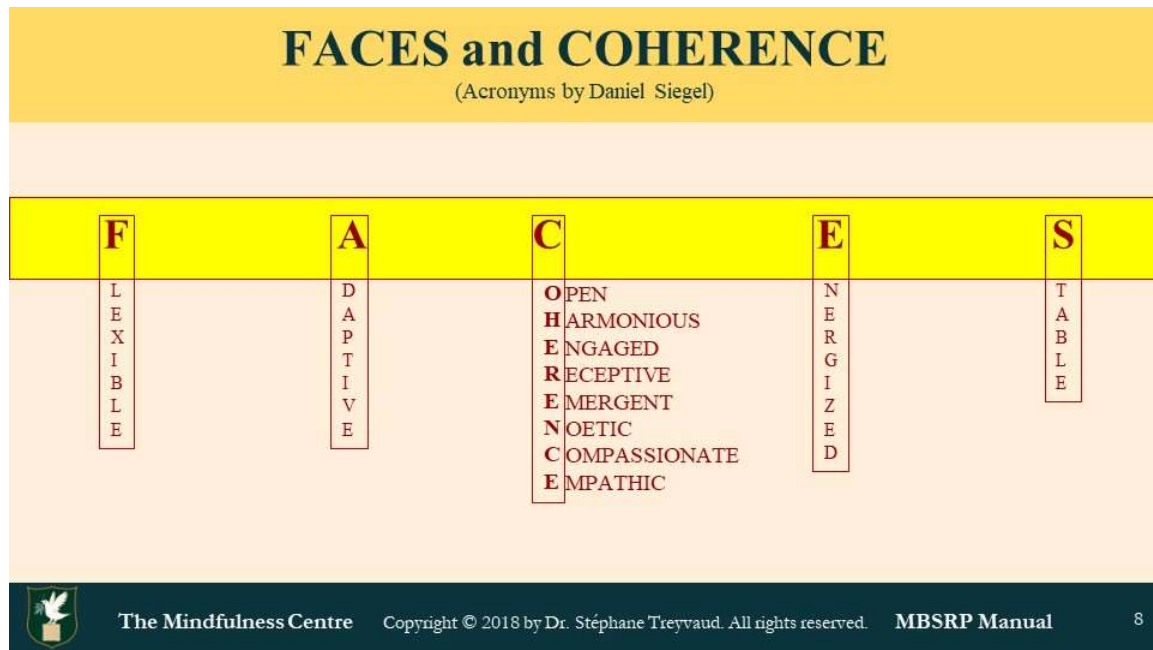
4. **Self-organization and self-regulation:** Because of the recursive process described above, open complex systems are self-organizing and self-regulating. As the example of Tafelmusik shows, there is no director directing the orchestra. It is the quality of relationships between the players that organizes the whole system. This is the same with us: Our organism organizes itself for optimal survival through the interaction of its differentiated parts, not through some kind of central entity that controls the system. We find the same phenomenon in murmuration, those bird swarms we see in the fall. There is no ‘chief bird’ leading the swarm. The way the swarm dances through the sky is determined by the distance between every single bird of the swarm. The system shapes its own unfolding. There is no programmer, no program, no outside force governing how the system will flow across time. **There is only a web without a weaver.** Self-organization and -regulation emerge from the interactions among the basic elements that comprise the system.

Self-organization and -regulation means that our organism organizes itself for optimal survival through the interaction of its differentiated parts, not through some kind of central authority that controls the system. There is only a web without a weaver.



5. **Non-linearity:** This means that **small changes in one component of the system can lead to large changes in the whole system.** Small inputs into the system can result in large unpredictable outputs and behaviours of the system. Complex systems are capable of becoming rigid or chaotic in flash. On the negative side, a small trigger like a toothpaste lid that hasn't been put back on the tube can lead to a major emotional meltdown

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2. THE NINE DOMAINS OF INTEGRATION

At the risk of simplifying a tad too much, we can say that the brain contains nine neurocircuitry clusters that require integration to create health and wellbeing. These nine clusters are called **domains of integration**. We can only fully feel well and healthy, and our suffering can only then reach minimal levels, if all nine domains are integrated. Lack of integration in any of these domains manifests as either chaos or rigidity, and will cause some form of discomfort, illness or suffering. We approach integrating these domains by looking at what domains in a person's life have rigidity or chaos, and then we proceed with the required differentiation and linkage in those domain aspects where rigidity and chaos is identified.

