

## Embodied Pre-Cognitive Charge

A simple way to understand and imaging how early experiences continue to influence our lives.

Most are aware that ACEs, Adverse Childhood Experiences, impact and even predict future behaviors in adulthood; violence, victimization, chronic health problems, mental illness, addictions, education, job opportunities, earning potential and more. ACEs most are often linked to painful physical and psychological trauma. But there is something else that predicts future behaviors, the absence or sensory deprivation of pleasure:

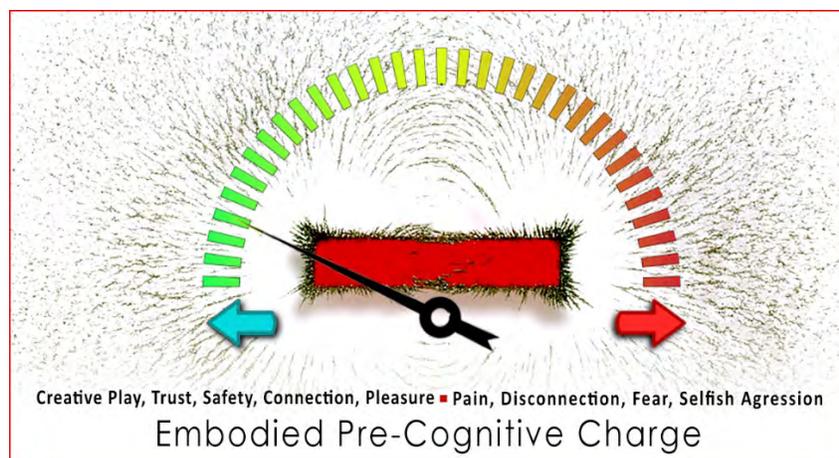
- (1) Not experiencing soothing perinatal experiences;
- (2) Not experiencing extensive breastfeeding on request;
- (3) Not experiencing positive touch;
- (4) Not experiencing responsive attention—prompt and appropriate responses to needs, keeping the young child optimally aroused;
- (5) Not experiencing frequent care by responsive individuals other than mothers (fathers and grandmothers, typically); and
- (6) Not experiencing self-directed multiage, free play in nature.

Darcia Narvaez, PhD, The Evolved Nest

If we have pleasurable sensory stimulation, those are the brain engrams, the templates [pre-cognitive charges] that will be stored and they will be images of pleasure. If the experiences are painful, the images will be of pain and pain evokes violent responses. But there is something else that evokes violent responses and that's the absence of pleasure, which is different than the sensory experience of pain. Most people don't appreciate this distinction. In fact, more damage occurs with the sensory deprivation of pleasure than the actual experiencing of physical painful trauma, which can be handled quite well in individuals who were brought up with a great deal of physical affectional bonding and pleasure which carries with it emotional trust and security. So we really have to look at the trauma of sensory deprivation of physical pleasure and how that translates into the separation experiences, the isolation experiences of the infant from the mother. That's the beginning.

James W. Prescott, PhD

A way of visualizing how early experiences, *both nurturing and its absence*, predispose future patterns, and more specifically how they influence and bias cognition, thought and the relationships defined by thinking and culture, it to imagine an embodied magnetic field.



Imagine that each nurturing (pleasurable) moment and each unnurturing (painful) moment a child experiences, during the early preverbal months of his or her life, create a positive or negative 'pre-cognitive' charge that lives in the sensory-motor and limbic-emotional brain centers and continue to radiate, like an invisible magnetic field, lifelong. When the field is positive experiences are interpreted as positive-pleasure; basic-trust, connection and creative play. When the magnetic charge is painful-negative, the field drags the interpretation of felt experiences towards withdrawal, fear, separation,

defensive aggression and even violence. At an even deeper level, this same charge that is alive in the mother before conception, during pregnancy and after, affects both the mother and her baby.

Michele Odent, MD, describes in *Primal Health*, how sensory-emotional gates or thresholds of perception are established during the early months of development. Once these threshold points are set, they more or less predefine for life how the body and brain interpret and therefore respond to various experiences.

