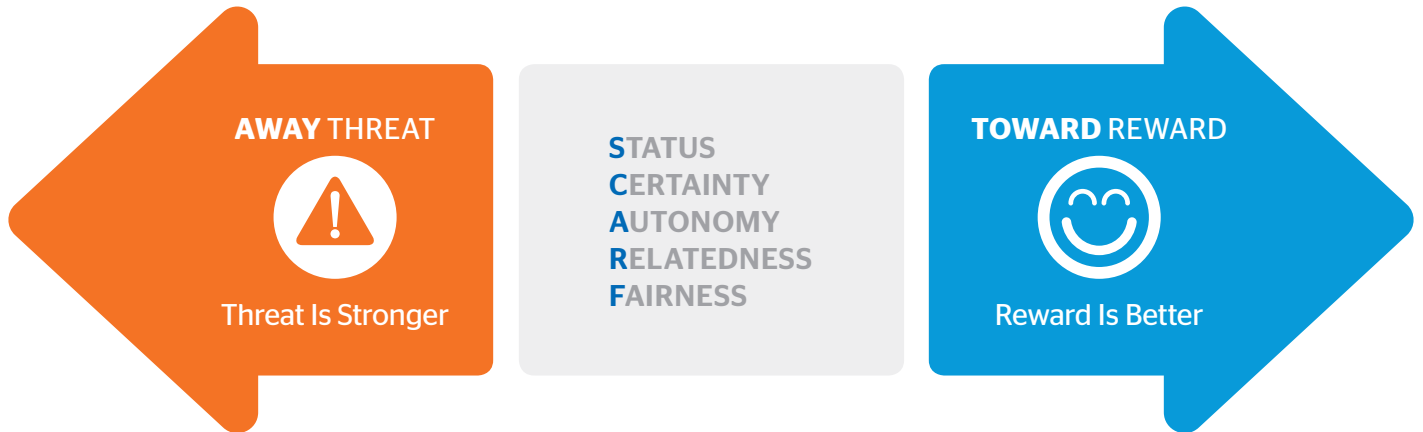


SCARF® Research Summary

As many as five times a second, your brain scans your environment for social threats or rewards (Rock, 2008). The SCARF® Model maps this monitoring, and its social impact, across five domains.



Status

Is about relative importance to others



Certainty

Concerns about ability to predict the future



Autonomy

Provides a sense of control over events



Relatedness

Is a sense of safety with others: friend, not foe



Fairness

Is a perception of fair exchange between people

THE SCARF® MODEL IS BUILT UPON THREE CENTRAL IDEAS

- 1** The brain treats many social threats and rewards with the same intensity as physical threats and rewards (Lieberman et al., 2008).
- 2** The capacity to make decisions, solve problems, and collaborate with others is generally reduced by a threat response and increased by a reward response (Elliot, 2008).
- 3** The threat response is more intense, more common, and often needs to be carefully minimized in social interactions (Baumeister et al., 2001).

The SCARF® Model provides a way of bringing conscious awareness to your interactions. It helps alert you to people's core concerns (which they may not even understand themselves) and shows you how to adjust your words and actions for a more positive impact.

SCARF® Research Summary continued

THREAT AND REWARD

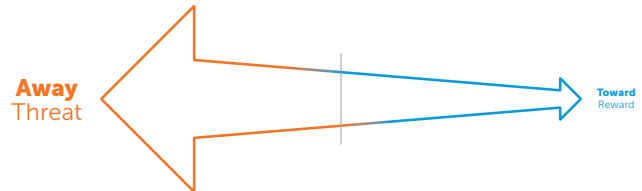
Threat circuits in the brain are those systems that help us detect and avoid dangers. Reward circuits in the brain are those systems that let us know we are on the right track and to do more of what was working.

THE IMPACT OF THREAT AND REWARD

When we experience strong threat or reward, these brain systems tend to take over. And, when we experience too much threat or reward, our more automatic, primitive brain systems drive our behavior. Under conditions of high threat, it becomes hard for the newer, evolved frontal regions of the brain to operate (Arnsten, 1998). We rely on those newer and more frontal parts of the brain for things like self-control, planning, making tough decisions, and staying focused on what we want to focus on (Arnsten et al., 2005). These are precisely the types of tasks that we want people to be skilled at in most jobs.

However, there is an imbalance that is important to keep in mind. It is very easy to go too far with threat, and is a lot harder to go too far with reward. When presented with potential threat, we respond more powerfully and quickly (Baumeister et al., 2001). This is to say that threat is a more strong and urgent system than reward. At the same time a threatened brain has a hard time being creative, opening to ideas and input, and coming to new insights (e.g. Jung-Beeman et al., 2008).

A rewarded brain, by contrast, has an easier time with collaboration, creative thinking, insight, and cognition in general. Thus, limiting the experience of threat and moving towards an experience of reward is often what we want to do to help people be mentally well-equipped for the challenges at work.



SCARF® DOMAINS

It turns out that feeling socially threatened or socially rewarded affects the brain in many of the same ways as physical threat or reward (Lieberman et al., 2008). This is where the power of understanding threat and reward become most important. Just as you wouldn't put someone in agonizing pain and then expect them to perform well, so too you shouldn't put them in strong social pain and expect them to perform well. To many parts of the brain, there is no difference between social and physical threat.

The SCARF® Model holds the five most common social domains in which we can most easily feel threatened. It is a tool for thinking about the ways we socially threaten and reward others, whether we mean to or not, and the ways they socially threaten and reward us.

Status:	Less than or better than
Certainty:	Perception of familiarity
Autonomy:	Perception of choice
Relatedness:	In-group or out-group
Fairness:	Perception of fair exchange

REFERENCES

- Arnsten, A. F. T. (1998). The Biology of Being Frazzled. *Science* 280, 1711-1712.
- Arnsten, A. F. & Li, B. M. (2005). Neurobiology of Executive Functions: Catecholamine Influences on Prefrontal Cortical Functions. *Biological Psychiatry*, 57, 1377-1384.
- Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E. & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is Stronger Than Good. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(4) 323-370.
- Elliot, A. (2008). *Handbook of Approach and Avoidance Motivation*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Jung-Beeman, M., Collier, A. and Kounios, J. (2008). How Insight Happens: Learning From the Brain. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, (1), 20-25.
- Lieberman, M.D. & Eisenberger, N.I. (2008). The Pains and Pleasures of Social Life. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, (1) 38-43.
- Rock, D. (2008). SCARF: A Brain-Based Model for Collaborating With & Influencing Others. *NeuroLeadership Journal*, (1) 44-52.