Every domain has its underlying mechanism, which we will briefly discuss. If chaos and/or rigidity are dominant in a certain domain, certain interventions are available that are domain-specific and beyond the scope of this program to be discussed. However, always remember that in a fundamentally generic way mindfulness meditation practice is exactly about what non-integrated, chaotic or rigid domains need – differentiation and linkage of their energy flow. We differentiate with attention and link with COAL. By faithfully following the techniques of practice, you will thus automatically integrate most of the nine domains.

Human beings live in two worlds, the world of process and direct, non-verbal experience, and the world of content and virtual, verbal narratives. The nine domains span the spectrum of both these worlds, and therefore require mindful examination of both. Meditation is a technique that examines the first of these two worlds; to address the second, other techniques that focus on the content of our stories are necessary. Psychotherapy is one of those content-focused techniques.

2.1. Consciousness Integration – Simple and Complex Self

Bringing mindful awareness to all our subjective experiences, which means gaining *clarity* about *what* exactly we experience and *orienting* ourselves in the *complex landscape of all possible experiences*, is the first step to take as we integrate the first domain, the **domain of consciousness**. **Consciousness integration is the gateway to all other domains of integration.**

Consciousness integration is about differentiating and linking the different elements of experience as depicted in the **Wheel of Awareness** (session 2). We learn to differentiate rim elements from one another (the known of the 8 senses) and from the hub (the knowing of awareness itself), and also attention (= focused awareness) from awareness itself, so that they then can be linked by holding it all in awareness.

In living our lives, we experience life and act in a world. We go to school, shop, fix things, eat and much more. We have a choice of two ways we can be and act in the world. We can either just experience life as we act – what most people do all the time as they live on autopilot. Or we can observe our experiences as we experience life and act in the world, which requires mindfulness. In other words, we can either be a character in a play, or the actor who observes being a character in a play.

Our **sense of self** may be **rigid, limited and cohesive**, or it can be **flexible, open and complex**. If limited, we go about the business of living without reflection and awareness. If complex, our sense of self is double-layered with an **observing** and **experiencing self**. In this case, we are able to observe, reflect and bring awareness to life's unfolding experience, allowing us the space to make more skillful choices. The limited self is said to be **identified** with experience, meaning that we have little or no awareness of how we live – we take our experience to be reality itself without realizing that we have constructed it. This results in a lack of ability to choose. The complex self is **disidentified**, meaning that we are able to observe and become aware of how we live – we realize that experience is an internal construction we can chose to relate to in different ways. This gives us the freedom to discern what is going on and make other choices than what the conditioned self would automatically do.

LIMITED AND COMPLEX SELF	
Limited self	Complex self
Single-layered: Experiencing = observing self.	Double-layered: Experiencing + observing self.
Experiencing self lives without anyone aware.	Observing self aware of what experiencing self lives.
Experiencing life as we act.	Observe experience while experiencing life as we act.
Character in a play.	Actor observing being character in a play.
Know what we do without knowing that we know we do.	Know what we do while knowing that we know we do.
Identified with experience .	Disidentified from experience.
We live what we live without knowing we live what we live.	We observe while we live what we live.
No ability to chose. The experiencing self is on autopilot.	Freedom to discern what is going on and open up a wide range of choices versus autopilot mode.



Mindfulness practice causes us to disidentify from experience through consciousness integration. In other words, mental activity no longer continuously sweeps you up, but you can live within the spaciousness of the integrated state of being aware of awareness, realizing that mental experiences are not you. This gives this incredible opportunity to focus attention to change brain function. Instead of being a passive rider along whatever your nervous system is doing, you can use your mind to change the function first, and then the structure of your brain.

CONSCIOUSNESS INTEGRATION

Consciousness integration involves differentiating the knowing from the known, allowing for a fuller sense of identity and freedom of choice through discernment.

Executive
functions and
awareness




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2.2. Vertical Integration

Vertical integration means using interoception (see session 2, B 2.3.) to first differentiate, then link all layers of neuroprocessing up from the body to the brainstem, the limbic area, the cortex and the MPC. The focus is on how input from the body is brought up through the spinal cord and the bloodstream into the brainstem, limbic areas, cortex and MPC to form a vertically integrated circuit.

