

The Fusion Dynamics Framework

A Field Guide to the Inner Mechanics of Experience

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To Valentina.

Table of Contents

Introduction (Foreword)	4
Chapter 1: The Four Functions (The Observable Foundation)	8
Chapter 2: The Law of Three (The Engine of Change)	10
Chapter 3: The Eight Modes (the Horizontal Dimension)	13
Chapter 4: Levels of Availability (the Vertical Dimension)	19
Chapter 5: The Fusion Dynamics Map (The Full Grid)	22
Chapter 6: From Map to Movement (The Heuristics of Change)	26
Chapter 7: Between Function and Dysfunction (The Struggle for Awareness)	32
Chapter 8: Mapping Correlations (Alignment with Psychological Models)	37
Chapter 9: The Currents of Constraint (Mapping Negative Emotions)	47
Chapter 10: Getting to Work (Using Negative Emotions).....	54
Chapter 11: The Currents of Freedom (Positive Emotions)	61
Chapter 12: Preparing to Meet Life (Daily Practices)	68
Chapter 13: The Virtuous Path	76
Conclusion.....	83
Acknowledgments	85
Appendix A: The Architecture of the Fusion Dynamics framework	87
Appendix B: Glossary of Terms.....	89
Appendix C: The Vertical Path	94
Appendix D: The Full Fusion Dynamics Map	99
Appendix E: The Landscape of Constraint	117
Appendix F: The Landscape of Change.....	121
Appendix G: The Landscape of Flourishing.....	124
Appendix H: The Mechanics of Consciousness	127
Selected Bibliography of Foundational Works	130

Introduction (Foreword)

This framework has been some 25 years in the making, mostly unknowingly, as only in the past five years did the notion of a framework begin to take shape in my mind. It has been a journey driven by a very deep questioning of life's meaning, and the hope that, in the end, the answers I could find would bring me peace.

As a biochemical engineer, my biases towards functionality and biological systems will show through, but I will also share a couple more biases.

For the longest time, I have not been able to shake a deep intuition that each of us has a purpose, or at least a path, unique to each person, which could lead to some sort of inner realization. I have also been strongly drawn to the notion of life generating itself from very basic, elementary precepts, which could recursively explain the complex mess of life while also hinting at how we could navigate it.

I think these intuitions have given me some of the clues I needed to put the pieces together. Still, this is not an exposition meant to prove anything. I treat these notions as working possibilities: to neither believe them blindly nor reject them out of hand. I try to stand between those two extremes and simply hold them as hypotheses that invite validation in real life.

To clarify, I genuinely think that there is hardly one original thought in this text. I feel more like an archaeologist than anything else, basically just chipping away dirt, sweeping, and finding the many notions and ideas that, when put together, seem to work very nicely.

Beyond the intellectual search, my efforts have been driven by experience, and the potential practical application of the framework. Yes, it should make logical sense, but mostly, it must be useful.

The framework has been forged and reframed through constant testing; not just in my own life, but via many people who have participated through individual sessions, digital prototypes, and workshops at different development stages.

An important disclaimer: readers knowledgeable in the tradition known as the "Fourth Way" introduced to the West by G.I. Gurdjieff and further systematized by thinkers like J.G. Bennett, will have no difficulty recognizing that I am using and reframing many concepts derived from there. My intention has been to translate their wisdom so that it is approachable, actionable, and compatible with the language of modern life, while recognizing my own shortcomings in understanding it, as I am merely a struggling student. This choice of lineage was not arbitrary, as it proved pivotal to achieving a parallel objective of this exposition.

Understanding this framework has been deeply nurturing to me, and it would be my greatest joy if more people could benefit from it and, above all, test and validate it in their own lives.

Quantifying Experience

In parallel with my personal inquiries, there is a specific, practical objective behind the particular architecture I have chosen. My aim has been to develop a framework clear enough to instruct software to “understand” something as fluid and subjective as human experience.

How can “meaning” or “suffering” be translated into zeros and ones? For a machine to distinguish “this” from “that” we need precise dimensions, a robust logic, and clear recursivity that can allow a system to model human experience.

Paradoxically, the rigorous simplification required to teach a machine turned out to be quite clarifying personally.

Most importantly, this digitization serves a larger hope. By encoding these insights into software, the possibility opens for deployment at scale, e.g.: well-being democratization. It also opens the door to other exciting possibilities, such as optimization of individual users’ paths, and, in societal terms, increasing our capacity to learn more about our own being using shared frames of reference. I am not claiming that this framework is that final frame, but I do see it as one step in that direction.

The same rigor that made the framework teachable to a machine was aimed at a second application the digitization made tractable: AI alignment. Whether an artificial system can respond generatively rather than collapse toward its loudest input is, structurally, the same question this book asks about humans. That line of work is developed separately.

The Purpose of This Document

The aim of this document is quite concrete: to gather the Fusion Dynamics framework in one place, with enough precision that readers from diverse backgrounds, and eventually software, can mean roughly the same thing when they use its terms.¹

By “framework” I mean a self-contained system derived from first principles which includes a map and ways of navigating that map towards the aim of happiness. Here, I lay out the definitions, assumptions and internal mechanisms so that they can be inspected, tested, and if necessary, corrected.

I am not offering an all-encompassing theory of the universe, or a replacement for existing therapies. What I am putting forward is a map with three suggestions:

1. That a large share of our moment-to-moment experience can be described, at least in outline, using a small set of variables or dimensions.

¹ For reference, a summary of this architecture can be found in Appendix A: The Architecture of the Happinetics Framework and a glossary of terms in Appendix B.

2. That many ideas from clinical psychology and contemplative traditions can be organized coherently on that same map.
3. That by applying in our personal experience the same principles that are the foundation of this map, we may suffer less and be better off.

This is an invitation to test it in real life, through honest experimentation. In a pragmatic sense, its value will depend on whether it makes a practical difference in people's lives or not.

Using Many Languages

A heads up to the reader: I do not expect this to be an easy read. It will require a fair amount of mental abstraction to grasp the notions I am presenting, and that difficulty is not helped by that fact that I am blending different "languages" in the exposition. To avoid confusion, it may help to name in advance the distinct levels that this framework operates:

- **Phenomenological.** Some parts are descriptions of lived experience: how certain patterns of thought, emotion, and action tend to feel from the inside.
- **Theoretical.** Other parts are abstract structures: functions, diagrams, and grids that try to organize those experiences. They are proposed constructs whose status depends on their coherence and usefulness, not on being "real entities".
- **Metaphysical / Ontological.** A small number of elements are background assumptions about how change and meaning are structured. These are borrowed from specific philosophical and contemplative traditions and used here only as first principles for the model.
- **Pragmatic.** The concrete guidelines and heuristics are practical proposals. The claim is simply that they may help in real life.
- **Correlational.** When the framework is compared with existing psychological models, the connections are conceptual mappings or resonances. They are meant to show possible alignments, not to pretend empirical validation.

Obvious Limitations

This framework does not replace medical, psychiatric, or trauma-informed care. It describes patterns of functioning, not underlying causes.

In some conditions, such as severe trauma, psychosis, bipolar mood episodes, neurodevelopmental syndromes, or neurological disease, the core drivers of experience may be primarily biological or environmental in ways that this model does not capture.

In those cases, the Fusion Dynamics Map might still be a useful language for describing certain patterns, but it should never be used to delay appropriate medical or specialist treatment.

How to Read this Book

I would, of course, recommend reading this guide in its entirety, but I am aware that it can feel dense. For that reason, a quick guide depending on the reader's interest follows:

If you are a practitioner or therapist, you may wish to skim Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 8, and focus more closely on the remaining chapters.

If you are a researcher, you may want to concentrate on Chapters 4 through 8 and consult Appendices D through H.

If you are primarily interested in the fundamentals and their application, you can read Chapters 1 and 2, and then move to Chapters 9 through 12. Chapters 7 and 8 can provide optional background.

Chapter 1: The Four Functions (The Observable Foundation)

To build a useful map of human experience, I begin by considering certain basic elements that can be observable in any living system. I will refer to this system as an organism: a bounded unit that maintains its own coherence in relation to the environment. The same logic applies whether the organism is a unicellular organism, a single person, a relationship, a team, or an organization.

To be viable, e.g.: to survive, self-regulate, and thrive, an organism can be described as performing four essential jobs or functions which will comprise the core of the Fusion Dynamics framework.

These functions can be divided into two dyads, based on the "substance" they process: information on the inside, and material on the outside.

The Information Dyad (The "Inner World")

This first pair of functions manages the organism's immaterial world of information, defining the system's awareness and its ability to self-regulate.

1. Perception (P)

Function: Input

Perception is the input function, the organism's "sensor" responsible for making contact with reality. Its job is twofold:

- External Sensing: Reading the outside environment ("Is that a threat or an opportunity?").
- Internal Sensing: Reading the organism's raw internal state (its core affect: valence and arousal), before any further processing occurs.

Without a clear Perception function the organism is "blind", operating on false or incomplete data.

2. Regulation (R)

Function: Internal Processing

Regulation is the internal processing function. After Perception brings in raw data, the Regulation function processes it by comparing the current state to the desired state (homeostasis), after which it can make the internal adjustments necessary to remain stable, coherent, and functional.

The Perception-Regulation dyad on its own is a closed system, with no capacity to act on the world. For this, the material dyad is required.

The Material Dyad (The "Outer World")

This second pair of functions manages the organism's concrete world. It defines the system's agency and its ability to engage with the world.

3. Interaction (I)

Function: Exchange

Interaction is the exchange function. It is the organism's gateway for managing its boundary with other organisms and the environment. It is both an input and an output of material.

4. Action (A)

Function: Output

Action is the pure output function. It is the system's agent, allowing it to act upon and shape the material world to achieve its goals.

An Operating Viable System

These four functions: Perception, Regulation, Interaction and Action (or PRIA for short), are the foundational architecture of the Fusion Dynamics framework, summarizing the main jobs a viable organism must perform, again and again, to keep going.

I have found that in practice, most of what we think, feel, and do can be described as some combination of these four core processes. This does not mean PRIA is the only possible way of describing life experience, but it provides a very compact language, applicable across situations.

To better grasp its implications, three principles must be first established:

Firstly, PRIA implies a system that can actively steer itself, making it dynamic and purposeful. Secondly, the four functions are not a linear, one-time sequence (Step 1 → Step 2 → Step 3 → Step 4 → Stop), but form a continuous, feedback loop: the output of Action instantly and automatically changes the environment, and this “new” environment is then immediately fed back as the next input for Perception.

Lastly, PRIA is considered a recursive pattern that can be applied at multiple levels: from bodily events to individual, relational, and organizational processes. The same “operating system” serves as a lens at different scales and speeds.

Extrapolating from this, it can be said that at any given moment, a person is not running a single PRIA loop, but parallelly many at once, and at different speeds: one loop may be tracking the temperature of the feet, another may be processing a memory, and another involved in a lively debate with a co-worker. Each of these situations follow the same basic sequence but they overlap and interact. What we call a “state” can be thought as the net effect of many such loops operating together.

Chapter 2: The Law of Three (The Engine of Change)

Having defined our foundational four functions (PRIA) of a viable organism, we can now explore the dynamics within. To do so, I borrow on a principle that has proven unexpectedly powerful as an organizing lens of the framework: the Law of Three.

When we think of motion, we often imagine a simple picture: one initial state, one final state, and a force applied in a certain direction. If we look a bit closer, we can also notice a second force: resistance to that initial push. In other words, what is most evident is a duality of two forces in opposition: push and pull, activity and resistance.

A force and its direct opposition can produce oscillation, swings between one pole and the other, but not the emergence of something qualitatively new. For a genuinely new outcome to appear, a third kind of influence seems to be needed: not more push or more resistance, but an influence that operates at a different logical level, one that can relate the two opposing forces in a way neither can do to itself.

The Law of Three proposes that this is a structural feature of change: when only two forces are at play, outcomes remain within the same register. When a third, reconciling force enters, it introduces a possibility that was not available within the oscillation itself.

The three forces are:

1. **Force 1 (The Active Force):** An initiating, expansive, "yes", or positive impulse.
2. **Force 2 (The Passive Force):** A resisting, containing, "no", that counters the Active Force through constraint, friction, or structure.
3. **Force 3 (The Reconciling Force):** A neutralizing, aligning, or bridging force. This is an independent "unseen", or less conspicuous influence that allows the first two forces to interact and resolve into a new, stable outcome.

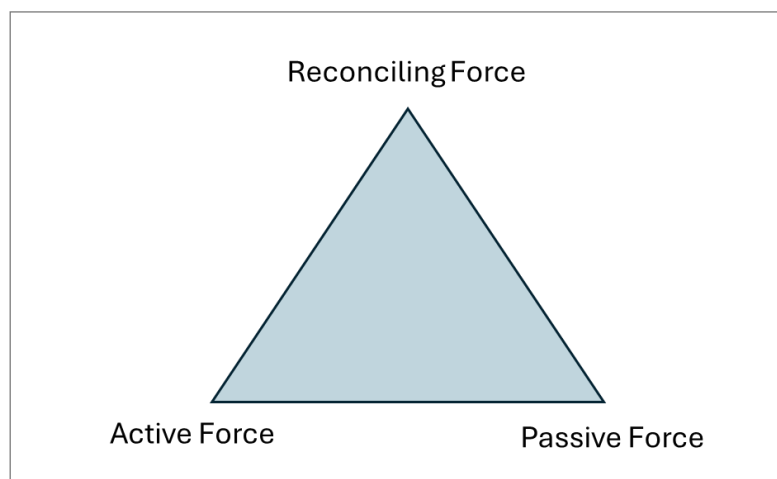


Figure 1: The Law of Three

A familiar example is a chemical reaction in which two reagents (active and passive forces) can sit in a flask indefinitely. Without a catalyst (a substance that participates in the reaction without being consumed by it) no new compound forms. The catalyst operates at a different level from the reagents: it does not add more of either force but enables them to combine in a way they could not on their own. This is the structural role of the reconciling force.

