

DRIPS

DEALING WITH OUR RELATIONAL IRRITATIONS: POISED TO SERVE

DRIPPING #8: FEAR

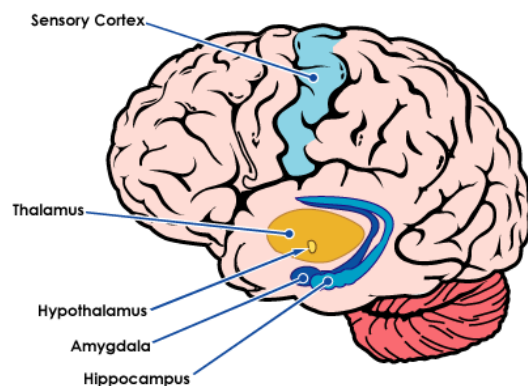
I. Introduction

- A. Definition: "Fear is a chain reaction in the brain that starts with a stressful stimulus and ends with the release of chemicals that causes a racing heart, fast breathing and energized muscles, among other things, also known as the fight-or-flight response."

One of the most paralyzing and frustrating problems in all of life (especially for women) is FEAR. We are consumed with the real or imagined repercussions caused by the fear of the unknown, the fear of calamity, the fear of sickness, the fear of death, the fear of losing our family, the fear of losing our jobs, the fear of being misunderstood and so it goes.

- B. A word about how our brains work as we respond in fear (from www.science.howstuffworks.com):

Parts of the Brain Involved in Fear Response

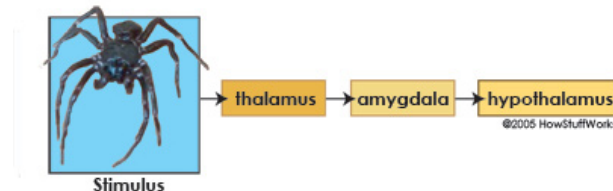


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- **Thalamus** - decides where to send incoming sensory data (from [eyes](#), ears, mouth, skin)
- **Sensory cortex** - interprets sensory data
- **Hippocampus** - stores and retrieves conscious memories; processes sets of stimuli to establish context
- **Amygdala** - decodes emotions; determines possible threat; stores fear memories
- **Hypothalamus** - activates "fight or flight" response

The process of creating fear begins with a scary stimulus and ends with the fight-or-flight response. But there are at least two paths between the start and the end of the process.

The Low Road



Creating Fear

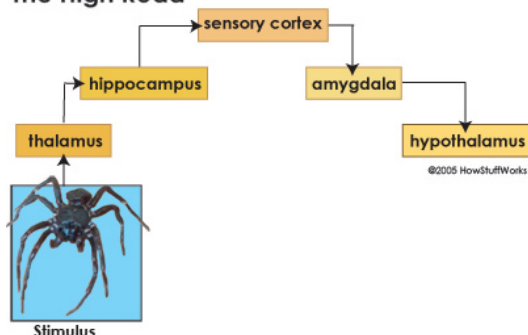
The process of creating fear takes place in the brain and is entirely unconscious. There are two paths involved in the fear response: The **low road** is quick and messy, while the **high road** takes more time and delivers a more precise interpretation of events. Both processes are happening simultaneously.

The idea behind the low road is "take no chances." If the front door to your home is suddenly knocking against the frame, it could be the wind. It could also be a burglar trying to get in. It's far less dangerous to assume it's a burglar

and have it turn out to be the wind than to assume it's the wind and have it turn out to be a burglar. The low road shoots first and asks questions later. The process looks like this:

The door knocking against the door frame is the stimulus. As soon as you hear the sound and see the motion, your brain sends this sensory data to the thalamus. At this point, the thalamus doesn't know if the signals it's receiving are signs of danger or not, but since they might be, it forwards the information to the amygdala. The amygdala receives the neural impulses and takes action to protect you: It tells the hypothalamus to initiate the fight-or-flight response that could save your life if what you're seeing and hearing turns out to be an intruder.

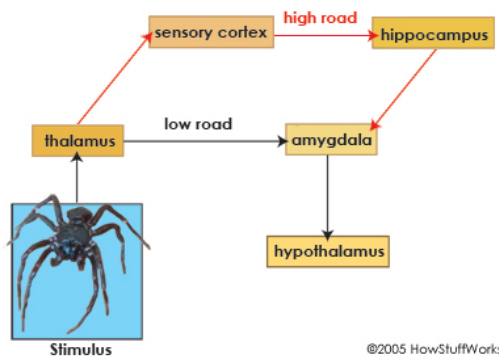
The High Road



The high road is much more thoughtful. While the low road is initiating the fear response just in case, the high road is considering all of the options. Is it a burglar, or is it the wind? The long process looks like this:

When your eyes and [ears](#) sense the sound and motion of the door, they relay this information to the thalamus. The thalamus sends this information to the sensory cortex, where it is interpreted for meaning. The sensory cortex determines that there is more than one possible interpretation of the data and passes it along to the hippocampus to establish context. The hippocampus asks questions like, "Have I seen this particular stimulus before? If so, what did it mean that time? What other things are going on that might give me clues as to whether this is a burglar or a wind storm?" The hippocampus might pick up on other data being relayed through the high road, like the tapping of branches against a window, a muffled howling sound outside and the clatter of patio furniture flying about. Taking into account this other information, the hippocampus determines that the door action is most likely the result of wind. It sends a message to the amygdala that there is no danger, and the amygdala in turn tells the hypothalamus to shut off the fight-or-flight response.