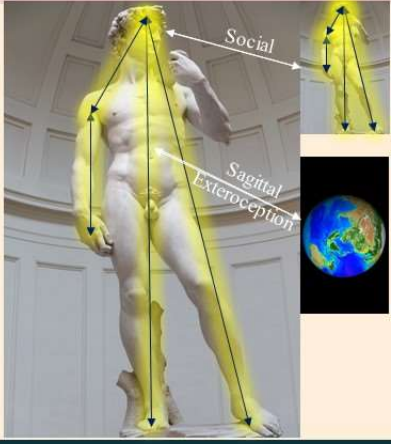
By cultivating an intentional focus of attention on somatic sensations we enable the wisdom of the body to gain access to the mind. In this way we disentangle unresolved losses and cohesive adaptive states that have cut us off from the vitality of being fully immersed in our senses. Consider for example someone who suffers from unexplained anxiety. When attention is brought to the body and its somatic sensations connected to the anxiety, they often discover that what is going on in the body is far more complex than just feeling anxious. Other unexpected sensations emerge, such as throat tightness, nausea, chest vibration, and with that awareness the person begins to cry. At first, the tendency is to feel ashamed and want to resist crying, but when encouraged to let it happen, the person ends up sobbing and able to formulate reasons for this sadness they had not realized before. Astonishingly for the person, the anxiety has now disappeared and been replaced by a vital access to what was previously cut off from awareness.


Bodily states directly shape our moods and feelings, which all interact to influence our reasoning and decision-making. Adverse reactions to our own bodily inputs or trying to avoid awareness of them, leads to a restricted access of the hub to any points on the rim. In such a non-integrated state, the individual is susceptible to patterns of rigidity or outbursts of chaos, far from the FACES energy flow of wellbeing.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Vertical integration harmonizes EIF from top (MPC) to bottom (soma) and from inside (interoception) to outside (social) through all levels of neuroprocessing, ensuring access to our embodied nature.

Embodiment




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2.3. Horizontal (Bilateral) Integration

Horizontal or bilateral integration is about left-right brain integration. These two hemispheres are very different and construct very different realities for us. It is therefore important to learn to differentiate the two, in order to make the differentiated elements available to new linkage. Like in vertical integration with its hierarchical asymmetry making the body more fundamental than cognition, we have a left/right brain asymmetry, too. The two worlds they construct are not different ways of thinking about the world, but different ways of *being in* the world.

Here are a few differences between the right and the left brain. The right hemisphere is the first to develop in childhood, the left one develops later. The left hemisphere is logical and processes cause-effect relationships. It thinks linearly, linguistically, literally, and makes lists (all Ls). The right hemisphere is holistic rather than linear, metaphoric rather than literal, non-verbal rather than linguistic, and visual-spatial instead of logical. The right brain is directly connected to the body and directly *presents* unfettered reality in its varied uniqueness, while the left brain is only connected to the right brain and uses right brain information to create concepts *about* it; it creates a virtual reality *about* reality by *re-presenting* it. The left brain analyzes the whole and sees parts, while the right brain takes in the whole and sees context. The left brain is the performance brain, the right brain the relationship brain. Autobiographical memory (the way we remember our life's story) and the ability to modulate stress are located in the right brain. **Reading, writing and arithmetic (rrr)** are the domain of the left brain and should therefore be

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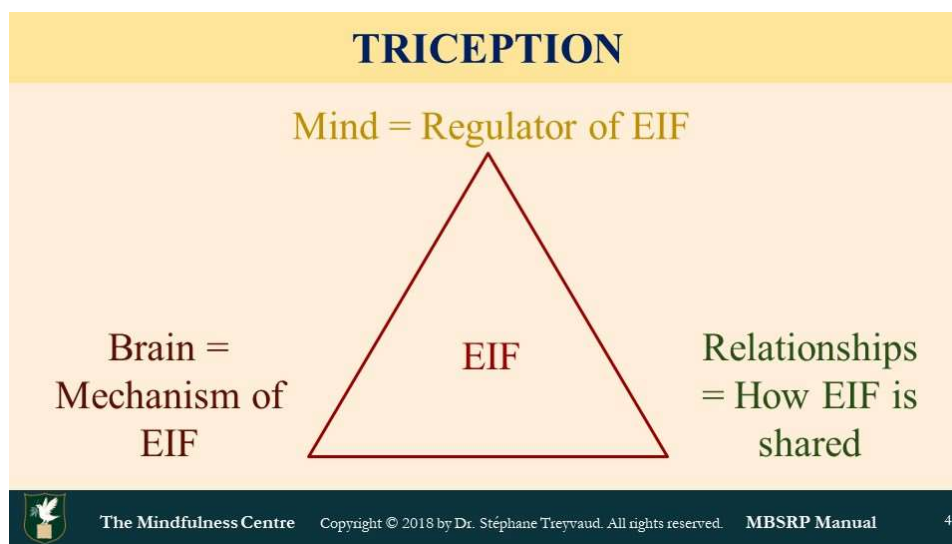
1. TRICEPTION² - THE TRIANGLE OF ENERGY AND INFORMATION FLOW