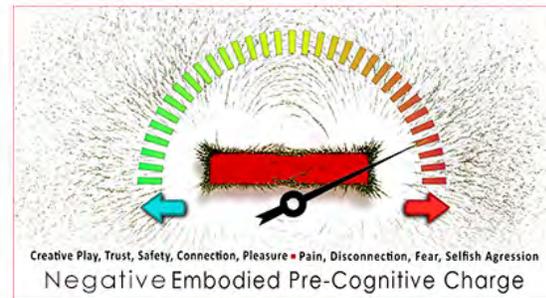
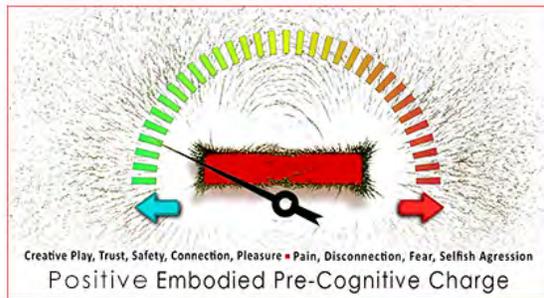
According to Paul MacLean's *The Triune Brain in Evolution*, the second mammalian (limbic) brain is nested in the primary sensory-motor brain, and the neocortex is nested in and receives its inputs from these two much older brain centers. The important point is; opening, unfolding and development of cognition, what we think of as thinking, is influenced and even defined by the nonverbal threshold points established in these primary brain centers. The 'pre-cognitive' charge, the invisible magnetic field generated by these much older brain systems, filter, prejudice, and prejudice the information the neocortex receives and then uses to create how and what we think, how we interpret and define who we are and how we relate to everything, how our self-world-view or 'reality' is created, defined and maintained.

- Over 600 million years ago, with the appearance of the cold-blooded vertebrates, there appeared sensory systems.
- 200 million years ago, elements of what MacLean refers to as the Limbic Brain, or the Second Brain, began to appear.
- Approximately 50,000 years ago the capacity to create various types of abstract images - of letters, words, numbers; of comparisons, analogies, similarities; of spatial, and sound forms, images of logical sequences, and 'play' with symbols, word, colors, sounds, and forms, matured.
- Perhaps 10,000 years ago Civilization emerged, which represents a fraction of the total kinds of societies that have existed. Considered time wise, civilized societies make up less than one percent of humanity's presence on the planet.

Gabor Maté book, *When the Body Says No: Understanding the Stress-Disease Connection*, describes how this hidden 'pre-cognitive' charge is associated with the 'state specific' nature of this nested brain hierarchy. The charge manifests as chronic stress which being invisible and therefore not treated, exhausts the immune system, resulting in all sorts of physical breakdowns. The same unseen force manifests as various addictions as Maté describes in *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. David Bohm and Emeritus Professor Jaak Panksepp, PhD, describe how each new learning experience creates neural pattern in-and-between each primary brain center. Each thought, feeling and action activates this circuit creating a unique but common 'state specific' resonate expression in all three centers simultaneously. At subtle levels, every thought activates a movement in the body and a related feeling.

Each experiences an embodied default 'state' ranging from 'safe enough to play' with life and its relationships to varying intensities of mistrust, stress, fear, defense, and aggression that permeate the entire field we call thought, with each thought activating and unconsciously being influenced by this hidden positive or negative default 'pre-cognitive' charge. This embodied default context functions in a similar way to the positive and negative poles of a magnet. The relative charge, positive to negative, unconsciously draws and biases thought's abstractions into the service of the default state or charge, without us being aware of the pull, regardless of the appearance or assumed content thought is imagining. The hidden 'pre-conscious' charge, like an invisible magnetic field, predefines, below conscious awareness, the context that gives meaning to our thoughts and actions.

When the 'pre-cognitive' charge is pleasurable, positive, the developing self-world view or psyche playfully and empathically integrates life's experience into a constant, entangled and reciprocal movement towards wholeness for the super-organism that life is. Being related, in touch with others is the key to wellness and happiness. The 'self' is not experienced as separate from the whole. And this engaged empathic, creative context creates the meaning upon which cognitive thought functions.



When the 'pre-cognitive' charge is painful, traumatic, negative, empathic playfulness is absent. Experiences are painful. The developing self-world-view or psyche withdraws, disassociates, splits off and isolates to protect itself from a world that cannot be trusted. When this negative 'pre-cognitive' charge is the hidden context or foundation, cognitive thought is motivated primarily to predict, control and protect the isolated self.

There exist, therefore, two fundamentally different cultural brains, two different realities; one, playfully, empathically and creatively engaged, where contributing to the wholeness, happiness and wellbeing of others simultaneously does the same for one's self; and two, an isolated self-world view where life and its relationships are painful, threatening, something to isolate and protect against.

It is also worth considering that the awakening and development of innate capacities are model-environment dependent. Of an unknowable spectrum of potential capacities, epigenetics shows that only those shown necessary and useful by the model-environment will be developed, a process Joseph Chilton Pearce described as 'the model imperative' fifty years ago. To this we must add the impact the 'pre cognitive' charges, has on this process. Like gravity, the 'pre-cognitive' charge pulls the meaning and function of each capacity into the services of that charge; positive, playfully engaged, creative, or negative, self-centered protection, defense and control. Predator capitalist's aggression on one end of the spectrum and the Dalai Lama's compassion on the other.