Within this framework, meaningful change (as distinct from oscillation between familiar poles) requires the participation of all three forces. Without the reconciling element, the system can alternate but cannot reorganize.:

- A seed (1) and soil (2) cannot become a plant without the Reconciling Force of water and sunlight (3).
- Raw ingredients (1) and a hot oven (2) can only alternate between “raw” and “burnt” unless a Reconciling Force like a clear recipe or an attentive cook (3) clarifies the aim and brings the required timing into play.
- An aspiration toward transcendence (1) and the pull of daily life with all its distractions (2) can remain in tension indefinitely, until a Reconciling Force, a guide, or a concrete path of practice (3) reconciles both worlds into a new way of living.

Many traditions seem to have referenced to a similar triadic structure, though they use different language and metaphors. Some of these may be interpreted as follows:

- In Hinduism, the Law of Three is hinted at in the Trimurti: Brahma (1), the Creator (Active); Shiva (2), the Transformer or Destroyer (a principle that breaks down old forms and sets limits); and Vishnu (3), the Preserver (the Reconciling principle that maintains cosmic balance).
- In Christianity, a similar pattern can be interpreted in how the Christian Trinity has been described: The Father (1), the Active Will; the Son (2), the Word made flesh (the incarnation into material constraint); and the Holy Spirit (3).
- In Buddhism, this principle is embodied in the Three Jewels (Triratna): The Buddha (1), the Active guide and principle of enlightenment; the Dharma (2), the Passive law or teaching; and the Sangha (3), the Reconciling community that embodies the teaching and makes it a living, functional reality.

Numerous other philosophical and esoteric systems, including Sufi metaphysics and Kabbalah, contain triadic structures that can also be read in this way.²

This framework treats this Law as the main lens for thinking about change, and therefore it will be used to explain or deduce different kinds of processes (as it is a multi-level, multi-perspective principle). From this Law, six fundamental transformations can be derived, which will structure much of what follows.

² A resonant triadic structure is also found in the Yijing (I Ching). While the system is built on the binary polarity of Yang (Active) and Yin (Passive), its application relies on the "Three Powers": Heaven, Earth, and Human. In this view, the Human functions as the Reconciling force that mediates between the creative principle (Heaven) and the receptive principle (Earth).

Chapter 3: The Eight Modes (the Horizontal Dimension)

So far, I have presented the two basic building blocks of the framework: the PRIA functions and the Law of three. From this point on, most of what we will do is simply follow what happens when these two ideas are applied together.

The first practical result of this combination will be the definition of eight Modes that make up the horizontal axis of the Fusion Dynamics Map. To do so, we need to first explore a further derivation from the Law of Three.

The Six Transformations or Triads

When the three force of the Law of Three interact among themselves in an ordered process, they can occupy the roles “first, second, third” in exactly six ways: 123, 132, 213, 231, 312, 321, yielding a set of specific types of basic transformations. The detailed mechanics and profound implications of these six transformations have been developed in detail by J.G. Bennett in his work on Systematics.

For our purposes, we can briefly describe the "character" of each transformation:

- **123: Creation / Expansion / Actualization**

The active (1) force directly engages a receptive (2) ground, and from their encounter, a reconciling (3) outcome is produced. This is also called the actualization triad because it shows how latent possibilities in a situation become a concrete, observable form (a new behavior taking hold, a project that starts, etc.).

- **213: Evolution / Concentration / Internalization**

The receptive (2) force initiates by opening or “taking in”, inviting the action of something which acts (1) upon it, with a reconciling (3) result that is internally organized. One way to picture this is as a person or system (2) becoming genuinely open to external input (1) (therapy, relationships, or constraints) so that a new internal configuration or new potential (3) can take shape. You may notice that the same concrete process can sometimes be described as “Evolution” (213) from the perspective of the one changing, and as “Creation” (123) from the perspective of the one initiating the intervention.

- **132: Interaction / Coordination**

The active (1) force initiates but reaches the receptive (2) field through the reconciling (3) factor, which functions as a medium of relation (e.g.: language, shared task, therapeutic frame). Consider a person (1) using the shared language of this framework (3) to communicate with other people (2) so that perceptual contact can actually be made.

- **231: Identity**

The receptive (2) force initiates, and its raw “suchness” is articulated and stabilized through the reconciling (3) factor, yielding a characteristic active (1) pattern as result. This transformation speaks of a receptive substrate (2), such as a person’s history or temperament, brought into contrast with a meaning-system (3), leading to the emergence of a recognizable mode of acting and being in the world, a relatively coherent identity (1).

- **312: Order / Universal Law**

The reconciling (3) force initiates, operating through the active (1) force to shape and organize the receptive (2) domain. This is a top-down structuring triad where a pattern, rule, or law (3) exerts itself via concrete actions or mechanisms (1) to impose order on conditions (2).

- **321: Freedom / Emptiness**

The reconciling (3) force initiates by acting first on the receptive (2) factor, softening or neutralizing resistance so that the active (1) force can operate unblocked. In the process referenced to in this triad, constraints are digested in advance so that action becomes unimpeded. It can be exemplified as a moment when new insight (3) transforms a person’s relationship to their conditions (2), allowing genuinely new responses (1) to emerge.

A working hypothesis of the Fusion Dynamics framework is that the six triadic processes can be clustered into two interdependent cycles:

- A “Creator” or Upper Cycle, oriented to purpose, pattern, and new form, and
- a “Created” or Lower or Cycle, oriented to conditions, embodiment, and maintenance.

The Creator or Upper Cycle

The Creator Cycle links three transformations (in a cyclic shift, where the first position rotates to the last):

312 (Order) → 123 (Creation) → 231 (Identity) → [repeat]

One way to read this sequence may be:

- **312 - Order**

The organism first orients itself within a lawful structure: “This is the kind of world I am in; these are its rules and constraints”. A “world-view” in the form of family influence, beliefs, cultural norms or values is at play.

- **123 - Creation**

With that orientation, the organism acts, and potential is converted into a concrete outcome: “Given this world, this is what I actually do”. Order informs action.

- **231 - Identity**

By seeing what has been produced and how it fits into its world, the organism recognizes itself in its own outcome: “I am the kind of organism that does this, in this way”. A more defined sense of “I-in-this-world” consolidates.

That revised identity then feeds back into a renewed sense of order: “Given what I now am, what kind of world am I living in?”. The cycle repeats, but not exactly as before: each loop subtly alters both the experienced world (312) and the sense of self within it (231), and therefore the kinds of actions (123) that become available.

The Created or Lower Cycle

The Created Cycle links the other three transformations:

132 (Interaction) → 321 (Freedom) → 213 (Evolution) → [repeat]

One way to read this sequence from the point of view of lived experience is:

- **132 - Interaction**

The organism is immersed in a stream of events, stimuli, and transactions: “Things happen to me and around me”. There is exchange, but mostly within a familiar range.

- **321 - Freedom**

Occasionally, something interrupts the usual stream: a shock, a pause, a moment of heightened awareness or unusual receptivity: “For a moment, I am not fully run by my usual scripts”. In this opening, alternatives can be sensed.

- **213 - Evolution**

Through that opening, a new pattern can be taken in and integrated: “I let something different affect me, and it changes what is now “normal” for me”. The organism reorganizes around what it has allowed in; new skills, new meanings, etc. The baseline conditions (nervous system, habits, expectations, etc.) shift and re-tune.

The result can be a gradual evolution of the “given”: what used to be fixed (typical arousal patterns, automatic beliefs, default coping, etc.) becomes more plastic.

The Horizontal Split: Internal and Systemic Modes

A careful look at the two Cycles hints that they work as a single, symbiotic system, constantly co-creating and supporting each other: while the Created (Lower) Cycle provides the material, the stability, and the “ground” for the Creator Cycle to act upon, the Creator (Upper) Cycle

provides purpose, direction, and new patterns that "pull" the Created Cycle. It is as if they feed upon each other.

By extending this rationale to the PRIA functions, we can "infuse" each function with two different roles, one of self-maintenance (implicit in the Created Cycle) and one of system-coherence (implicit in the Creator Cycle).³

This two-level requirement forces each of the four PRIA functions to differentiate into two Modes which operate simultaneously:

- **Internal Mode:** A function "for self". Preserving and regulating the organism's own integrity oriented to immediate viability, inner stability, and local concerns.
- **Systemic Mode:** A function "for whole". Contributing to, and aligning with, something larger. Oriented to the wider ecosystem (family, team, organization, community) and to one's role within it.

This distinction leaves us with a more granular eight possible Modes of operation.

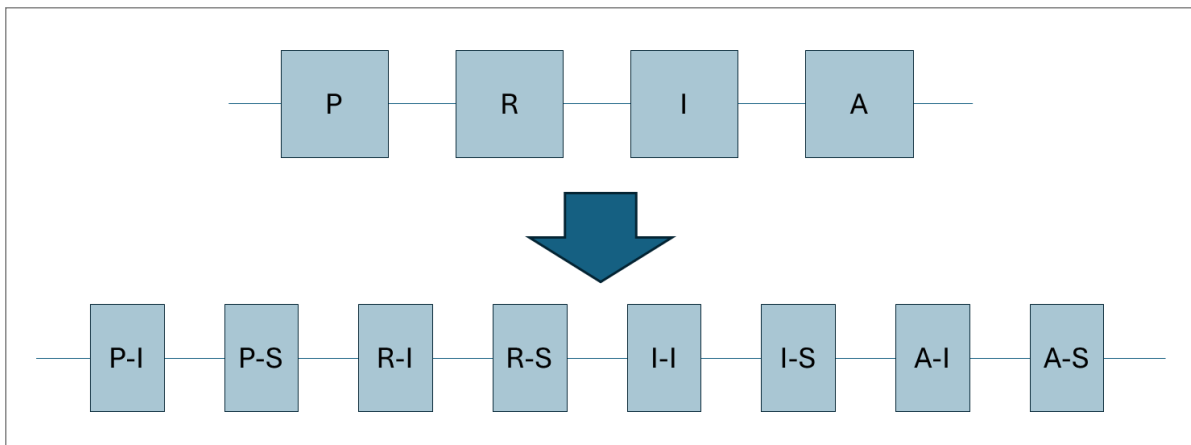


Figure 2: Deriving 8 Modes from the 4 Basic Functions

We can now name them explicitly.

³ If we arrange the six transformations in two columns of palindromes (312 over 213, 123 over 321, 231 over 132) and then follow the Creator cycle across the top row (312 → 123 → 231), the Created cycle runs in the opposite direction across the bottom row (132 ← 321 ← 213). In other words, as the Creator cycle advances "to the right," the Created cycle advances "to the left". This yields a pair of counter-running cycles: one that maintains and evolves conditions "from below," and one that introduces pattern and meaning "from above". This is compatible with Bennett's Systematics (the six triadic processes as reciprocally conditioning movements across levels), Wilber's holons (the constant polarity of agency "for self" and communion "for whole"), Maturana and Varela's autopoietic distinction between operational closure and structural coupling, and Beer's viable system architectures that couple autonomous operational loops to higher-order regulatory loops.

The Eight Modes: The Full Horizontal Map

Perception

- **Perception-Internal (P-I): Reality Contact**

Collecting reliable, immediate data so that the organism can navigate its own life. It asks: “What is actually happening right now, for me and around me?”.

- **Perception-Systemic (P-S): Essence Recognition / Pattern Insight**

To grasp the larger pattern: how facts fit together, what matters most, what the situation is “about”. The focus for this Mode is: “What is the deeper pattern or meaning of this situation as a whole?”.

Regulation

- **Regulation-Internal (R-I): Inner Steady-State / Emotional Regulation**

To regulate inner states (arousal, emotion, physiological balance) so the organism remains coherent and functional. It focuses on: “How do I hold and modulate what I am experiencing so I don’t fragment or shut down?”.

- **Regulation-Systemic (R-S): Aligned Ecosystem / Mutual Care and Limits**

To sense the state of the wider field (family, group, context) and align with it without self-erasure. “What does balance look like for the group, and how do I participate in that without losing myself?”.

Interaction

- **Interaction-Internal (I-I): 1-to-1 Relational Attunement**

To manage direct exchanges fairly and responsively (partners, friends, colleagues, clients). Its focus: “How do I stay in live, fair contact with this person in this moment?”.

- **Interaction-Systemic (I-S): Social Role and Contribution**

Job: to manage one-to-many relationships: groups, cultures, institutions, and their explicit and implicit rules. It asks: “What is my role here, and how do I play it so the system functions?”.

Action

- **Action-Internal (A-I): Initiative**

To spark personal will. The capacity to begin, choose, and move. The focus is on: “Given what I see and feel, what am I going to do now?”.

- **Action-Systemic (A-S): Creation / Contribution**

To build or produce something that serves a wider purpose beyond the immediate self (family, team, world). “What am I building that truly matters, beyond my personal interests?”

Note that these are not personality types. Every person has all eight Modes in principle; what varies is how each one operates.⁴

Hypothetically, if the Upper and Lower Cycles would mingle harmoniously, these Modes would operate in a fluid, lawful way; yet life conditions are not “ideal”, and so within these same Modes of operation, we can expect distortions and deviations to be produced.

Note on the Use of the Law of Three

In the following chapters I will use the Law of Three at two levels.

First, to describe a concrete moment of experience, I will speak of Active, Passive, and Reconciling Forces; what is pushing, what is resisting, and what is reconciling. This is basically a snapshot of a given situation.

Second, whenever I write a numbered Triad (such as 213) I will be talking about a characteristic pattern of change over time, a transformation.

Keeping both levels allows to analyze a point in time (three forces in a given moment), while still having a vocabulary of transformations when shifts in an organism’s functioning need to be described.