1.1. Three Irreducible, Bi-Directionally Correlated Dimensions – One Reality

Take a coin: It has three surfaces: head, tail and the rim. You can describe each surface separately, but in the end, no surface is more fundamental than any other, none can be left out and none can be reduced to anything simpler. Each surface is thus irreducible. In addition, all three surfaces are the inseparable sides of the same coin.

In trying to understand the energy and information flow of being human, Daniel Siegel came up with an analogous metaphor, the **triangle of triception**, which has three, yet irreducible and bi-directionally correlated dimensions. This model is widely accepted among scientists and provides a **functional, scientific and objective definition** of what it means to be human from an energetic point of view. In addition, **triception is not just a concept, but as the word says, a way of directly experiencing and sensing the organism that we are as three different dimensions.**

In us humans, energy and information flows in three dimensions. These dimensions are irreducible, meaning that none is more fundamental than the other, none can be left out to understand who we are, and none can be parsed further into smaller entities, or reduced to anything else. These dimensions are bidirectionally correlated, which means that the energy flow in each dimension is an expression of the energy flow in any of the other two dimensions, just manifesting differently. The **triangle** of these three dimensions is the triangle of **brain**, the **mechanism** by which energy and information flows, **mind**, the **regulator** of EIF, and **relationships**, the way EIF is **shared**.



It is important not to be reductionistic about any of these three dimensions and assume that any one of them is more fundamental than the other. These three dimensions are interdependent with each other and influence each other back and forth in all directions. This is what we mean by saying that they are bi-directionally correlated and associated. They are all interconnected as one system of EIF. The slightest change in one dimension will cause changes in the other two dimensions. Said differently, brain, mind and relations are different aspects of *one single reality*, not different domains or separate dimensions of reality. **The ability to sense and track EIF through this triangle of mind, brain and relations is called triception.**

1.2. The Three Dimensions of Triception

1.2.1. Brain

Recall the fun facts about the brain in session 1. We mainly concentrate on the neurons, because we know most about how they function, but we need to remember that the brain has ten times as many glia cells³, which are a fascinating bunch of different kinds of cells we are only now beginning to understand more deeply. Here is a slide summarizing their various roles.

**THE AMAZING GLIA –
10x as many (1 trillion) as neurons (100 billion)**

- ❖ Build the brain of the fetus
- ❖ Direct the connection of its growing axons (long body of neuron) to wire up the nervous system
- ❖ Repair the nervous system after it is injured
- ❖ Sense impulses crackling through axons and hear synapses speaking
- ❖ Control the signals neurons use to communicate with one another at synapses
- ❖ Provide the energy source and substrates for neurotransmitters to neurons
- ❖ Couple large areas of synapses and neurons into functional groups
- ❖ Integrate and propagate the information they receive from neurons through their own private network
- ❖ Release neurotoxic or neuroprotective factors,
- ❖ Plug and unplug synapses
- ❖ Move themselves in and out of the synaptic cleft
- ❖ Give birth to new neurons (stem cells)
- ❖ Communicate with the vascular and immune systems
- ❖ Insulate the neuronal lines of communication (myelin), and
- ❖ Control the speed of impulse traffic through them.


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The brain is also closely connected to other associated energy systems such as the nitric oxide (NO)⁴, immune and other systems in the body.

