

The Brain's Four Level Control Center

All of us are hard wired for relationships, so, loss of connections with one another causes pain.

Knowing how your brain reacts to being overwhelmed can help you calm, which helps those around you calm.

Share this with a friend, partner, your family. It will give you all a common language.

When your brain is in overwhelm, it is yelling: Make It Stop!

Practice stopping when emotions start to go out of control. You want to stop escalation, the more you fight, the more out of control difficult feelings become. Just Stop! Breathe. Do something else even if it's jumping in place while repeating, "I can do this, We can do this, We will get through this, We are OK, I am OK."

Let's get to basic Brain Function, starting with:

The brain's **Four Level Control Center**

4. Level Four: (Conscious) When our whole brain is active we know who we are. We can talk, think, read and process information/instructions, be in worship, feel our feelings, sing, play, work.

When overwhelm occurs, & level 4 shuts off we lose our sense of ourselves and what it's like us to be and do (you forget what you like to do when you feel angry or frustrated). You lose a sense of time and consistency (are you, or others hungry, when was the last meal, how much sleep have you had?) you lose your ability to set goals and finish things—frustration goes up. **You want to know when you start to lose level four because immediate action can help you stay connected and relational.**

Take a time out & Breath . . . In advance go over the descriptions previous posted, *breath*, with your partner, family & friends so they know what you are doing & can join you.

3. Level Three: (Conscious) Regulates your ability to calm & quiet, to connect & empathize with others. Even when you have started to lose a sense of yourself (when level 4 goes off), you can still check on those around you and discern what emotional state they are in (if you are able to do this for yourself), and you can empathize with others and the situation. And if you know how to calm yourself (through breathing, exercising, taking a time-out, etc) you can also help others calm and quiet.

When we lose level 3, we lose most everything just listed. We cannot calm/quiet, in fact we lose the ability to regulate our emotions, we lose joy along with being able to connect and empathize with others. We begin losing our ability to communicate.

To recover, stop here, do the exercises to calm and return to relationship, though it gets more difficult to quickly calm the more upset you get.

2. Level Two: (Subconscious) Level 2 decides whether your world is good, bad, scary (if you've had any violence in your life as a child you will have a system that says life is bad or scary), when your brain drops down to this level it is unconsciously deciding to fight, flee, or freeze. Level 3 doesn't change its mind even in the face of truth to what it believes. You have lost the ability to speak coherently.

When we lose level 2, such as: when we get into a fight with those we love, we often say things we would never want to say. Adrenaline goes up. **It is best to just stop, get out of the room, get your body still (or do some intensive aerobics, like run, jump rope, etc. Or sit or lie down, do deep breathing, clench all your muscles, then let them go, repeat).**

1: Level One: Your brain is screaming, "Make It Stop." All your faculties that were on to help you be relational and rational have shut off. You will not be able to "think" through or resolve anything. You will not be coherent. Level one is the greatest pain a human being can feel and when you are in your worst pain your brain just wants everything to stop. The more you try to resolve, the worse your pain becomes, and people often resort to their worst behavior.

Practice just stopping when emotions start to go out of control. You want to stop escalation, the more you fight, the more out of control difficult feelings become. Just Stop! Breathe. Do something else even if it's jumping in place while repeating, "I can do this, We can do this, We will get through this, We are OK, I am OK."

Taking on a sports metaphor is helpful to some people; Meditation on spiritual things is very helpful to many of us; Self talk is effective when it is encouraging. Avoid criticism, to self & others. Be careful with media, stay away from information that frightens you including scary movies.