⁴ We can also note that, within this framework, the four PRIA functions can in principle be reconstructed from the Law of Three alone. For any transformation to occur there must be an input (Perception) and an output (Action) that is different from the input; whatever lies between those two poles must perform the work of regulation and exchange (Balance and Interaction). In that sense, the very ideas of input, output, and the processes in between are a natural consequence of transformation itself.

A more granular model might “purify” these four functions further. One could, for example, hypothesize a six-function base (Perceive-Receive, Balance-Process, Balance-Radiate, Interact-Receive, Interact-Give, Action-Output). If one then applied the same Internal/Systemic dimension to each of those six pure functions, a 12-function map would logically emerge. The current Framework keeps to the simpler 4×2 structure for clarity and usability.

Chapter 4: Levels of Availability (the Vertical Dimension)

Just as in biology, where mutations can be constructive or harmful, the “mutations” in how these processes meet can lead to deviations. In this framework, those deviations show up as the Constrained States (the Surplus and Deficit States) that will populate its vertical axis. This axis is not one of function, but of quality.

The Origin of Verticality and Duality

In line with the organizing principle of this framework, the vertical map is treated as modelling increasing distance from an integrated, lawful pattern of functioning or “source”. For the purposes of this model, each “further step down” represents a more localized configuration in which the organism has both increased richness of experience and fewer degrees of freedom, because at each step new constraints are added. Operationally, this “distance” manifests as degrees of automatism.

At these "distal" points of the system, deviations from lawful process are not just possible; they are built into the structure. This is not considered a structural error, but simply the model representing a world that allows, at least in design, for individuality and choice. Seeing this as a neutral fact, non-judgmentally, is what opens the door for the compassionate, practical tone of the framework.

Once "distance" and "deviation" are in place, the single, centered line of lawful harmony splits. A world of duality emerges.

For each of the eight Modes, any deviation from the “pure”, balanced center must go somewhere: tending to drift into one of two opposing directions. This is the origin of the two poles of unbalance or dysfunction:

- **The Surplus State:** A "too much, too hot" deviation.
- **The Deficit State:** A "too little, too cold, blocked" deviation.

A system "distanced" from its source is left at the effect of raw, un-harmonized, binary forces: a "push" and a "pull". We could hypothesize that the human experience of this "dissonance", this lack of harmony, is a sort of primordial stress.

This architecturally defines the “Constrained” States, which correspond to any of the 8 Modes when they are captured by the automatic push-and-pull of this raw, binary duality.

These two raw forces find a parallel with mechanisms described in biology: the Behavioral Activation System (BAS, the drive for expansion) and the Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS , the drive for contraction).

A characteristic of these systems that we can all relate to, is that when they are strongly engaged, they tend to narrow the organism’s options: attention is rapidly captured, pre-planned behavior is overridden, and responses become fast, stereotyped reactions. In such

moments there is very little real choice available, we simply “snap” into approach or avoidance until the activation subsides.

The Three Levels of Availability

At this point I need to name more precisely what the notion of “separation” has been hinting at: the operational field of the vertical axis. The easiest way to explore this is by looking at the extremes. At the top, we posit a lawful, relatively unconstrained pattern of functioning. At the bottom, we find a highly constrained configuration, with many layers of conditioning and opposing forces, to the point where behavior is largely automatic. What is missing at that lower extreme? Awareness. In this sense, the vertical axis models degrees of consciousness.

This "availability of Awareness" is the key.

When Awareness is present, the organism is no longer completely fused with either raw expansion or raw contraction, instead, a possibility appears; a third force has come into play. In a moment of opening the Reconciling Force of Awareness can hold the two opposing forces (push and pull) together in a wider field, marking the threshold in which an organism can choose an alternative.

While Awareness is a continuum, for the purpose of this map, we distinguish three distinct levels of availability which in daily life manifest as three States of Functioning:⁵

- **The Constrained State (Unaware):** This is the state of very low or no Awareness, of automatism. The organism is running on "autopilot". Behavior is not a choice, instead actions and reactions feel necessary, justified, or inevitable.

This is the state of being "stuck". In this state, we “are” the emotion or thought, rather than being able to see or managing them.

- **The Responsive State (In Transit):** This is the state of applied Awareness. It is the threshold where the organism "wakes up" to its own automatism and is able to see itself in a Constrained State, and thus not being fully absorbed by it.

This gap makes it possible to shift functioning: even if the Constrained State is still active, an alternative action has become available. Here, the organism can consciously apply a “Move” to manage the imbalance. In this framework, this whole process is the essence of “working on oneself”.

It is worth noting that Awareness is, in a sense, counter-habitual; it requires effort to go against the grain of our automatism.

- **The Balanced State (Aware):** This is the ideal "center line" of each Mode operating cleanly, freer from the friction of automatic patterns or external circumstance. Perception is clearer, Regulation is steadier, and Action is more aligned. It

⁵ The full developmental journey through levels of consciousness is a distinct hierarchical concept. This "Vertical Path", as described by others, is briefly presented in Appendix C.

corresponds to the “Middle Way” in Buddhism, or “The Golden Mean” in Aristotelian philosophy: the virtue that lies between the deficiency and the excess.

This allows for a more granular view of the possibilities of existence, when combined with the eight Modes of function, we now have 24 possible combinations of States:

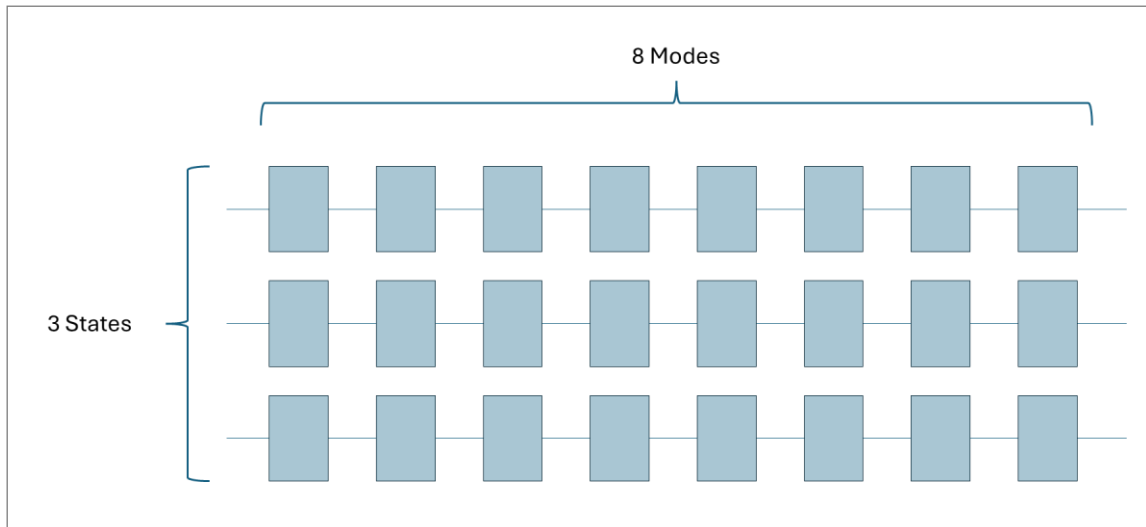


Figure 3: Acknowledging Verticality via 3 States

I do not provide further description of the Balanced level, as it is to be considered a dynamic ideal. It is a target to aim for, not something to achieve. The moment we assume (probably largely based on imagination) "I am balanced", our identification with that state means we are, by definition, no longer in a state of pure, present-moment awareness. We are in a new Constrained level. In practice, this means that “how honestly can I see and respond?” is a more useful question than “how often am I perfectly balanced?”

The effort is to be in a constant and aware process of balancing. This implies that Humility (acknowledging our shortcomings, possibilities and limitations) and Acceptance (the non-judgmental seeing of our state) are at the foundations of personal growth. Put another way, the process of Evolution (213) begins with a receptive stance: we must first allow ourselves to be affected by reality and see ourselves for what we are, so that the influence of Awareness can have an effect on us.⁶

⁶ Strictly speaking, when we describe a process as Evolution (213), the other five transformations are also present to some degree. Naming one triad simply means putting that aspect in the foreground because it is most relevant for the discussion at hand.

Chapter 5: The Fusion Dynamics Map

As we saw in the previous Chapter, the Constrained States are not a single point but a dual polarity (Surplus or Deficit). Concurrently, it is necessary to consider that the Responsive States must also offer two distinct directions of movement (one for each type of Constrained State). Therefore, the 3 States must be “unfolded” into 5 States.

For clarity, when I refer to a Responsive “State”, it means that I am describing the fact that Awareness is present. When I refer to a Responsive “Move”, I am describing, for practical purposes, an action to be taken. They are two sides of the same coin.

The Unfolding: From 3 to 5 States

We build the map from the center outward:

- **The Balanced State:** This is the ideal “center line” of coherence and the central row of the map.

For each of the 8 Modes, it is the state in which the function is doing its job cleanly and proportionately.

- **Responsive Moves:** Between the automatic poles of the Constrained States and the center lies the Responsive States, the arena of aware action. On the map, I label these rows by the specific action required to return to balance:
 - The Cooling Move: the conscious act that counters a Surplus State.
 - The Warming Move: the conscious act that counters a Deficit State.
- **The Constrained States:** The Constrained States account for automatic (unaware) functioning of the Modes. On the map, these occupy the top and bottom rows:
 - The Surplus State (the hot pole, associated with approach-dominant, BAS-like patterns).
 - The Deficit State (the cold pole, associated with avoidance-dominant, BIS-like patterns).

Putting this together, each of the 8 Modes can be expressed by 5 States, yielding 40 possible Combinations:

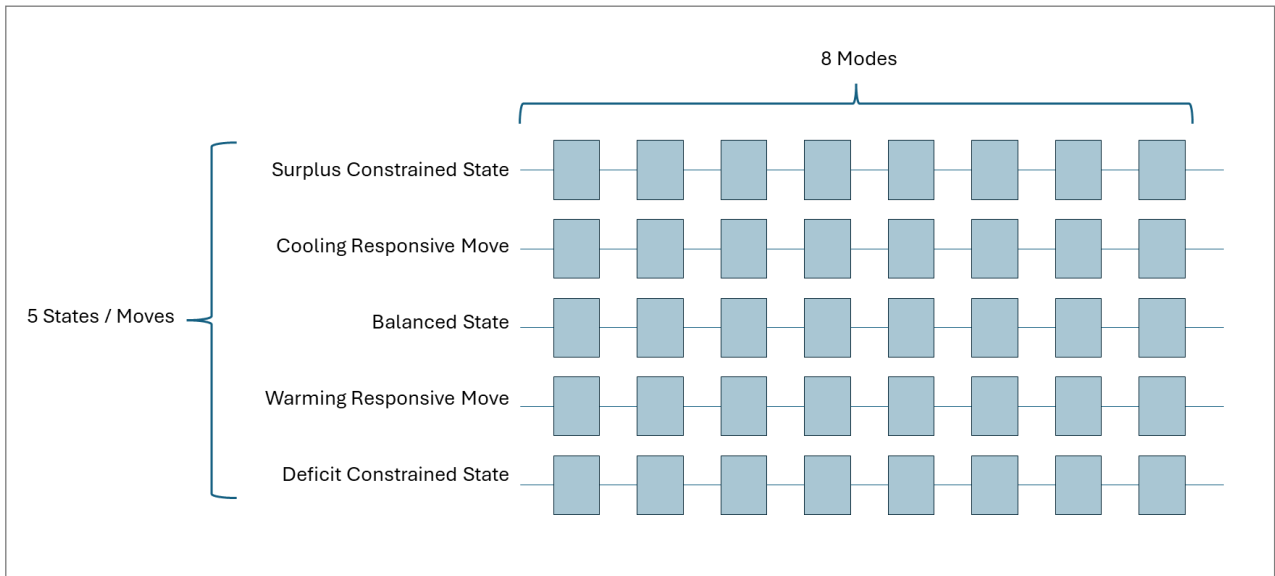


Figure 4: The Unfolded Map into 8 Modes and 5 States

Each of the 8 Modes can be pictured as a dynamic triangle. The Balanced State is the apex; the Constrained States are the wide base; and the Responsive Moves are the sides that guide us upward.

The Principle of “Same Impulse”

Before presenting the full map, I will point to an important principle from which the Moves are derived: The Constrained States (Surplus/Deficit) and their corresponding Responsive Moves (Cooling/Warming) are not different or opposing kinds of energy. They are two faces of the same underlying functional impulse.

Said differently: each Responsive Move is utilizing the same raw impulse that the corresponding counter Constrained State is based upon. The only difference between the States is if Awareness is acting as mediating factor or not.

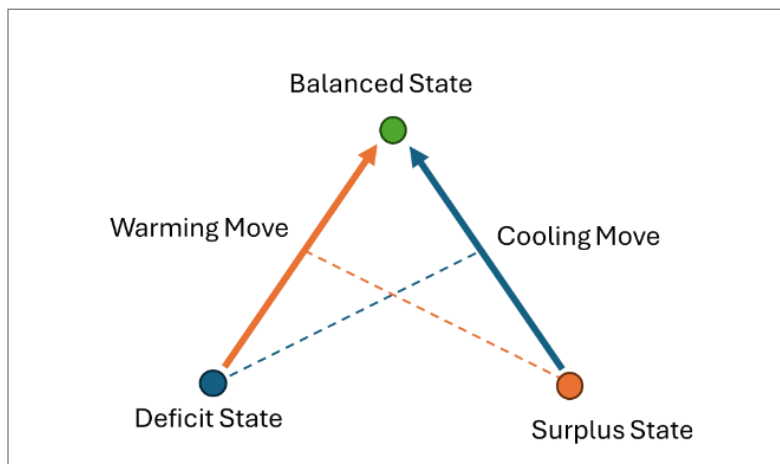


Figure 5: The Dynamic Triangle

A concrete example: in the Action-Internal Mode, the fundamental energy is will. Its negative side (Surplus) is Impulsive Action / Rashness, or will in raw, unmodulated form. Its positive side (Cooling Move) is Pacing Drive, meaning the same impulse of will but consciously paced and aligned with reality. This principle is replicated across all Modes and States.