The one reality is the reality of energy flow. ‘Flow’ happens across time and creates patterns. One of these pattern clusters is the physical body. The brain and the complex network of neurons in the brain is part of the body. Energy flowing in the form of our body, and more

specifically in the form of electrochemical impulses through the complex network of neurons in the brain, can sometimes create energy swirls that have symbolic meaning, our thoughts we call ‘information’. **The brain is thus the somatic, objectively measurable and quantifiable, physiological mechanism by which energy and information flow. It is also an open complex system and the first of the three dimensions of triception and who we are as EIF.**

‘Brain’ means neural connections in the whole body and their complex firing patterns. We could indeed say ‘body’, since the brain does not exist in a vacuum¹. Developmentally the brain and nervous system evolve from the surface skin cells of the embryo and have the same function cell membranes (mem-brain), that is the regulation of the relationship between the organism and its environment. The brain is responsible for our capacity to be aware of subjective experience. What is experience? In neurological brain terms, **experience is the activation of neural firing in response to a stimulus**. Every single experience you have is correlated with neurofirings in your brain. As we have internal and external experiences throughout life, neurons form synaptic connections with one another through the flow of energy they carry in the form of electrochemical firings. That ability of the brain to rewire itself throughout the life span is called ‘**neuroplasticity**’, which entails **synaptogenesis, myelinogenesis, neurogenesis and epigenesis (gene expression)**. While our genetic inheritance directs overall brain organization, it is **experience that influences how and when which genes become expressed**. This is the reason why creating wholesome experiences in the form of mindful living is so important.

NEUROPLASTICITY		
Type	Details	Development time
Synaptogenesis	New synapses get created through neural activity.	Instantaneously or minutes to hours.
Myelinogenesis	Glia raps neuron’s axon in myelin (fatty substance) – increases speed of neural conductivity by 3000 times.	10 years, 10,000 hours of practice to develop expertise.
Neurogenesis	Glia stem cells differentiate into new neurons.	Every 24 hours, then takes 6-8 weeks & up to 3 months to full cell maturity.
Epigenesis	Cell proteins, enzymes and metabolism change and influence gene expression – hereditary.	?

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¹ Put a human brain in a dolphin’s body and you would have none of the incredible creativity humans are capable of, because that dolphin body does not allow for the fine manipulation of objects and adaptability to different environments the human body allows.

A. THE TECHNIQUE OF DYNAMIC MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

1. THE BREATH IN SITTING MEDITATION

In the last session we started to introduce **sitting meditation** by focusing on the first principle of paying attention on **alignment**. We are now going to introduce the second principle to attend to in sitting meditation, the **breath**.

1.1. Sitting With The Breath Meditation Instructions

The instructions move from the periphery to the core of the breathing process and are designed to get you closer and closer to the essence of the breath, from which much mindful wisdom can be learned. We will explore the five steps of the Dynamic Mindfulness system's attention on the breath.

- 1.1.1. **Breath acknowledgement:** We often forget that we are breathing, and this step reminds us to become aware of the breath and realize we are breathing. There is a first acknowledgement of the **breath's** existence as an **entity** or **noun** (breath).
- 1.1.2. **Breath immersion:** A closer look at the breath reveals its flowing nature. We intensify our attention to follow the **breathing process** from moment to moment, from its very beginning to its very end, realizing that the breath is not just an entity or noun, but indeed a **process** or **verb** (breathing).
- 1.1.3. **Breath differentiation:** Now being as close to the breathing process as we are, we realize that there are three different phases with three different experience qualities: The inbreath, experienced as a receiving, expanding and activating; the outbreath, experienced as a releasing, calming and grounding; and the longer pause at the end of the outbreath, experienced as a surrendering, dissolving and resting. We have to learn to differentiate these three phases clearly by feeling them directly in the body. The reason for these different breathing qualities lies in the accompanying autonomic system involvement, sympathetic arousal ('Caffeine shot') breathing in, parasympathetic arousal ('Valium shot') breathing out and deepening of the parasympathetic arousal in the pause.
Some people may not be able to experience these subtleties right away. This is not cause to worry. Simply notice what you DO feel, keeping these subtleties in the back of your mind.
- 1.1.4. **Breath generalization:** As we begin to explore the boundaries of breathing, we discover that there are none. Breathing does not only occur in the belly and chest, but it affects the whole body. This is not surprising, given that the autonomic nervous system is distributed throughout the body. We notice that all subjective experiences

of the rim through all the four quadrants (including thought patterns) are affected by the breathing rhythm, appearing differently in the outbreath, inbreath or pause. The metaphor of a ship at sea may help to clarify. No matter how concentrated you may be on any activity on a ship at sea, the waves move you constantly and there is no escape from it. No matter what you do and how you look, everything inescapably always moves with the waves. The same with breathing, that incessantly and inescapably moves the whole body and mind, no matter how we observe.