Cognitive thought, nested in and dependent on the earlier brain systems, is incapable of altering this deeply embodied default state. What is required is a more fundamental reset of the embodied context, which thought cannot reach. This reset involves nurturing these primary centers by 'speaking' the embodied language these centers expect and need. When negative or traumatic events occur in a child's life it is the responsibility of the caregiver to radiate and express in themselves their fully-bonded and integrated positive default state. Modeling a positive 'state-specific' ground or context helps the child experience that same in themselves as they form their emerging interpretation of experience, something the child cannot do for themselves.

Please don't blame or expect the intellect to correct its pathologies. Our selfishness and its implicit cruelty and violence, that now threatens every species on the planet including all of humanity, is rooted in a deeper betrayal, a failure to fully develop the primary centers. Joseph Chilton Pearce called this betrayal a *Time Bomb in the Nursery*. David Bohm put it this way:

We are faced with a breakdown of general social order and human values [in ourselves, our social systems and technology] that threatens stability throughout the world. Existing knowledge cannot meet this challenge. Something much deeper is needed, a completely new approach. I am suggesting that the very means by which we try to solve our problems is the problem. The source of our problems is within the structure of thought itself.

In this deeper embodied context, appreciating the nested brain hierarchy, words are superficial Band-Aids. The real medicine is deeper, moving the needle of the 'pre-cognitive' charge in the body with safe, pleasurable touch, and the empathy of being seen for who and what the child is experiencing now. Surrounding the child in what Darcia Narvaez calls the Evolved Developmental Nest provides a constant source for this deeper reset.

Background: Keith Buzzel, MD

A brain really should be called a brain when it has developed the capacity to take a slice through all of the variable forms and energies; out there, and build a resonant representation or an image of the external world. And then, within the confines of that creature, act upon these images for survival. Then you have a brain.

Over 600 million years ago, with the appearance of the cold-blooded vertebrates, there appeared sensory systems, which could construct a resonant representation, or image, of some portion of the external world.

Once the first brain becomes well-established as a whole sensory/motor instrument, which occurred about 200 million years ago, elements of what MacLean refers to as the Limbic Brain, or the Second Brain, began to appear. The critical difference is that the world that the second brain opens to is not the world 'out there' beyond the bounding membrane, but the inner world of dynamic metabolism and motions.

Self-perception, when limited to the first brain, is a representation only of the body surface. A lizard has receptors that will tell it to some degree the amount of pressure it's putting on one of its fore limbs. But it doesn't relate the internal dynamic state of the limb itself, the muscles, the blood flow, etc. This capacity evolved with the second brain.

With the development of the second brain, we also see a transition from a two-chambered heart to a four chambered heart. We see the evolution of the diaphragm, the uterus and the support for intra-body development of the embryo. In addition, all of the neural controls and the monitoring of all of the blood vessels, of all the other fluids, the so called lymphatic system of the body, and we have the appearance of a more and more sophistication in the immune system. *There is a blending between these two in perception or consciousness.* Both, however, are sensations.

As we move up the evolutionary ladder over the last 200 million years we see increasingly dense neural structures, which begin to open capacities and functions that look like the third brain. Cleverness, a monkey digging with a stick for food. We see the emergence of curiosity, not for food, not for survival, but curiosity for its own sake. All this requires the neural matrix of a third brain. As this third brain develops we naturally see, in the life of many mammalian forms, aspects, which appear surprisingly similar to those that emerge with the full human brain. But the third brain isn't complete. When it is complete it will have the capacity to create various types of abstract images - of letters, words, numbers; of comparisons, analogies, similarities; of spatial, and sound forms. It will 'image' logical sequences, and 'play' with symbols, word, colors, sounds, and forms. This is the world of the third brain.

MM: This third brain, being the latest evolutionary structure, might be still be considered immature. We described how the core sensory-motor and mid limbic brains have developed feedback systems which create images of what is happening outside and inside (proprioception). David Bohm suggested that the new brain, the Neocortex, has not evolved a feedback system to keep track of thought and this is a major source of confusion and conflict. We lose track of what the third brain is doing.

This is a recurring theme in MacLean's monumental work, *The Triune Brain in Evolution*. There are far fewer paths connecting the second brain to the third brain than those that connect the first brain to the third brain. *This makes the new brain much more vulnerable to data from the outside than information coming from the sensors of the second brain which monitor inside states. We have a strong neural prejudice from the outside world and fail to give equal attention to what is going on inside.*

There also seems to be a clear difference between generic males and females in this regard. Males tend to emphasize the outside world. Women, because they are the source of nurture, the source of life and continuity, are more aware of the inner world. The connections between the second brain and the third brain of females, especially the right side of the third brain, are much more pronounced than males. As a result, they can be more attentive to the reality of their second brain inner 'relationship' world.

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