The Fusion Dynamics method, therefore, is not about “fighting” or “eliminating” Recklessness. It is about redeeming the underlying impulse of will (or any other primordial impulse) by applying the conscious Move of Pacing Drive, so the organism can function more properly.

In this sense, the “problem” and the “solution” are made of the same substance; the difference is whether awareness is present, and at which degree.

The Fusion Dynamics Map: Abbreviated Chart

Below we present the finalized abbreviated version of the Fusion Dynamics Map including the 8 Modes (Columns) and the 5 States / Moves (Rows) that yield the 40 Combinations.

Table 1: The Abbreviated Fusion Dynamics Map

Mode	Perception-Internal (Reality Contact)	Perception-Systemic (Pattern Insight)	Regulation-Internal (Inner Steady-State)	Regulation-Systemic (Mutual Care and Limits)	Interaction-Internal (1-to-1 Attunement)	Interaction-Systemic (Social Role & Contribution)	Action-Internal (Initiative)	Action-Systemic (Creation Beyond Self)
Surplus State	Over-Focusing (Biased Facts) - hunting only confirming data, stuck on details.	Over-Patterning / Dogmatism - forcing everything into one fixed view.	Indulgence / Hedonism - chasing immediate comfort, losing regulation.	Submission / Self-Sacrifice - erasing oneself to keep the peace.	Craving / Enmeshment - clinging, losing oneself in the other.	Policing / Punitiveness - rigidly enforcing rules, over-controlling others.	Recklessness - acting fast without checking reality or impact.	Over-Achievement - compulsive doing for image, status, or ego.
Cooling Move	Widening Inquiry - broadening and checking facts, inviting disconfirming info.	Widening Contemplation - holding current view lightly while sensing other possibilities.	Centering - returning to neutral sensations (breath, posture, ground) to steady oneself.	Self-Accepting Limits - affirming one's needs and boundaries as valid.	Satiety & Boundaries - standing in one's own worth so contact is not driven by hunger.	Role Acceptance / Humility - relaxing control; doing one's part cleanly within limits.	Tempering Drive - pacing one's energy and timing.	Constrain to One Next Step - narrowing to a single, humble, concrete action.
Balanced State	Objectivity - seeing what is, with minimal distortion.	Clarity - a "click" of understanding of what truly matters here.	Equanimity - able to feel fully without being overwhelmed.	Empathy & Kindness - caring for the whole without losing oneself.	Fair Attunement - both people feel seen, not drained.	Transparent Order - clear roles and rules that feel fair and workable.	Initiative - calmly turning intention into action.	Creation - sustained work that brings something genuinely useful into the world.
Warming Move	Selective Allowing - letting in a small, manageable stream of relevant new data.	Discriminating Inputs - sorting and weighing information to find a coherent pattern.	Awakening Wish - gently rekindling the desire to feel more alive and present.	Connecting to a Larger Good - remembering why the whole matters, beyond one's comfort.	Seeking Connection - taking a clean step toward contact.	Finding Contribution - exploring where one can genuinely add value.	Purpose Re-Alignment - reconnecting with the deeper "why" to unfreeze.	Inspiration - opening to new ideas, meanings, and higher purposes that can guide work.
Deficit State	Shutting Out / Refusing Input - avoiding or rejecting information, especially if uncomfortable.	Hazy Confusion / Spurious Links - either only fragments, or false, tangled connections.	Emotional Numbing - feeling flat, distant from one's own emotions.	Self-Interest (Comfort First) - closing off to others; "my ease before everything".	Withdrawal / Emotional Deprivation - pulling away with the sense "my needs will never be met".	Feeling Useless / Aimless - "I have no place, no role, nothing to offer here".	Inertia / Dependence - stuck will; waiting for others to move first.	Hopeless Resignation - "nothing I do matters; nothing new is worth doing".

This chart uses simple, phenomenological language. For an extended version with correlating psychological constructs and detailed description of each of the 40 Combinations in the map, please see Appendix D.

I suggest printing or keeping this chart at hand for reference in the following chapters, as well as spending some time to internalize its structure.

Chapter 6: From Map to Movement (The Heuristics of Change)

We now turn from structure to movement: how can States shift in day-to-day life? How does an organism move from a Constrained State toward a more Balanced way of functioning?

In Chapter 4 we pointed to Awareness as the pivotal factor to separate from the push and pull of automatism. To reframe this in terms of the Law of Three, we can zoom in on a single moment of Awareness, where the three forces can be distinguished:

1. **A Responsive Move as the Active force.** Within the gap opened by Awareness, volition becomes possible. We can choose a concrete alternative, a Responsive Move, to redirect behavior.
2. **Automatism as the Passive force.** This is the established standard “situation”, where automatic patterns (a Surplus or Deficit State) restrain experience unto themselves, leading to reactive and repetitive behaviors.
3. **Awareness as the Reconciling force.** Its influence leads to a non-judgmental seeing of “what is happening right now” which opens the door to new possibilities. Awareness does not fight the pattern nor merges with it; it holds it, bringing both the pull of habit and the sense of an alternative into the same field.

In other words, in these crucial moments, when we can be aware of an automatic pull, we are no longer condemned to it.

In this chapter we will explore the alternatives presented to us by the Responsive Moves, as different ways of navigating the Fusion Dynamics Map toward Balanced States.

But first, I would like to clarify what I mean by a "Move".

In our lived experience, we cannot directly choose our emotions or our automatic thoughts. They "pop up" as signals from our automatic conditioning. We cannot simply command ourselves to "feel happy" or "stop thinking".

The only level of causality where we have direct influence is Action. In other words: sensing can come from anywhere (a thought, a feeling, a sensation), effect is only related to Action.

Therefore, every Responsive Move in this framework is an Action, whether it is internal (e.g., shifting attention to the breath, reframing a thought) or external (e.g., setting boundaries, walking away from an argument, or calmly holding the ground).

We cannot choose to be unaware, we simply are, as we cannot command a Balanced State to be, we can only choose a Move. We cannot control the signal; we can only control our response to it.

Within-Mode and Cross-Mode Moves

When there is Awareness of a Constrained State, there are two broad ways a Move can be selected:

1. Within-Mode balancing

Staying in the same Mode and using the countering Cooling or Warming Move to correct its Surplus or Deficit, correspondingly. For Example:

- Situation: Perception-Internal Surplus (“Over-Focusing”). “I cherry-pick data to prove my own point”.
- Awareness: “I notice I am only looking for confirming evidence”.
- Choice: “I deliberately seek disconfirming or neutral data” (Perception-Internal Cooling: “Widening Inquiry”).

Here the Move stays in the same Mode. In the given example, a Cooling Move of Perception-Internal is used to rebalance the Surplus State of the same Mode.

2. Cross-Mode balancing.

Recruiting another Mode to support the change. For example:

- Situation: Action-Systemic Surplus (“Over-Achievement”). “I keep on tinkering with a design project looking for a perfect delivery, and cannot pull myself to recover my strengths”.
- Awareness: “I notice that my body is exhausted and my relationships are strained”.
- Choice: Regulation-Systemic Cooling (“Self-Accepting Limits”) to settle (using a Move from a different Mode) and then return to Action-Systemic with a more balanced work schedule”.

The map on its own is not prescribing a single “correct” sequence, only providing possibilities to test. Each rule or heuristic that we choose to apply for selecting a Move starting from a given Constrained State, can create different intervention styles.

While the possibilities are many, the Fusion Dynamics framework highlights two specific heuristics for their combination of consistency and alignment with the model’s core logic. We will call them a Foundational Heuristic and a Breakthrough Heuristic.

The Foundational Heuristic: The “Nearby Helper”

This primary heuristic is grounded in the cybernetic logic of the PRIA loop. It is a logical solution that provides a highly effective, common-sense intervention for daily imbalances. We use the notation X to point to a specific Mode (or column in the map).

- For a Surplus State (X):
 - Rule: The Responsive Move is Cooling (X+1) (move forward one column).

- Logic: The system “cools” a “hot” Surplus by “dumping” the excess impulse forward onto the next function in the loop to be processed.
- For a Deficit State (X):
 - Rule: The Responsive Move is Warming (X-1) (move backward one column).
 - Logic: The system “warms” a “cold” Deficit by “drawing fuel” or support from the previous function in the loop.

How this works will be clearer by looking at a few examples:

Example 1 - A Surplus problem

- Surplus State: Rigid Patterning / Dogmatism (Perception-Systemic Surplus). A “hot”, rigid, and ungrounded drive to impose one pattern on everything.
- Rule (Foundational): The rule is Cooling (X+1). The next column (X+1) after Perception-Systemic is Regulation-Internal.
- Resulting Move: Centering (the R-I Cooling Move).
- Note: This is a classic mindfulness-type intervention. The system reconciles “hot”, rigid thinking (P-S) by cooling it with internal, bodily sensation (R-I). In practical terms: “Stop theorizing and get into your body”.

Example 2 - A Deficit problem

- Deficit State: Inertia / Dependence (Action-Internal Deficit). A “cold”, frozen internal will.
- Rule (Foundational): The rule is Warmig (X-1). The column before Action-Internal is Interaction-Systemic.
- Resulting Move: Finding Contribution (the I-S Warming Move).
- Note: This is a classic behavioral/systemic intervention. The “cold” internal will (A-I) is warmed by drawing fuel from the systemic drive to find a role (I-S). It instructs: “Don’t wait for your will to show up; find a team, a project, or a job that will pull it out of you”.

At this point it is helpful to remember that the PRIA functions form a loop, so the X+1 Mode for Action-Systemic (A-S) is Perception-Internal (P-I) and so on.

The Breakthrough Heuristic: The “Diagonal Cross”

This rule is useful in more entrenched or chronic Constrained States. It is closer to a “system reset” than a small adjustment.

This heuristic proposes that breakthrough may be obtained from a structural shift in perspective, reconciling both Dyads (Perception-Regulation ↔ Interaction-Action) and both types of Modes (Internal ↔ Systemic) at the same time. This yields four diagonal pairs:

- Perception-Internal (P-I) ↔ Interaction-Systemic (I-S)
- Perception-Systemic (P-S) ↔ Interaction-Internal (I-I)
- Regulation-Internal (R-I) ↔ Action-Systemic (A-S)
- Regulation-Systemic (R-S) ↔ Action-Internal (A-I)

In this heuristic, the Responsive Move jumps along the diagonal to the paired Mode (as well as taking the opposite temperature: Cooling for Surplus, Warming for Deficit).

Example 1 - A Surplus problem

- Surplus State: Over-Driven Achievement (Action-Systemic Surplus). A compulsive, “hot” state of systemic, external doing.
- Rule (Breakthrough): The diagonal cross of A-S is R-I.
- Resulting Move: Centering (the R-I Cooling Move).
- Note: This is a shocking intervention for a workaholic. The system reconciles “hot”, external doing (A-S) with “cool”, internal being (R-I). It instructs: “Stop doing, without justifications. Just be, inside, for a moment”.

Example 2 - A Deficit problem

- Deficit State: Emotional Numbing (Regulation-Internal Deficit). A “cold”, frozen internal numbness.
- Rule (Breakthrough): The diagonal cross of R-I is A-S.
- Resulting Move: Inspiration (the A-S Warming Move).
- Note: This is an intervention reminiscent of Logotherapy. The “cold” internal numbness (R-I) is not “fixed” by focusing on the numbness. It is reconciled by finding external, systemic inspiration (A-S). It instructs: “Find a creative act bigger than yourself, and the feeling will follow”.

Growth and Failure of Growth

Change or growth is not guaranteed. The same dynamics can lead to two very different trajectories:

- When automatism dominates and Awareness is ignored or numbed, the system tends to circle around the same Constrained patterns or degrade into even further stuckness.
- When Awareness is noticed but no Move is attempted, the result can be a stale mate, e.g.: self-criticism without change.

- When Awareness is noticed and at least one concrete Move is tested, however small, the system has an opportunity to learn. It may not jump to a perfectly Balanced State, but it can begin to move.

In that sense, the dynamics of growth described here are conceptually simple and do not require extraordinary capacities; they are ordinary processes that need to be repeated, moment by moment:

- a Surplus or Deficit State is recognized,
- a Move is attempted,
- and the organism may discover and strengthen, over time, the paths that lead to a more balanced functioning.⁷

Change and the Conditions for Happiness

One might argue that the heuristics presented here do not yield happiness, in fact, that they can be quite uncomfortable. And that might be true if we are talking about happenstance (happiness tied to circumstance), but thorough this work, we are aiming for something else.

Fusion Dynamics is about engineering the conditions under which a more stable form of happiness becomes possible. Each of the eight Modes, when balanced, contributes one ingredient to a deeper, more stable kind of well-being:

- A more Balanced **Perception** helps us see reality more clearly instead of living inside distortions or avoidance of facts.
- A more Balanced **Regulation** helps us stay internally at peace instead of chaotic or numb.
- A more Balanced **Interaction** makes relationships more reciprocal and less wounding.
- A more Balanced **Action** brings our efforts into alignment with what actually matters.

Philosophically, this is close to what many traditions (and some strands of modern psychology) call eudaimonia: living in alignment with one's capacities, values, and role, even when circumstances don't go our way.

Fusion Dynamics invites us to try to see happiness less as happenstance and more as a quality of experience that can remain present, at least in part, when we are facing experiences that are difficult or contrary to our personal liking.

⁷ While these Moves are described here as conceptual choices, physiology also plays its part, e.g.: we cannot "think" our way out of a threat response. This will be explored in Chapter 11: The Currents of Freedom.

There is no guarantee, but everything points to the possibility that, with time and steady practice, through the honest and consistent application of the Fusion Dynamics Heuristics we can increase the frequency and depth of Balanced States, reduce the time spent trapped in Constrained States, and make it more likely that, over time, experience begins to resemble a life that is both more peaceful and more satisfying.