- 1.1.5. Breath non-interference:** In this step we bring awareness to the fact that breathing is effortless if we learn not to interfere, and that ‘it’ breathes all by itself without us having to actively participate. Breathing out takes no effort, because it is a muscle release downwards into the earth with the force of gravity. The pause takes no effort, because nothing needs to happen. Breathing in takes no effort, because it is triggered by an automatic neurological brain impulse that makes it happen without our participation. Allow the inbreath to arise in its own time while you rest in the pause. We can practice profound non-interference and getting out of our own way.

BREATH AWARENESS IN DETAIL			
STEP	INSTRUCTION	DESCRIPTION	COMMENTS
1. Breath acknowledgement	Breathing in, I am aware of the inbreath; breathing out, I am aware of the outbreath	Breath as object and noun.	Relatively superficial attention.
2. Breath immersion	Breathing in, I am aware of the inbreath from the very beginning to the very end; breathing out, I am aware of the outbreath from the very beginning to the very end.	Breathing as process and verb.	Intensifies the attentional focus to becoming sharper.
3. Breath differentiation	Feel the three qualities of the breath: Inbreath: Receiving, expanding, activating Outbreath: Releasing, grounding, calming Pause: Surrendering, dissolving, resting	Breathing as massage.	Sympathetic (inbreath) and parasympathetic (outbreath) arousals make for three very different in-, outbreath and pause experiences.
4. Breath generalization	Whatever rim experiences you focus on, notice how differently they appear in the inbreath, outbreath or pause.	Ship at sea metaphor.	Sympathetic and parasympathetic arousals affecting the whole body. All subjective experiences are affected by and change with the breathing cycle.
5. Breath non-interference	Breath flows effortlessly by itself, outbreath falling with gravity, pause inert, inbreath arising with autonomic impulse. Get out of your own way.	Breath comes and goes all by itself. It (not you) breathes.	You never have to take a breath – it breathes all by itself.



1.2. General Considerations About The Breath

1.2.1. The Whole Organism Breathes

Where we experience the breath may seem obvious at first: the chest muscles and the diaphragm collaborate in the breathing movement and we feel the breath in the region of the upper abdomen, the chest and/or the nostrils. So far so good, particularly for beginners, whose

awareness is limited by years of habitual contraction and stress. But the situation is more complex than that.

Where does the breathing impulse come from? Breathing is regulated by the brain, both involuntarily and voluntarily. This means that I, my entire self, and it, my body, breathe! Where do we experience the breathing cycle? Not only in the belly and chest, but also in the nose as the air flows past the nostrils, and with experience, we discover that indeed the whole body moves ever so slightly with every breathing movement. Throughout the whole body, sensations and perceptions are influenced and modified by the breathing cycle. With breathing the whole body moves and is affected by the state of blood oxygenation that depends on breathing. These movements also affect our background emotional state, which is distinctly different during the three phases of the breath, outbreath, pause and inbreath. The ebb and flow of background emotions affect our intellect, the movie-in-the-brain, which means that in summary, we come to the conclusion that the organism that we are breathes as a whole.

In concentrating on breathing, we are automatically challenged to consider the paradox that in focusing we are looking at a whole body experience that reaches beyond the focus of concentration.

1.2.2. Why We Work With The Breath

There are several reasons why the breath is so central to the practice of mindfulness:

1. **Breath is life.** You could think of the breath as being like a thread or a chain that links and connects all the events of your life from birth, the beginning, to death, the end. The breath is always there every moment, moving by itself like a river.
2. **The breath moves with the autonomic nervous system.** By differentiating between inbreath and outbreath we harmonize the interplay between sympathetic and parasympathetic arousal towards integration.
3. **The breath takes place in the present.** Focusing attention on it facilitates entering into direct experience and letting go of the extensive past and future.
4. **It is always there, always available** for focus as a marker of one's emotional state.
5. The act of intentionally bringing awareness to the breath involves **'taking up space' in the same limited capacity channel** that has been filled with ruminative thought. The fact that the breath is a 'moving target' of attention that requires some effort to maintain attention on underscores its power to 'take space' away from the already powerful ruminations. Although this is not the eventual aim, it can provide a temporary substitute for (or a distraction from) ruminative thinking.
6. Attention to the breath involves attending to something that is **the opposite of goal orientation**. In other words, it inspires us to embody this open, non-goal-oriented attitude in our daily lives. Also, breath observation is about simplicity itself, and in one's emotional life, attention to the simple can be more effective than analysis of the complex.
7. The simple act of registering that the mind has wandered, noting where it has gone and returning to the breath, involves just the sort of **metacognitive monitoring** – seeing thoughts as thoughts – that promotes the skills of **decentering** that will be needed to prevent escalation of negative thought-affect spirals. This also provides repeated practice in intentionally **disengaging from the doing mode of mind and engaging in the being mode**.

