

Appendix 1

Four Levels Of The Brain's Relational Engine

The Joy Switch model is based on the work of Dr. Allan Schore from UCLA in the field of interpersonal neurobiology, which uses regulation theory and attachment theory to show how the relational right hemisphere in the brain is progressively integrated and closely interconnected.

How well the right hemisphere develops largely comes down to the quality of the relationship and interactions with a “bigger brain” early in life. Schore says, “the structure and the function of the mind and brain are shaped by social experiences, especially those involving emotional relationships.”¹ Schore proposes a model of the right hemisphere where the cortical and subcortical areas work together for optimal development and function.²

The brain's relational engine, the “relational circuit,” has four levels which work together so we stay fully engaged, flexible, resilient and relational. While separate systems, these levels work together *as long as we can manage what we feel*. This ability to manage what we feel is our *emotional capacity*. Once we lose our ability to regulate emotions, the relational engine stops working together and quickly becomes disorganized. We can say, the relational circuit is dimmed to varying degrees and will go off. Big emotions bring instability to the relational engine. Our ability to use relational skills is now greatly hindered. We become rigid. Our brain is operating in the restricted state Dr. Jim Wilder calls *Enemy Mode*.³

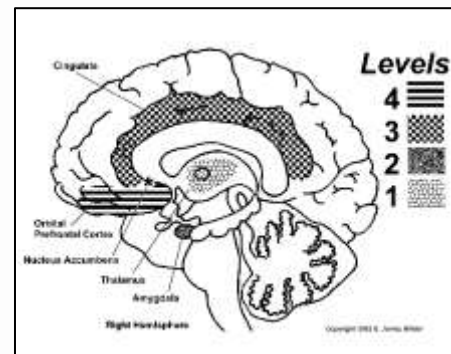
In enemy mode, we amplify negative emotions. We focus on pain and problems. We want to win. Serving our own needs becomes more important than caring for the needs of other people. While *The Joy Switch* book is not the place to dive deeply into the theory, there are a few details worth noting about the four levels.

The Four Levels

Here is a short summary of the brain's relational engine, known as the relational circuit or emotional control center. Starting with Levels 1 and 2 in the bottom of the engine, these two levels are subcortical, below our conscious awareness. This means the bottom levels do not ask our permission in order to respond. We are not directly aware of what's happening at Levels 1 and 2. These levels are more like reflexes where we jump because someone or something startles us.

Problems at Levels 1 and 2 show up indirectly. For example, when we feel loss or abandonment at Level 1, we may notice cravings, tension or restlessness. When we are startled at Level 2, strong reactions and phobias can arise. We may become “on edge” and cautious.

The upper levels of the relational engine, Levels 3 and 4, are easier to monitor. These are “cortical” layers where we gain a greater awareness of what's happening when. If we are feeling sad, for example, at Level 3, we know we are feeling sad. We can decide how we want to respond to our sadness by using our Level 4 where we have goal-directed behavior, personal preferences, creativity, and more. Level 4 is our “personal preferences” center where we make decisions based on our values.



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Lower Levels In The Relational Engine

1. **Level 1 - Attachment:** The attachment center where we securely (or insecurely) attach to people who share joy and let us rest.

- a. Example: *I bond with the person who is consistently glad to be with me, who lets me rest when I need to.*
- 2. **Level 2 - Assessment:** The guard shack⁴ where we watch for opportunities to approach and connect, or fearfully avoid when something threatens our joy. Here is our brain's survival circuit which is our "self-preservation" center, in charge of the fight, flight and freeze response.
 - a. Example: *If I touch a hot stove, I quickly move my hand without thinking about it.*

Upper Levels In The Relational Engine

- 3. **Level 3 - Attunement:** The emotional regulator where we stay connected in high-energy joy states and coast to low-energy quiet states. Here we use the correct amount of energy to maintain our interactions. We learn to return to joy when distressing emotions arise.
 - a. Example: *I walk into the room and notice you are napping so I turn down my voice and move quietly.*
- 4. **Level 4 - Action:** The brain's "captain" who oversees our ability to use the best of our brain's resources, so we stay creative, purposeful, goal-directed, thoughtful and resourceful. We act like our true, relational selves using all the best expressions of our identity when Level 4 is running.
 - a. Example: *In every situation my Level 4 focuses on staying myself whether I am joyful, sad, angry, hurt or distressed. The Level 4 asks, "How do I best reflect my character and identity in this situation?"*

Here is what the relational engine looks like in real time.

- 1. **Attachment:** I look and listen to see if you are familiar and personal to me.
- 2. **Assessment:** If you are familiar, I evaluate if I should approach or avoid you.
- 3. **Attunement:** I now gauge how much energy I need to drive this interaction. I may start with high-energy joy then, once I see you are tired, I turn down my energy levels to match you.
- 4. **Action:** I interact with you in a way that matches my values, goals and personal preferences.

This progression happens quickly. Enemy mode (*Simple/Stupid*) is what happens when the *Level 2 Assessment* center takes over. We lose access to the higher levels, *Level 3 Attunement* and *Level 4 Action*. Without these two upper levels working, we forget who we are and what is important in the moment. We become reactive, non-relational and our focus turns to problems and winning conflicts and arguments.⁵

Predatory/Smart enemy mode, on the other hand, is what happens when all the levels are running *except* the *Level 1 Attachment* level. In this state, we come across as caring and kind but we do not create strong attachments with others. We build relationships with the end-goal of getting what we want. We can call this crafty mode because it's a predatory system focused on stalking and tracking.