In the next chapter I will return to this distinction and look more closely at what I mean by happiness and how it differs from the short-lived happenstance relief produced while inside Constrained States, as well as going deeper into the concept of Awareness as a prerequisite for any movement toward true well-being.

Chapter 7: Between Function and Dysfunction (The Struggle for Awareness)

If Awareness is so important, why is it so rare, unstable, and so easily lost?

Why, even if we “know the map”, do we find ourselves again and again pulled back into Constrained States?

To answer these questions, I will introduce the notion of Negative Triads: the same six lawful transformations described in Chapter 3, now seen in their distorted form.

Two Kinds of Happiness

In Chapter 6 I suggested that engineering happiness is not about chasing pleasant moods but about engineering the conditions under which a more stable form of well-being becomes possible.

We can distinguish two quite different definitions of happiness:

- **Happenstance happiness:** The relief when a Constrained State is temporarily soothed or gratified. While real at the level of the nervous system, it is short-lived and reactive (or automatically driven). It depends on things going a certain way.
- **Grounded happiness:** Unlike happenstance, which relies on external events aligning with our preferences, this second form of happiness (sometimes called eudaimonic well-being) is less dependent on what is happening to us, and more dependent on how we are meeting reality. I will call it “grounded happiness” to emphasize that it is not about elevated states but about a more stable relationship with what is. It is characterized by:
 - A sense of regulation that persists even when the environment is difficult.
 - A willingness to be in contact with the world rather than withdrawing from it.
 - A sense of acting from one's own center rather than being driven by mechanical compulsion.
 - An underlying quiet feeling of Peace, Joy and/or Gratitude.

One central problem of our lives could then be stated very simply: we spend most of our time inside Constrained States, chasing happenstance happiness, while a deeper, more stable happiness is also available, only through a different quality of functioning.

The rest of this chapter is about the hinge between those two possibilities, the crucial role of Awareness, and the factors that make it so hard to sustain.

The Spark of Awareness

In practice, no Constrained State ever decides to relinquish itself. From the inside, each Constrained State feels self-evident (“this is just how it is”), justified (“I have reasons to be like this”), and necessary (“if I let go of this, something bad will happen”).

If change depended on these States voluntarily changing their mind, nothing would ever move.

Awareness is what allows s to see the Constrained State for what it is, and from there, allow a separation from it. For example:

- “I am angry” becomes “I can see anger moving through me”.
- “I am a failure” becomes “I notice this familiar failure story”.
- “This is just who I am” becomes “I recognize this as a pattern, not my whole being”.

Three things are happening in such a moment:

1. The Constrained pattern is still present.
2. There is now a separate vantage point that can observe it.
3. In that gap, however small, a different response becomes possible.

If this spark is so central, what makes it so fragile? Why does it appear, and then vanish, often within seconds?

One way to approach this question is from inside the Constrained States themselves. What is so enticing about them that we are pulled back in, again and again, even when we might know better? What is the temptation we seem unable to resist? The answer, in line with this framework, lies in another great contribution of Bennett’s Systematics: The Negative Triads.

They are the distorted versions of the six basic transformations introduced in Chapter 3, the same structural movements, now operating in ways that keep Constrained functioning and make Awareness hard (or impossible) to sustain.

The Six Negative Triads: The Corrupted Engine

In Chapter 3 we described six basic transformations derived from the Law of Three:

- 312 (Order)
- 123 (Creation)
- 231 (Identity)
- 213 (Evolution)

- 132 (Interaction)
- 321 (Freedom)

When this same types of transformation have become heavily distorted (due to increasing constraint at each step down the scale of consciousness) they keep attention trapped in the familiar loops of the Constrained States, and make Awareness feel weak, irrelevant, or even dangerous.

I will denote these distorted versions as -(312), -(123), and so on, and refer to them as Negative Triads. Briefly:

- **-(312): Subjectivism**

Order collapses into “my private order”. Facts are tacitly rearranged to fit a pre-existing inner scheme while discrepant data simply does not register. The transformation now serves self-confirmation rather than reality and it becomes harder (if not impossible) to see things as they are.

You know this pattern when you walk out of a conversation having heard nothing that challenged your view, not because no one challenged it, but because the contradictions were filtered out before they registered. Or when you read an article and only retain the sentences that confirm what you already believed or feel comfortable with.

- **-(123): Useless Imagination**

The creative impulse detaches from real conditions and is contented within fantasy. Energy that could build something concrete is spent rehearsing futures, revisiting pasts, or constructing inner scenarios that never become real.

This is the two-hour inner rehearsal of a confrontation that never happens. The business plan revised endlessly in your head but never on paper. The fantasy of how someone might be thinking about you.

- **-(231): Fear**

Identity fuses with a brittle self-image (“my image”, “my status”, “my story”), followed by the fear of losing or exposing that construction. Behavior organizes around protecting this identity.

A manager avoids giving clear, difficult feedback; not because they lack insight, but because being seen as “the nice one” feels non-negotiable. The result is indirect communication, delay, or over-softening, which can register externally as avoidance and, in some cases, be interpreted as lack of backbone.

- **-(213): Self-Centeredness⁸**

The drive to evolve concentrates on the self as an end in itself. “My growth, my

⁸ In his original elaboration, J.G. Bennett utilized the term "Self-love" to describe the -(213) triad. However, in contemporary psychological discourse, "self-love" is frequently used to describe a healthy, necessary regard for one's well-being. To avoid ambiguity and to capture the restrictive, inward-

attainment, my specialness” become the organizing center. Development is still pursued but largely cut off from reciprocity and service; others are recruited as mirrors or instruments.

This shows up in the meditator who measures progress by how many hours they sit, or the therapist who uses client breakthroughs as proof of their own skill. The development is real, but it has also become a performance for an audience of one.

- **-(132): Waste**

Interaction mechanically continues, but it no longer builds anything of value. Time, attention, and relational energy are dispersed in automatic exchanges: habitual chatter, scrolling, or conflict. Activity without purpose.

Forty-five minutes into a group chat argument about something no one will remember next week. An evening of scrolling that began “just to check” and ended with a vague sense of having been robbed. The meeting that produced no decision but gave everyone the feeling of having done something.

- **-(321): Identification**

The capacity for Freedom collapses into fusion with a role, mood, or narrative: “this state is me”. The very capacity to choose how we relate to experience is lost, so Constrained States feel absolute and inescapable, the exact opposite of the 321 Freedom triad.

“I’ve always been anxious... it’s just who I am”. In that sentence, the possibility of relating differently to anxiety has already been closed. The state has been promoted from weather to climate, from something passing through to something that defines the territory.

A few clarifications are important:

- The Negative Triads are not located in any single Mode. Each one can tint Perception, Regulation, Interaction, and Action at once.
- They are not “extra” pathologies on top of the map. They are underlying patterns that feed the Constrained States and help explain why they are so sticky.
- They are largely invisible from the inside (and often difficult to read from the outside as well, though a skilled observer may sometimes catch their traces in recurring patterns of behavior). Subjectivism feels like “being right”. Useless Imagination feels like “just thinking things through”. Identification feels like “this is who I am”. This is why we consider them as a veil over Awareness.

Seen together, the six Negative Triads form a kind of corrupted engine: instead of allowing for creation, identity, evolution, interaction, and freedom, they inhibit Awareness and keep the organism cycling within Constrained States.

collapsing nature of this pattern as defined in this framework, I have adopted the term "Self-Centeredness".

We need to remember (here, and whenever we catch ourselves viewing any part of the framework through a negative lens) that the Negative Triads are not “bad” *per se*; they are simply one aspect of the same architecture that also includes the original, harmonious Triads describing optimal functioning. As Jeanne de Salzman put it, “We struggle not against something, we struggle for something”: not against Negative Triads, automatism, or Constrained States, but for Awareness, growth, and grounded happiness.

Up to this point, I have laid out all the components of the Fusion Dynamics framework, and can proceed to compare it to established psychological models. In subsequent chapters I will dive deeper into the application of the framework.

Chapter 8: Mapping Correlations (Alignment with Psychological Models)

Up to this point, I have presented the Fusion Dynamics framework as a self-contained proposition, but is it compatible with modern psychological studies and practice? In this chapter I will explore this question having as reference well-established models of personality, dysfunction, and therapy.

Personality and Structure

Trait models such as the Big Five and HEXACO are primarily descriptive: they summarize what tends to be present, on average, in a person's emotional and behavioral repertoire, but do not offer, in themselves, a mechanistic explanation.

In Fusion Dynamics terms, a trait can be seen as a heavily used configuration on the map: which States and Modes are used more often than others across stretches of time. In other words, it treats traits as emergent patterns of functioning.

Big Five / HEXACO

Below, I offer a broad comparison between constructs from the main trait models in use currently and the emergent qualities of specific State-Mode configurations in the Fusion Dynamics Map:

- **Neuroticism / Emotional Stability**
 - High Neuroticism can be read a person that spends more time in Constrained States, especially in Regulation-Internal (R-I) and Perception-Internal (P-I), thus exhibiting difficulty holding emotion and a bias toward catastrophizing or avoidance of internal signals.
 - Emotional Stability is seen as a tendency to spend less time in Constrained Regulation-Internal (R-I) and Perception-Internal (P-I), and more time in their Responsive or Balanced variants. In practice, this means negative emotion is less likely to escalate into chronic overload or shutdown, and recovery from stress is smoother, with corresponding cascading effects in the other Modes.⁹

- **Agreeableness**

Empirical work suggests at least two components of Agreeableness, Compassion and Politeness, which can be split into different Modes:

⁹ In general, cascading effects are expected in line with the feedback notion of the PRIA functions as discussed in Chapter 1.

- Compassion which can be linked to Balanced Regulation-Systemic (R-S): genuine concern for an extended group.
- Politeness / Compliance which mimics patterns that can be found in Interaction-Internal (I-I) and Interaction-Systemic (I-S): how we manage fairness, yielding, and boundaries.
- **Conscientiousness**

Conscientiousness can be loosely decomposed into two clusters:

 - Orderliness, dutifulness, and reliability, which are emergent qualities of Action-Systemic (A-S) in a Balanced State: coordinated action in service of shared structures, norms, and tasks.
 - Industriousness, self-discipline, and initiative, which are also emergent qualities of the Balanced Action-Internal (A-I) Mode, showing as sustained personal effort, follow-through, and self-directed drive.
- **Openness / Intellect**
 - Intellect is related to Perception-Internal (P-I) as acceptance and even enjoyment of complex information, analysis and problem-solving.
 - Openness can be linked to a Balanced Perception-Systemic (P-S) Mode: sensitivity to patterns, openness to new ideas and information, and cognitive flexibility.
- **Honesty-Humility (HEXACO)**
 - Low exploitation and entitlement, high fairness and sincerity map into Balanced use of Interaction-Systemic (I-S) and Regulation-Systemic (R-S): fulfilling one's role without manipulation or self-sacrifice.

Even though I had worked with these trait models before developing the current Fusion Dynamics Map, I did not design it to fit them. Looking back, it has been a surprise to see how often the structure of the map appears to overlap, in non-trivial ways, with how personality is currently measured.

It is interesting to note also that the map provides in some cases more granularity than classical models. Whenever a broad trait is known to contain distinct facets (for example, Compassion vs Politeness, or Orderliness vs Industriousness), those facets often map cleanly onto different Modes.

The summarized complete mapping is provided in Appendix E: The Landscape of Constraint.

Schemas and Structural Vulnerabilities

In this section, I contrast the map to Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS), showing how they can be described as recurring functional postures in specific Modes.

Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS), in schema therapy, are enduring patterns of meaning about self and others. They are usually formulated as cognitive-emotional “stories” that feel like deep truths, such as:

- “I must submit to others; my needs do not matter”,
- “No one will ever truly meet my emotional needs”,
- “I am fundamentally inadequate”,
- “I must be perfect to be acceptable”.

These stories are not momentary thoughts; they are structural vulnerabilities that bias perception, emotion, and action across situations and time. In the Fusion Dynamics language, they can be seen as “scripted” Constrained States, exhibiting the corresponding pattern of automaticity and self-confirmation.

When translated into this map, they often look like chronic Constrained States in specific Modes. For example:

- **Subjugation:** Regulation-Systemic (R-S) Surplus: over-yielding to the system, self-erasure “for others”.
- **Emotional Deprivation:** Interaction-Internal (I-I) Deficit: isolation, bitterness, “my needs will never be met in 1-to-1 closeness”.
- **Failure:** Interaction-Systemic (I-S) Deficit: “I have no real place; I cannot occupy a role competently”.
- **Unrelenting Standards:** Action-Systemic (A-S) Surplus: Over-Achievement, compulsion to do more, never enough.

Many schemas are clearly blends of different Modes (e.g., Defectiveness / Shame mixes R-I and I-I Deficits), but the pattern repeats: schema language captures the story while the Fusion Dynamics Map captures the functional posture that makes the story believable and self-perpetuating.

When I first laid the Fusion Dynamics Map side by side with Young’s schema model, again I was struck by how many of the 18 schemas seemed to “land” on recognizable Constrained configurations without having designed the map for that purpose. In this case, the direction of granularity is partly reversed: the schema list is more fine-grained in language (18 named patterns), while the Fusion Dynamics Map is based upon only 8 functional Modes (16 possible Constrained States).

As a result, several things happen at once:

- Some schemas map fairly cleanly onto a single dominant Constrained configuration (like the examples above).
- Many schemas can be seen as blends of more than one Mode-State pair (for example, Defectiveness / Shame mixes Regulation-Internal and Interaction-Internal Deficits).

- Some Constrained States in the map do not seem to have an obvious one-to-one schema label in the current EMS taxonomy. These can be thought of, cautiously of course, as candidate structural vulnerabilities that have not been carved out explicitly in that framework.

When several schemas map to the same Constrained configuration, the overlay of context (values, underlying motivations, emotional profile, etc.) may provide the nuance for a clearer mapping.