Have you ever noticed how the breath changes with our moods – short and shallow when we are tense or angry, faster when we are excited, slow and full when we are happy, and almost disappearing when we are afraid? And yet, these changes are like the waves on the surface of the ocean. Beneath the movement, the turmoil or changing patterns of the ocean waves or the breath cycles there is always the calm **depth of the ocean body and the breathing process itself**, no matter how it appears. It is there with us all the time. It can be used as a tool, like an anchor, to bring stability to the body and mind when we deliberately choose to become aware of it. We can tune into it at any moment during everyday life.

With practice, we become more aware of our breathing. We can **use it to direct our awareness to different aspects of our lives**: For example, to relax tense muscles, or focus on a situation that requires attention. The breath can also be used to help deal with pain, anger, relationships or the stress of daily life. During this program, we will be exploring this in great detail.

So remember:

- Appreciate your breath, for without it you can't live!
- Be present with your breath, for it goes on all the time!
- Be moderate in your actions, because if your breath is laboured, you are working too hard!
- Enjoy your breath, since breathing well is living well!
- Surrender to the breath, since breath is life and opens access to its mysteries.


1.3. Door of Avoidance

With attention on the breath we close the door of avoidance of interference. Not allowing what is, to be as it is, constitutes an important mechanism of defense that keeps us away from exploring suffering more deeply.

BREATH AWARENESS - OVERVIEW

1. Breath acknowledgement
2. Breath immersion
3. Breath differentiation
4. Breath generalization
5. Breath non-interference

Door of avoidance: Interference


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C. DAILY PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK FOLLOWING SESSION 6

1. DAILY PRACTICE

Formal practice:

- A. Start by reviewing your tools (attention and COAL) and grounding yourself a few minutes with attention to alignment and breath. Then practice sitting meditation **with allowing and letting be** every day (SabA). Use the recording entitled **S6-Allowing and Letting Be**.
- B. Practice the **3-minute stopping and breathing space – expanded version with allowing and letting be** (3SBS-X1) 3 times a day.
- C. Complete daily the **unpleasant events calendar** (UEC). This is an opportunity to explore the quality of unpleasantness that accompanies and influences the arising of experience. In this practice we come to unpleasant experiences from the opposite angle. Instead of finding out what unpleasant tone is attached to emerging experience, we pick an unpleasant hedonic moment and find out what experiences (somatic sensations, emotions and thoughts) accompany it.

Become really aware of thoughts, feelings and somatic sensations around one unpleasant event each day, while it is occurring. Record as soon as you can, in detail (use the actual words or images in which the thoughts came as if they were spoken aloud) the precise nature and location of bodily sensations.

Notice the danger of wanting to avoid or push away unpleasant experiences in a misguided belief that ignoring them will bring happiness.

Informal practice:

- A. **DO NOT JUST DO THINGS, BUT FEEL THEM.**
- B. Practice the principles of somatic attention during your everyday life.
- C. As often as possible slowdown as you go about your day.
- D. As often as you can remember to STOP with an emphasis on the breath
- E. Choose one new (different from last week) **routine activity** in your daily life (showering, tooth brushing, getting dressed, walking the dog etc.) and every day make a deliberate effort to bring moment-to-moment awareness to it each time you do it, just as we did in the raisin eating exercise. First zero in on knowing what you are doing while you are actually doing it. Second, gently but firmly bring your attention back to the breath and physical sensations (touch, sight, sound, smell and taste) that occur during the respective activity whenever your mind has wandered away to some other place.
- E. As often as possible bring **mindfulness to your eating**. Notice what, how much and how you eat.

2. DAILY PRACTICE RECORD FORM – SESSION 6

Record on the daily practice record form each time you practice. Also, make a note of anything that comes up in the daily practice, so that we can talk about it in the next session.

Day/Date	Practice	Comments
Monday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	
Tuesday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	
Wednesday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	
Thursday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	
Friday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	
Saturday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	
Sunday Date:	SabA 3SBS-X1 3x UEC	