Appendix 2

19 Relational Skills

The secret to making your other skills matter.

Skill 0: Relational Circuits. Engaging the brain's relational engine puts us in the ideal position to learn and practice relational skills.

Skill 1: Share Joy. Facial expressions and voice tones amplify: "We're glad to be together!"

Skill 2: Soothe Myself, Simple Quiet. Quieting (shalom) after both joyful and upsetting emotions is the strongest predictor of life-long mental health.

Skill 3: Form Bonds For Two: Synchronize Attachments. We can share a mutual state of mind that brings us closer and lets us move independently as well. We are both satisfied.

Skill 4: Create Appreciation. Healthy minds are full of appreciation. Appreciation creates belonging and changes stress to contentment.

Skill 5: Form Family Bonds: Bonds For Three. Family bonds let us share the joy built by the people we love.

Skill 6: Identify Heart Values From Suffering: The Main Pain and Characteristic of Hearts. Caring deeply can mean hurting deeply. Our deepest hurts hide our greatest treasures.

Skill 7: Tell Synchronized Stories: Four-plus Storytelling. When our minds work together, our stories come together.

Skill 8: Identify Maturity Levels. We need to know where we are, what we missed and where we are going. Without a map, we keep falling in the same holes.

Skill 9: Take A Breather: Timing When To Disengage. Skillfully take short pauses before people become overwhelmed. We read the non-verbal cues so we can build trust.

Skill 10: Tell Nonverbal Stories. The non-verbal parts of our stories strengthen relationships, bridge generations, and cross cultures.

Skill 11: Return To Joy From The Big Six Feelings. We return to shared joy as we quiet distress. We stay in relationship when things go wrong.

Skill 12: Act Like Myself In The Big Six Feelings. When we find our design, we will be life-giving - whether we are upset or joyful.

Skill 13: See What God Sees, Heartsight. Seeing people and events from God's perspective yields a life filled with hope and direction.

Skill 14: Stop The Sark. False “Godsight” may seem true to us at the moment but leads to: blame, accusation, condemnation, gossip, resentment, etc. The sark requires active opposition.

Skill 15: Quiet Interactively. Skilled reading of facial cues allows us to operate at high energy levels and manage our drives without hurting ourselves or others.

Skill 16: Recognize High And Low Energy Response: Sympathetic And Parasympathetic. Some are at their best with activity and others with solitude. Knowing our styles and needs bring out the best in all our interactions.

Skill 17: Identify Attachment Styles. Our lives and reality need to be organized around secure love. Fears, hurts, and emotional distance create insecure relational styles that will last until we replace them.

Skill 18: Intervene Where The Brain Is Stuck: Five Distinctive Levels Of Brain Disharmony And Pain. Each of the five levels of brain processing react with a different kind of distress when it gets stuck. When we know the signs, we will know the solutions.

Skill 19: Recover From Complex Emotions: Handle Combinations Of The Big Six Emotions. Each of the five levels of brain processing react with a different kind of distress when it gets stuck. When we know the signs, we will know the solutions.

Appendix 3

Bonus Resources

Theory behind *The Joy Switch*

- The work and resources of Dr. Jim Wilder at lifemodelworks.org.
- The work and resources of Dr. Karl Lehman at immanuelapproach.com.
- The work and resources of Dr. Allan Schore from UCLA at allanschore.com.

Training and application for *The Joy Switch*

- 19 skills training, materials and courses at thrive.today.org.

Relational Circuits

- *Outsmarting Yourself* by Dr. Karl Lehman, This JOY! Books, 2011.
- *RARE Leadership: 4 Uncommon Habits For Increasing Trust, Joy And Engagement In The People You Lead*, Wilder and Warner, Moody Publishers, 2016.
- *The Immanuel Approach For Emotional Healing And For Life*. Lehman, Immanuel Publishing, 2016.
- *The Pandora Problem*, Dr. E. James Wilder, Deeper Walk International, 2018.
- *Building Bounce, How To Grow Emotional Resilience*, Warner and Hinman, Deeper Walk International, 2020.
- *The Other Half Of Church*, Hendricks and Wilder, Moody Publishers, 2020.

Relational Skills

- *Joy Starts Here: The Transformation Zone*, Wilder, Khouri, Coursey and Sutton, Shepherd's House, 2012.
- *30 Days of Joy For Busy Married Couples*, Coursey and Coursey, Coursey Creations, LLC. 2013.
- *Transforming Fellowship: 19 Brain Skills That Build Joyful Community*. Coursey Creations, LLC. 2016.
- *Relational Skills In The Bible: A Bible Study Focused On Relationships* by Brown and Coursey, Deeper Walk International, 2019.
- *The 4 Habits of Joy-Filled Marriages*. Warner and Coursey, Northfield Publishing, 2019.

¹ *The Development of the Unconscious Mind*, Dr. Allan N. Schore, W.W. Norton & Company, 2019, Page 56.

² Dr. Jim Wilder has taken Schore's work and expanded it from a neurotheological perspective in *The Pandora Problem*, Dr. E. James Wilder, Deeper Walk International, 2018. Dr. Karl Lehman has written a book providing a theoretical basis along with practical application on the brain's relational circuits called *Outsmarting Yourself* by Dr. Karl Lehman, This JOY! Books, 2011.

³ *The Pandora Problem*, Dr. E. James Wilder, Deeper Walk International, 2018.

⁴ Term used by Dr. Jim Wilder.

⁵ Learn more in the THRIVE-at-Home courses with the teachings of Dr. Jim Wilder.