A summarized interpretive schema mapping is offered in Appendix D.

Dimensional Psychopathology

Dimensional models such as AMPD and HiTOP identify broad tendencies in how psychopathology is expressed. When viewed through the lens of the Fusion Dynamics Map certain resonances can also be sketched:

- **Detachment** overlaps with Interaction-Internal and Action-Internal Deficits: withdrawal, isolation, and lack of initiative in contact.
- **Antagonism** reflects skewed patterns in Regulation-Systemic and Interaction-Systemic: exploitation, hostility, and contempt for mutuality.
- **Disinhibition** describes behavior consistent with Surplus Action States coupled with a diminished capacity to access Balanced Regulation-Internal.
- **Negative Affectivity** seems to capture a chronic bias toward Constrained States of Regulation-Internal and Perception-Internal.
- **Psychoticism**, in its milder forms, touches the Surplus State of Perception-Systemic (unusual or idiosyncratic patterning of experience) with impaired grounding in Regulation-Internal.

Some authors propose a single general factor of psychopathology, a “p-factor”. In Fusion Dynamics terms, this can be viewed as a system-wide lack of functional Awareness: across many Modes, experience is dominated by Constrained States, with very little stable capacity to notice automatic patterns and choose alternative Moves.

Relational Models

Two relational frameworks show particularly strong resonance with the Fusion Dynamics framework:

- **Adult attachment:** While Attachment Anxiety is an expected manifestation of the Interaction-Internal Surplus State (craving, clinging, and fusion-seeking), Attachment Avoidance corresponds with the Interaction-Internal Deficit State (distancing, self-protection, and “I cannot rely on anyone” type of thinking). The Balanced State of

Interaction-Internal approximates the moment-to-moment functioning associated with secure attachment in close relationships: a capacity for mutual closeness without fusion or withdrawal.

- **Interpersonal circumplex:**

- **Communion** (warmth versus coldness) maps to Regulation-Systemic and Interaction-Internal patterns: attuned presence versus withdrawal, rejection, or emotional flatness.
- **Agency** (dominance versus submission) maps to Interaction-Systemic and Regulation-Systemic Surplus/Deficit patterns: over-control, coercion, or dominance vs abdication of role or chronic deference.

The core observation is that attachment styles and interpersonal “positions” look like stable, relational postures in the Interaction and Regulation Modes.

Neither dimensional psychopathology models nor interpersonal models were used explicitly to generate the Fusion Dynamics Map, although, given their generality, it is not surprising that relatively clean conceptual resonances can be found.

Therapeutic Practices

From the Fusion Dynamics perspective, every therapeutic approach can be seen as choosing which Modes to work in, preferring certain Moves (Cooling or Warming; within-mode or cross-mode), and bringing forth Awareness so change may occur.

Below I highlight a few of the clearest resonances with standard psychological intervention models I could find. Appendix E presents a fuller mapping of potential correlations.

Cognitive and Behavioral Approaches

Cognitive and behavioral therapies (CBT, behavioral activation, exposure-based work, and habit training), in Fusion Dynamics language, work primarily around Perception-Internal (P-I), Regulation-Internal (R-I), Action-Internal (A-I) and Action-Systemic (A-S) Modes, by encouraging cycles of noticing a distorted Perception or blocked Action (dysfunction derived from a Constrained State), questioning or reframing it (bringing Awareness to it), and taking a different step in behavior (performing a Chosen Move).

Typical examples:

- **Cognitive restructuring** can be thought of as propitiating a shift from P-I Surplus (“Over-Focusing”: over-interpretation, catastrophizing) toward the Cooling Move of P-I (“Widening Inquiry”: testing hypotheses and noticing alternative interpretations), and sometimes recruiting the Cooling Move of R-I (“Centering”) when thoughts are tightly fused with bodily anxiety.

- **Behavioral activation** often functions as a Warming Move for A-I Deficit (inertia, no initiative). Rather than waiting to “feel like it”, the person is invited to act anyway in small, structured ways. This resembles the Foundational heuristic where a cold A-I state often needs to “borrow fuel” from the previous column (Interaction-Systemic), for example by reconnecting to roles, contribution, or social commitments that pull the person into action.
- **Exposure and habit training** works on gradually Cooling Surplus fear patterns (often in P-I and R-I) while Warming A-I and A-S. Repeated, titrated encounters with feared situations loosen the grip of Constrained Perception (“this is unbearable / catastrophic”) and Constrained Regulation (panic, collapse), while strengthening the capacity to act in the presence of fear.

ACT and the Negative Triads

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) shows one of the clearest alignments with the factors that constrain Awareness: the Negative Triads. ACT describes six core processes that maintain psychological inflexibility:

- **Cognitive fusion:** being “stuck to” one’s thoughts.
- **Experiential avoidance:** unwillingness to feel what is present.
- **Dominance of past/future:** getting lost in mental time.
- **Lack of present-moment contact:** living on autopilot, half-absent from here and now.
- **Lack of values clarity:** not knowing what truly matters.
- **Inaction or avoidant persistence:** not doing what matters, or staying busy to avoid it.

These can be read as closely paralleling the experiential outcomes of the **six Negative Triads**:

- **-(321) Identification:** Cognitive fusion and “self-as-content”; thoughts and self-stories are taken as literally true, rather than events in awareness.
- **-(231) Fear:** Experiential avoidance; not wanting to feel anything that might threaten a fragile sense of self or expose its limitations.
- **-(123) Useless Imagination:** Dominance of past/future; mental time travel and scenario-building that never returns to grounded action in the present moment.
- **-(312) Subjectivism:** Lack of present-moment contact; living inside a private narrative that filters or overrides shared reality.
- **-(213) Self-Centeredness:** values narrowed to “me and my story”; the orienting function of values collapses into self-centered agendas, disconnected from a larger whole.
- **-(132) Waste:** Inaction or persistence of avoidance; cycles of either frozen non-doing or busy, repetitive activity that do not contribute to what actually matters.

Conversely, the six flexibility processes in ACT (defusion, acceptance, present-moment contact, self-as-context, values, committed action) can be understood as a toolkit of Moves that bring Awareness to each Negative Triad, and support specific Cooling/Warming transitions on the map. For example:

- **Defusion** loosens Identification. Thoughts and self-descriptions are seen as events, not facts, making it easier to notice Perception-Internal Surplus and Regulation-Internal Constrained States without merging with them.
- **Acceptance** diminishes the Fear-driven refusal to feel, opening space for more Balanced Regulation-Internal (“I can be with this”) rather than avoidance or disconnection.
- **Committed Action** channels energy away from Waste and toward concrete Moves in Action-Internal and Action-Systemic, often through small, values-guided steps.

In other words, ACT and the treatment of Negative Triads by the Fusion Dynamics framework seem to converge on form and aim.

Emotion and Relationship Focused Approaches

Other therapeutic traditions resonate more with the relational and affective parts of the map, working directly in Regulation and Interaction.

- **Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT)** works explicitly within Regulation-Internal (primary emotional experience) and Interaction-Internal (attachment patterns in close relationships). The process of accessing, symbolizing, and transforming emotion often means moving from Constrained R-I (numbness, overwhelm) to a Responsive State where the feeling can be held, and then toward a more Balanced R-I (“I can feel this and stay with it”) and more Balanced I-I (“I can be vulnerable”).
- **Attachment-based and couple therapies** targets repeated Surplus/Deficit patterns in I-I and I-S (pursue/withdraw, attack/defend, parent-child reversals). Therapists often help each partner recognize their Constrained State, hold Awareness in the middle of a live interaction, and choose alternative Moves (Cooling or Warming) that support more mutual, Balanced I-I and R-S (regulation of the whole party).
- **Compassion-focused and compassion-based approaches** (e.g., CFT and many mindfulness-based protocols) can be read as systematic attempts to Warm Regulation-Internal and Regulation-Systemic. Soothing imagery, compassionate self-talk, and compassion toward others all work to quiet over-dominant threat circuits (Fear, Subjectivism, Identification) and make Awareness more available.

Summary of Therapeutic Practices

Seen through Fusion Dynamics, these therapies are different ways of walking the same terrain. Some focus more on Perception and Action (cognitive-behavioral lines) while others focus more on Regulation and Interaction (emotion- and relationship-focused lines), but all, in practical terms, aim to increase the availability of Moves to spend less time in Constrained States, and more time in Responsive/Balanced States, using their own language and heuristics.

I should also note that, as a non-psychologist, while I was aware of these therapies and may have a broad, outsider's understanding of them, I had not have them (or any other) in mind when assembling the Fusion Dynamics Map, so once again, I was struck by how clearly the map seems to point toward the same directions they are trying to move in, and the arenas in which they operate. Of course, seeing the direction and actually walking the path are very different things. The framework can suggest where and how an intervention might act, but the quality and effectiveness of that work depend on the specific methods, skills, and delivery of each therapeutic approach. These matters lie beyond the scope of this text.

Contextual Overlays

A third line of enrichment of experiential context may be brought in from additional constructs or overlays that do not describe functions or techniques, but background conditions that provide added qualities to each configuration in the map. In this section I point to six such constructs:

- **Affective tone** (valence, arousal) indicates whether a configuration feels pleasant or unpleasant, calm or activated, and is helpful distinguishing, for example, a “busy but energized” Surplus from a “tense and overwhelmed” one, allowing to choose between possible Cooling Moves.
- **Locus of control** captures where a person tends to locate cause and responsibility: themselves, in other people, or in circumstances. It helps distinguish, for example, “this is all my fault” from “this is all their fault” versions of the same Constrained State, and so orient Moves toward either internal change or systemic/relational adjustment.
- **Basic psychological needs (SDT)** tracks how autonomy, competence, and relatedness are being supported or frustrated in each configuration, linking States and Moves to concrete needs. For example, it can help us understand which needs are being protected by a given Constrained posture.
- **Values** indicate which expected pains or gains (e.g. security, achievement, benevolence, etc.) are influencing a given pattern. They link the dryness of the map to “what matters”, helping us understand why a person might remain in an unbeneficial configuration of State and Modes (maybe defending a valued goal), and how Moves can be framed as value-consistent.

- **Role / Self-configuration** refers to the recurrent “selves” or roles that appear across contexts (parent, manager, friend, inner critic, victim, fixer, etc.), each with its characteristic pattern of Modes and States, allowing work to focus on specific configurations instead of treating the person as a single, uniform profile.
- **Readiness to Move** indicates, within a given Mode-State, how feasible it is for a person to carry out a specific Move in this moment, reflecting a mix of perceived safety, motivation, clarity, skill, and available support. This helps tailor the intervention, for example, by choosing a smaller or indirect Move when readiness is low, and a fuller or more demanding Move when readiness is higher.

These overlays do not change the structure of the map; they enrich it, while providing valuable nuance to determine possible Moves. Additional dimensions such as developmental history, cognitive ability, or structural stressors may also be considered alongside this framework.

Well-Being Models:

In contemporary psychology, happiness is usually discussed under the umbrella of subjective well-being (SWB): a combination of life satisfaction, frequent positive emotion, and relatively little negative emotion. This is a useful way to measure how people feel about their lives, but it is deliberately agnostic about how that state is produced. A high SWB score can arise from many different internal configurations, including fairly constrained ones.

Fusion Dynamics takes a more structural broad stance. Conceptually it is closer to psychological well-being (PWB), which emphasizes autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Conceptually, these align closely with the Balanced Modes of the Fusion Dynamics Map (see Appendix G: The Landscape of Flourishing for details).

Similarly, well-being models such as PERMA, which distinguish Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, can be seen as “surface-level” summaries of lives in which the four PRIA functions spend more time in Responsive and Balanced States.

So, while SWB provides the summary (how life currently feels), and PWB and PERMA describe the visible shape of a flourishing life, Fusion Dynamics proposes a set of inner mechanics designed to move all three families of indicators in a positive direction.

Scope and Limits of the framework

With the structural and intervention layers in place, and with the addition of the six overlays the Fusion Dynamics Map can say quite a lot about how a person is functioning at a given moment and how feasible a given Move is from within that configuration. Even so, important domains remain outside the scope of this framework:

- **Cognitive ability:** The framework does not model raw mental “horsepower” (g, CHC factors) or processing capacity.
- **Temperament and biology:** Baseline features such as BIS/BAS set-points, arousal thresholds, genetics, neurochemistry, sleep, hormones, medication effects, and severe organic, neurodevelopmental, or neurological conditions can strongly bias functioning. The map can still be used to describe daily patterns, but it does not attempt to model these mechanisms.
- **Developmental history and narrative content:** Attachment history, trauma, learning experiences, and the specific stories people hold about themselves and others (beliefs, images, autobiographical memories) all influence where someone tends to be on the map, yet they are not directly encoded in the structure.
- **Structural and contextual factors:** Chronic stressors such as poverty, discrimination, unsafe environments, or lack of access to care can constrain which Moves are realistic or safe, regardless of internal willingness.

For these reasons, the Fusion Dynamics Map plus overlays is best read as a generic functional scaffold, not as a full account of why any given life looks the way it does.

Likewise, the Fusion Dynamics framework does not replace existing therapies or claim superior effectiveness, nor does it prescribe a single “correct” intervention sequence. What it offers is a unified language for describing what many therapies already do, a way to see missing Moves (for example, a treatment that works only in Perception but neglects Action and Interaction), and a compact set of heuristics for designing and testing new, integrative interventions. The correlations with personality models, schemas, dimensional psychopathology, relational frameworks, and well-being models suggest that its structure is not arbitrary, but they do not in themselves demonstrate efficacy.

The ultimate test remains pragmatic: do these distinctions and mappings help real people suffer less or create for themselves more stable forms of happiness and meaning in their lives? In the chapters that follow, I explore that possibility.

Chapter 9: The Currents of Constraint (Mapping Negative Emotions)

Having established the overall layout of the Fusion Dynamics framework, in these final chapters I will turn to how it can actually be used in our personal lives. To begin that exploration, this chapter focuses on the role of negative emotions.