The Paths of Fear



The sensory data regarding the door -- the stimulus -- is following both paths at the same time. But the high road takes longer than the low road. That's why you have a moment or two of terror before you calm down.

Regardless of which path we're talking about, all roads lead to the [hypothalamus](#). This portion of the brain controls the ancient survival reaction called the fight-or-flight response.

- C. A word about phobias ("the persistent fear of an object or situation in which the sufferer commits to great lengths in avoiding, typically disproportionate to the actual danger posed, often being recognized as irrational.")
- D. Fear (of the right things in the right dose) is a good thing. It allows us to respond appropriately.

II. In a very practical way, David addressed FEAR in Psalm 27

- A. Probably written in the time when Doeg the Edomite spoke against David to Saul (1 Sam. 21-22), this song divides itself into three parts:
1. David expresses his confidence in God (praises) vs. 1-6
 2. David acknowledges his dependence with a list of needs vs. 7-13
 3. David reminds us all to WAIT on the Lord vs. 14
- B. He starts with the praises (vs. 1-6)
1. Vs. 1: His focus is on the person of God not just the works of God. David knows God personally. He is not some distant deity worshipped with fire sacrifices. It is an intimate relationship.

“Light”: see Ps. 4:6, 18:28, 43:3, John 1:4, 1 John 1:5

“Stronghold”: See Ps. 18:2, 28:8, 31:2, 43:2

Both metaphors “pertain to the work of God in giving relief and victory, crowning his people with His blessings.”

“Whom shall I fear?”

“Of whom shall I be afraid?”

It is the greatness of God in relation to the insignificance of his own problems.

Look at Romans 8:31-39
 2. Vs. 2-3: David rehearses the specific occasions of potential fear...“evil doers” “adversaries” “enemies,” they are “devouring” and “encamped against me.” These aren’t just possibilities. It isn’t IF ...it is WHEN these conflicts or trials afflict your life (see James 1) and, yet he is CONFIDENT.
 3. Vs. 4-6 David glories in His fellowship with the Lord. His contact with Yahweh is intimate and direct. “He will conceal me. He will hide me. He will lift me up. And I will offer sacrifices. I will sing praises to the Lord.”

This isn’t a public David, this is a personal David alone with His God.
 4. We too are COMMANDED to respond in faith. In Eph. 5:18 we are commanded to “...be filled with the Spirit” and to show it by singing (vs. 19), giving thanks (vs. 20) and by being subject to another (vs. 21).
- C. Then (and only then) does he start to list his needs and address his fears (vs. 7-13)
- Note: there is a whole list of commands in these verses too...David is using strong imperatives with God.
- “Hear...answer me!” (vs. 7), “Do not hide your face...do not turn...do not abandon me! (vs. 9), “Teach me!” ... (vs. 11), “Do not deliver me over to...my adversaries!” (vs. 12)
- There is boldness here. It is a respectful and yet passionate approach to God. It is rooted in his personal relationship with the Lord. Look at Heb. 4:16, James 5:16 and Phil. 4:6.
- D. And then David sets a context for dealing with all those things that cause us angst...WAIT vs. 14

The “blessed pause”: **WAIT** The Hebrew term means “to twist or stretch.” “The noun form means ‘line, cord, thread.’ A vivid picture emerges. It is a verb describing the making of strong, powerful rope or cord by twisting and weaving ourselves so tightly around the Lord that our weaknesses and frail characteristics are replaced by His power and unparalleled strength. It describes very literally the truth of what has been termed the ‘exchanged life.’ As we wait, our weakness is exchanged for His strength.” (“Living Beyond” p. 103)

Isa. 40:31 “Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength...”

Phil. 4:13 “I can do all things through Him (IN HIM) who strengthens me.”

III. Next time you are threatened:

Ps. 118:6 “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

Prov. 3:24 “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.”

2 Tim. 1:7 “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”

A. Declare what you know...claim it!

2 Tim. 1:12 “...For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”

B. Express what you need...boldly!

Heb. 4:16 “Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

C. Wait...twist yourself around the strands of His strength and relax.

Ps. 46:10 “Be still and know that I am God...”

Discussion Questions:

1. What kinds of fears bother you? Does knowing how your brain works help with any of those fears?
2. When addressing fears from a biblical perspective, why do you think David start with praising the Lord?
3. What do you think about David’s boldness as he talks to God about his fears?
4. How can you “wait” as it relates to your fears?