Attention, Awareness, and “Leaks”

In Fusion Dynamics the basic currency of our inner life is Attention and Awareness is the mechanism that decides how that currency is spent.¹⁰

Attention is defined as directed tension: the organism’s “lean” toward an object, thought, or impulse, and Awareness as the wider field in which that tension is noticed.

Attention says “this”, while awareness says: “I notice I am looking at this”. This distinction reveals their dependency. Since Awareness operates as the wider field that notices where tension is directed, it relies on that tension to exist. Ergo, any increase in Awareness depends on the capacity to attend that can be employed.

If there is no Awareness, there is also no separation, and the organism simply lives inside whatever it is absorbed in. This is Attention fused with the object, which is what happens in Constrained States: Attention is captured by inner movies, inconsequential worries, or hijacked by automatic reactions. In other words, in these States attention leaks; there is a constant lack of gathered attention.

But Attention can also be made more stable and staying with an object or situation without collapsing into distraction or absorption. It can be made flexible, shifting its focus as needed rather than being dragged. The difference is Awareness.

When Awareness is present, the movement of attention itself becomes an object of perception. In that brief opening, we can see where the fuel has gone and redirect it. In other words: Directed Attention is the fuel; Awareness is the spark that turns mechanical contact into conscious direction.

¹⁰ The distinction proposed here between attention and awareness follows a long lineage. In the classical Yoga tradition, dharana is defined as focused attention on a single object, while dhyana is the continuous, unbroken awareness of that object. Modern mindfulness is often defined as “the awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally”, explicitly treating attention as the mechanism and awareness as the resulting field. Contemporary cognitive neuroscience distinguishes focused-attention practices from open-monitoring practices, mirroring our distinction between directed tension and the wider field that can notice it. For a detailed breakdown of the distinction between Attention, Awareness, and Presence see Appendix H: The Mechanics of Consciousness.

The Importance of Emotions

Why emotions? Because emotions are where the leaking of attention becomes most tangible.

A large body of research in cognitive and affective neuroscience shows that emotionally charged events, especially those linked to threat or loss, grab our attention faster and hold it more stubbornly than neutral ones. Studies by Vuilleumier, Pessoa, Fox and others, using reaction-time tasks and brain imaging, suggest that structures involved in detecting significance (such as the amygdala) can “turn up the volume” on sensory and attentional systems, making us notice what feels important or dangerous first. In parallel, work on the “negativity bias” (Baumeister, Rozin, Kahneman and colleagues) indicates that negative events and emotions usually have stronger and longer-lasting effects on our judgments and memory than equally intense positive ones.

Put simply: emotions have direct access to our attentional system, and negative emotions have priority boarding.

On top of that, most of us grow up in cultures that explicitly train thinking and doing but offer relatively little systematic training in emotional literacy and regulation, despite clear links between emotional competence and well-being. This means that for many people, emotional life is both highly powerful and relatively unexamined.¹¹

So, if Attention is the currency of our inner life, and emotion is the domain that most reliably seizes that currency, learning to recognize and relate to them is therefore one of the most leveraged ways to work with Attention and, through Attention, with Awareness.

To educate ourselves about emotions we draw once again on a derivation of the Law of Three: the Negative Triads. In Chapter 7 we saw that they are the corrupted engine keeping attention trapped in the loops of the Constrained States. It is therefore natural to expect a close connection between what drives those States (the Negative Triads) and what most reliably scatters attention (emotions). As it turns out, the Negative Triads offer a clean way to organize negative emotions into a manageable number of categories instead of an undifferentiated pool of separate feelings.

Three Negative Primordial Emotional Currents

Phenomenologically, the six Negative Triads cluster into three broad directions that can help explain how we tend to move emotionally:¹²

¹¹ Comparable arguments could be made about bodily sensation and about thinking, and both are important. I will however focus on emotion because it is often where people first notice that “something is happening”, it sits at the junction of body and thought, and it offers a relatively nuanced, nameable set of states. The body and cognition are always in the background of what follows, but emotion is the doorway I will use.

¹² These are literal correlates of Karen Horney’s categories of moving against (aggressive), moving away (detachment), and moving towards (compliant).

- **Moving Against:** trying to push reality (or others) into line.
- **Moving Away:** withdrawing from the present.
- **Moving Towards:** attempting to fuse with something to feel safe or whole.

Each of these currents has an Active pole and a Passive pole:

- **Active:** over-driven, expressive, outward-leaning.
- **Passive:** under-driven or collapsed, inward-sinking, held in.

That gives six practical currents that cover most of what people usually describe as “difficult feelings”.¹³

These three currents also connect to the biological systems introduced in Chapter 4. The Behavioral Activation System (BAS) provides the raw drive behind both Moving Against and Moving Towards: one oriented toward forcing, the other toward fusing, but both are approach-driven impulses. The Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) provides the substrate for Moving Away: the pull to withdraw, disengage, or freeze. This mapping is consistent with Gray’s motivational model, in which BAS energizes approach (whether aggressive or appetitive) and BIS energizes withdrawal and passive avoidance.

Importantly, the Active and Passive poles of each current do not map one-to-one onto BAS and BIS. Even within Moving Away (a BIS-driven current), Active-Away has a restless, buzzing quality that borrows BAS-like agitation, while Passive-Away settles into classic BIS shutdown.

Moving Against: Misalignment

Mostly fed by –(213) Egoism (“my gain first”) and –(312) Subjectivism (“my private order of how things should be”). The basic motion is “I must push reality (or other people) into line with what I need and how I see things”.

- **Active - Against:** This is the attacking face of the Against current which feels like heating up, pressure, indignation, entitlement and sense of being justified. Typical emotions are irritation, anger, outrage, contempt, “fed-up-ness”.
- **Passive - Against:** In this current aggression is still there, but it is held and weaponized over time rather than expressed directly showing up as bitterness, holding grudges and a cool hostility. Typical emotions here are resentment, simmering hatred, sour envy and grudge-holding.

¹³ The framework treats emotion, phenomenologically, as directional impulse: the felt “push” or “pull” that organizes movement. That makes it natural to group Negative Triads by the position of the Active Force (1), which embodies initiative. If the Triads are regrouped in other ways to describe characteristic bodily (organized by the position of Passive Force) and cognitive (organized by the position of Reconciling Force) distortions, categories of bodily tension patterns and of cognitive patterns also emerge.

Moving Away: Withdrawal

Mostly fed by –(123) Useless Imagination (living “elsewhere”) and –(132) Waste (activity that leads nowhere useful). The basic motion is: “I step out of the present and of the needs of this situation”.

- **Active - Away:** Attention runs away from the present into distraction and pseudo-activity in the form of restless inner buzzing. Typical emotions in this current are agitation, scattered anxiety, irritable boredom and uneasy excitement.
- **Passive - Away:** Withdrawal subtly gravitates towards absence: the person is technically present, but not really there. The inner attitude is one of flatness, fog, heaviness, “why bother”, and emotions included here are apathy, quiet despair and numbness.

Moving Towards: Craving

Mostly fed by –(231) Fear (fragile identity defending itself) and –(321) Identification (fusing with a role, person, or story). The basic motion is: “If I can just have / keep / become this, I’ll be safe or whole”.

- **Active - Towards:** The grasping face of the Towards current represented by feelings of urgency, inner hunger, or fear of losing. Typical emotions include anxious longing, jealousy, possessiveness and FOMO (fear of missing out).
- **Passive - Towards:** When passive, the Towards movement takes the form of self-erasure: “If I blend into what others need, maybe I will not be left out”. Typical emotions are shame, guilt, self-pity, helplessness and dependency.

In practice, this simple map may be enough to orient oneself, but if we want to study our patterns more closely it helps to distinguish different depths at which emotions operate.

We must also point out that although we call these “negative” emotions, the label refers to their effect on Awareness, not to how they feel. Some of them may feel intensely pleasant: a feverish sense of euphoria (Active - Towards), or the thrill of righteous outrage (Active - Against).

Degrees of Depth

It is important to stress that emotions are not clear cut. If one is present, several are usually present. Consider the image of a branching tree: branches higher up (momentary feelings and expressions) all connect back down to a set of intertwined roots (the six Negative Triads, which as discussed in Chapter 7, are not isolated either).

With that in mind, we can sketch a simplified anatomy of a reaction in four layers, all described in emotional terms:

1. **Engine - Negative Triads:** A configuration such as Self-Centeredness + Subjectivism [-(213), -(312)] or Fear + Identification [-(231), -(321)].

At this level there is no clear “emotion label” yet, but a general flavor: “I matter more”, “I must not be exposed”, “nothing is real unless I control it”, etc., felt more as a background tension than as a specific feeling.

2. **Emotional climate:** A slowly moving background mood colored by that engine: a chronic sense of being wronged, low-grade meaninglessness, permanent insecurity, etc.

For Example: a standing tone of bitterness; a habitual dullness or emptiness; a constant sense of being one step from rejection.

This climate can last hours, days, or years and is often taken as “just my temperament”.¹⁴

3. **Momentary emotions:** The more recognizable waves that rise out of the emotional climate: a spike of anger, a flare of envy, a swell of shame, a rush of excitement, a plunge into hopelessness.

Several may co-occur or blend. These are the feelings we usually name when we say “I feel X right now”.

4. **Affective expression:** The way momentary emotions color our stance in a situation: sharpness or hardness of voice, tightness in the face, jaw, or hands, or a change in the quality of our gaze (accusing, absent, pleading, etc.).¹⁵

From the outside, we can mostly notice layer 4. From the inside, we tend to experience a blur of layers 3 and 4 and treat that blur as “me” or “just the way it is”. The deeper emotional climate and engine usually remain implicit unless something invites careful observation.

The aim of introducing currents and layers is not to push us into constant analysis. It is to give Attention something intelligible to see when it appears, e.g. through sustained attention we can begin by noticing the use of severe language, then pinpoint the presence of anger, then noticing a long-held climate of “being owed”, etc.

We can then choose where we could work:

- Sometimes only the expression can be softened (“I will lower my voice and pause”).
- Sometimes the momentary emotion can be named and allowed (“This is jealousy; I can feel it without immediately justifying it or fueling it”).
- Occasionally, we may sense the climate itself (“I have been living in quiet resentment for weeks”) and that realization already shifts something.

¹⁴ The framework considers that at this level emotions become mingled with thoughts.

¹⁵ The framework considers that at this level emotions become mingled with bodily behaviors.

We are not trying to “fix” the Negative Triads at the root. Our task is to relate differently to what is already there: to stop adding fresh identification and fresh leakage of Attention. Each time we manage that, even briefly, Attention is a little less captured, Awareness has a little more room, and the Responsive States become a little more available.

Attractors of Attention

Once we begin to observe these emotional currents, a sobering fact becomes clear: They are self-reinforcing attractors for attention.

A few examples can help make this pattern visible:

- **Active - Against initiates**
 - A burst of anger leads to a cutting remark.
 - The other person reacts defensively and pulls back.
 - Their withdrawal is then read as “no one really cares about me”, a slide into Passive - Towards (self-pity, victimhood).
 - Attention keeps circling between indignation (“they were in the wrong”, P-S Surplus) and hurt (“poor me”, I-I Deficit), tightening the loop.
- **Passive - Away initiates**
 - A sense of meaninglessness leads to postponing tasks.
 - Tasks pile up, consequences approach, and shame and anxiety increase.
 - This spike of anxiety flips into Active - Towards: frantic attempts to fix everything at once, seeking reassurance or quick escapes.
 - When that fails, the attitude often drops back into more withdrawal, and attention is stuck between confusion (P-S Deficit) and hedonism (R-I Surplus).
- **Active - Towards initiates**
 - Fear of losing someone leads to clinging and constant reassurance-seeking.
 - The other person begins to feel pressured and takes distance.
 - That distance may ignite Active - Against (“how can they do this to me?”) or Passive - Away (numbness and resignation).
 - Attention ends up locked onto the relationship drama, with little left for self-contact (R-I Deficit) or wider perspective (P-I Surplus).

In all these cases the emotional current shapes perception, perception filters reality in a biased way, the biased perception justifies the emotion, and attention is pulled back into the

same orbit. We describe these currents separately for clarity, but in lived experience they frequently trigger one another, creating complex loops rather than clean categories.¹⁶

These currents act as self-reinforcing attractor states, the more attention we feed into the current, the stronger its local gravity becomes and the harder it is for Awareness to aid in seeing the whole configuration. In clinical and research language, related phenomena are described under labels such as rumination and various forms of negativity bias.

The goal is not to avoid negative emotion (that would simply add a new layer of Moving Away). The goal is to stop adding fresh constraint on top of what is already there. As we will see in the next Chapter, a particular set of tools is available to aid us in this effort.

¹⁶ This kind of emotion-appraisal-behavior feedback has been widely described in psychology (for example in cognitive-behavioral models and interpersonal cycle research).

Chapter 10: Getting to Work (Using Negative Emotions)

Having mapped the emotional currents that drain Attention, we can now begin to turn theory into practice: how to stop these leaks?

What Is to Be Seen

In this framework, the effort to concentrate Attention can be played out in two main arenas: our relationship with ourselves, and our relationship with others.

Seeing Ourselves

Firstly, we must be honest about its difficulty. The organism often resists Self-Observation because the view is painful.

To see ourselves clearly is to shatter our self-image, the settled more convenient perception of ourselves, which is most likely plagued with a heavy influence of imagined or bloated "facts". We may realize that we, who believe ourselves to be kind, have been aggressive to our partners or co-workers, or we may see that our "care" for our children was actually control, etc. This self-image defends itself against that realization because, from its perspective, it would mean ceasing to exist, and that feels like loss, as if a part of oneself were dying

Unfortunately, there is a second challenge to this work: the illusion of devolution. This is the disorienting sense that in the process of learning, we might be regressing: taking one step forward only to feel like we have taken three steps back.

As we begin to observe, we often feel that we are getting worse. We see more anger, more fear, and more selfishness than before. This is an optical illusion. We are not degenerating; we are increasing the resolution of Perception. We are finally seeing the dust that has always been in the room because we have opened the curtains. This experience is "dissonant" (it feels wrong) but it is a distinct marker of growth.

If we aim for growth, this is unavoidable.

Relationships

While we can observe our thoughts in solitude, it is in the friction of relationships where the automatism of the self becomes most visible.

If we look closely at our Constrained States, we find that the vast majority of them are relational events.

- Anger arises when someone violates our subjective "order".
- Envy arises when we compare to others.

- Shame and Superiority are opposing sides of the same coin: an obsession with how we are seen in the eyes of others.
- Resentment is the tally we keep of what others owe us.

Because these reactions are so immediate and intense, our relationships are not just the setting of our lives, they are our most fertile ground for self-observation. They provide the high-fidelity data we need to see our own automatic nature.

Similarly, if we find ourselves reacting to others with intense dislike or judgment, we can use a specific lens to decode that friction. With this I refer to the mechanism often referred to as Projection, which basically means “the world as mirror”.

The qualities we most violently reject in others, their arrogance, their laziness, their neediness, etc., are often aspects of our own Constrained States that we have rejected or normalized, and pushed into un-awareness. We spot them instantly in others because we know them intimately, and secretly, from the inside.

As the Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche noted, the instruction to “be grateful to everyone” is not about moral superiority, it is about recognizing that “troublemakers” are our greatest teachers.

St. Francis of Assisi echoes this perspective. In his Admonitions, he argues that the people who praise us are dangerous, while those who trouble us are our true helpers. He writes: “Our friends are those who inflict upon us trials, chastisements, shames, and injuries... for by what they do to us, we gain eternal life”.

When we feel a spike of dislike, we can ask: “What part of my own rejected automatism is this person showing me?” In this way, the “enemy” becomes a catalyst for our own integration.

Compassion as Practical Stance

The word compassion evokes moral or sentimental overtones, but in this context, I mean something quite pragmatic. Here, compassion is defined as: the choice to see a Constrained pattern, in oneself or another, without denying it and without adding unnecessary judgement.

The three practical elements which turn Compassion into a “circuit breaker” of negative emotional currents are:

- **Turning toward:** A deliberate willingness to stay in contact with the pattern instead of immediately defending, distracting, or retaliating. Rather than pushing it away or acting from it, we allow it to be seen and named (“Yes, bitterness is here right now”).
- **Non-judgement:** Not attacking ourselves for having the pattern: (“I am horrible for feeling this”), nor indulging in it either (“I’m justified, so I will do what I want”), but simply impartial acknowledgement (“This configuration exists in me. It is automatic. I can see it”). We simply stay with it.

- **Kindness:** Recognizing that our, or other people's behavior is a "functional profile" of our Constrained States, not who we are. We forgive and disengage not for *others'* sake, but to preserve our own attention.

We can think of this in terms of a play. When we are identified (or fused with the object of Attention, unaware), we believe we are the character. We are trapped in the script of our grievance or fear. Compassion allows us to step back and become the actor who knows they are playing a role. They can feel the emotion of the scene without losing their true identity. This distance is what allows us to change the script.

Why is this stance central for working with negative emotion? Because trying to fight one emotional posture with another reactive posture usually fuses them together, rather than freeing either.

Another way to see this is in terms of the Law of Three: two opposing forces on their own do not create anything new. For a different outcome, a Reconciling force is needed. In lived experience, that force is Awareness, and Awareness in turn needs compassion, not as a feeling of approval or resignation, but as a deliberate way of conserving attention and refusing to add new twists to an automatic pattern.¹⁷

Instead of "spending" attention on self-attack, blame, or denial, we use it to stay in contact with what is actually happening now. Compassion is not the "fix"; it is the stance that makes the "fix" possible. It holds the black hole at arm's length so that a lawful Move can be chosen.

Intentional Friction (or Staying in Front)

So far, we have spoken about unintentional friction: the problem, most often painful, generated when Negative Triads and negative emotional currents run on automatic and drag attention with them.

There is another, different kind of friction which several traditions point to and which fits naturally into this framework: intentional friction¹⁸, the friction we consciously agree to bear.

This can be seen as an Interaction (132) process: an active force choosing contact with a situation, through the mediating conscious effort to stay, rather than fleeing or fighting blindly.

Concretely, intentional friction can mean:

- staying in a difficult but necessary conversation instead of escaping from it;
- feeling a wave of shame and choosing not to dismiss it, but to breathe and stay with the sensation until it passes;

¹⁷ This use of "compassion" overlaps with empirical work on self-compassion (Neff and colleagues) and compassion-focused therapy (Paul Gilbert), where a kinder, less punitive relationship to one's own states is associated with lower anxiety and depression and more flexible emotion regulation.

¹⁸ G.I. Gurdjieff coined the term Intentional Suffering.

- facing a pending email, bill, or medical appointment instead of postponing again;
- acknowledging jealousy or resentment without immediately acting it out or justifying it.

In each case, we could reduce immediate discomfort by Moving Away, Moving Against, or Moving Towards automatically, but instead, we choose to remain in contact with the situation and with our own inner state a little longer than habit would allow. Why? To collect attention, Awareness, and open the door to choice and Freedom in that moment.¹⁹

This is the friction, the “suffering” we accept on purpose: not to punish ourselves, not to dramatize our virtue, but to interrupt the automatic loop and give Awareness a chance to stay.

Pain vs Suffering

A theme that runs through many sources is a distinction between unavoidable pain and the extra layer of friction we add through resistance and mental proliferation. The classical image is the “two arrows” discourse: the first arrow is the raw pain of events; the second arrow is the way we tense, resent, and create and perpetuate stories around that pain. Contemporary teachers such as Pema Chödrön and Thich Nath Hanh often summarize this as “pain is inevitable, suffering is optional”.

A similar distinction appears in modern acceptance-based therapies. In Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) the terms used are “clean pain” (the inevitable discomfort of loss, illness, uncertainty) and “dirty pain” (the additional distress created by struggling, avoiding, or over-analyzing the experience). In the language of this framework, unintentional friction is mostly dirty pain. Intentional friction is closer to clean pain: the suffering we agree to bear in order to stay present and respond properly, instead of adding new layers of constraint.

We can think of this in terms of “payment”. In the economy of our attention, there is no free ride. We always pay for our friction.

- **Unintentional Friction** (the “dirty pain” of reaction) is paying later, with steeped interest. We pay in the form of broken relationships, exhaustion, and regret.
- **Intentional Friction** (the “clean pain” of presence) is paying upfront. We pay the cost of holding our tongue or facing an emotion now. It feels expensive in the moment, but it buys us freedom from the debt of the cycle of automatism.

Consequently, from the Fusion Dynamics point of view, intentional friction is a powerful way to convert discomfort into something useful. With it, the same strain that once deepened Constrained States now becomes the material for presence, clarity, and later, for the emergence of positive emotions. Pain may be unavoidable, but not suffering.

¹⁹ As Triads never act alone, the presence of Interaction (132) also presupposes an Order (312): a sense that “this is the right kind of friction to bear” that can inform the organism of a specific learning experience, rather than random self-punishment. As noted here, it also can lead to Freedom (321).

It is crucial at this point to clarify what intentional friction is not:

- It is not seeking extreme pain or trauma.
- It is not staying in objectively abusive situations.
- It is not glorifying hardship for its own sake.

It is the willingness to bear moderate, appropriate friction instead of automatically escaping it, for a very practical purpose.

Additionally, I will mention another important warning regarding self-observation. As we practice observing ourselves, we must guard against confusing "health" with the simple absence of bad feelings. A Constrained State does not always hurt, for example:

- Numbing (Deficit R-I) reports as "low distress". The pain is not there, but experience is narrowed, not freed, there is less contact and growth.
- Grandiosity (Surplus A-S) reports as "high positive emotion". It feels like a rush, but perception is distorted and behavior is reckless.

Therefore, the relevant movement in self-observation is not simply away from unpleasant feelings. It is away from skewed, self-intensifying patterns that rob us of our capacity to be aware.

We are changing the signal we use to guide ourselves: not morals, not hedonism, but Presence.

De-Conditioning

It may seem surprising that a whole chapter is devoted to "negative" emotion. Yet many traditions have, in practice, taken a similar route: starting from the raw material of reactivity and using it as the basis for growth.

This is the functional definition of de-conditioning (traditionally termed Purification). It is the process of filtering out the noise of automatic reactivity.

Classical traditions address this variously: as Sila (ethical discipline) in Buddhism, Yama (restraints) in Yoga, Tazkiyah (purification of the self) in Sufism, or Kenosis (self-emptying) in Christian mysticism.

While these may look like purely moral rules about external behavior (for example, "do not kill", "do not steal", "do not lie"), their deeper purpose is internal. They are stop-signals designed to interrupt automatic momentum long enough for the underlying current to be seen. In the tree image, they are a way of keeping the branch from whipping around for a moment so that the trunk becomes visible.

When a current is noticed before it turns into action, less of its energy flows automatically into the pattern. Attention that would have been spent acting it out is retained. As this seeing repeats, the behavior weakens by itself as it has less "juice" to run on. Therefore,

deconditioning is not a matter of self-restriction, but of recovering Attention at the base so that less and less is lost through the same habitual leak.

We must distinguish this practice from suppression, which is pushing the emotion down to avoid feeling it or to maintain a self-image of being "good" or "spiritual". This creates a "Spiritual False Personality", a polished exterior with no substance. It is just another form of Moving Away (Avoidance).

What we are aiming for is containment, which is holding the impulse in awareness so it can be seen.

If we cannot contain the impulse with awareness, it is better to see the mechanics in action than to pretend they are not there. Sometimes, we need to witness the explosion, to hear the harshness of our own voice, to feel the hangover of the Surplus State, to truly realize the cost of our un-awareness. A messy, honest moment of seeing our automatic nature is infinitely more valuable than a polite, "spiritual" mask that hides the reality of our state.

The goal is not to look like a balanced person; it is to become a more conscious one.

Importantly, this framework remains amoral in the conventional sense. "Negative" here does not mean sinful or forbidden; it means negating Awareness. A burst of euphoria that carries us away (Active - Towards) can be just as distracting as a wave of rage (Active - Against), and yet euphoria or aggressiveness may be the proper response under certain situations. The question is not "Is this emotion acceptable?" but "What is it doing to Attention, and what possibility does it leave for Awareness?".

So far it may seem that we are stuck between friction we choose and friction that chooses us. Indeed, life will continue to generate conditions for this (as implied in the Triad of Order), but it also has generated conditions for us to experience, in parallel, the positive emotions which arise from Responsive Moves and Balanced States which will be discussed in the next Chapter.

Expanding the Field: Thoughts, Behaviors, and Triads

We have devoted this chapter to emotions because they are often the most magnetic and confusing part of our experience, however, it is important to remember that emotions are not the only signals.

The conditioning of the Constrained States leaves fingerprints everywhere. If there is one thing we need not worry about, it is running out of material to work with. We can notice:

- **Behaviors:** In some situations, a more accessible signal is the surface action, for example: noticing that you have been scrolling for an hour or that you just interrupted someone.
- **Thoughts:** In others, it is a cognitive script playing in one's head, for example: catching specific thoughts such as "I am special" or "They are wrong".

- **Triads:** As practice deepens, we may even learn to spot the Negative Triad itself, recognizing the distinct impulse signature of Fear or Identification before it fully forms into a thought or emotion.

It does not matter which signal is caught. A thought, a behavior, a feeling, or a subtle sense of contraction, they are all valid entry points.

This recognition must be practiced and refined. If we want to work seriously with Attention and Awareness, this is where the friction is, and therefore where the work begins.

Chapter 11: The Currents of Freedom (Positive Emotions)

In the previous chapters, I have described Negative Emotions and a way to work with them. This chapter turns to the other side of the picture, the emergence of Positive Emotions.

The realm of Fusion Dynamics is ordinary day-to-day life. It makes no promises of exalted or extraordinary states, but it does point to a vertical difference in how life can be lived: with more or less Awareness. I will begin this exploration from one simple insight that can act as a primer for that alternative way of living: seeing how limited the usefulness of negative emotions really is, once they have delivered their initial signal.

The Futility of Negativity

Much of the work so far has been corrective: recognizing the Negative Triads, interrupting destructive loops, and using Moves to stop the leaks. But why do we do this?

Guru Rinpoche, the 8th-century founder of Tibetan Buddhism, presented two questions to cut through the noise of the internal struggle:

If something can be corrected, what is the use of remaining displeased?

If something cannot be changed, why harbor ill-will?

These lines express a simple, structural truth: negative emotions are a bad investment. They consume attention, narrow perception, and fatigue the nervous system, yet they rarely (if ever) produce either real change or lead to peace.

The alternative is not indifference, rather distinguishing between two classes of possibilities to transform the situation into something useful:

- If something can be changed, the proper stance is to face it and act.
- If it truly cannot be changed, the proper stance is to accept it, not fight it, and stay present.

Both paths require intentional friction, as what needs to be felt still is felt instead of avoided. The only difference is if there needs to be an external action or only an internal one (e.g.: acceptance, forgiveness, pondering, etc.).

This notion is presented and expanded in the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change,

Courage to change the things I can, and

Wisdom to know the difference

In the language of Fusion Dynamics, “knowing the difference” corresponds to Perception operating skillfully. After enough hypotheses, trial and error, and feedback from reality, Perception may learn where our actual leverage lies: what can, and cannot, be influenced.

Of course, what we cannot change is a circumstance that already exists, but we can influence what comes next. From there, the task becomes working with what is actually movable: our inner configuration. We can ask ourselves: How is Perception being shaped right now? How is Regulation being achieved? How do I choose to Interact and Act in this situation?

Most of a tiger's hunts fail, yet it does not develop low self-esteem, it simply hunts again.

Seen from this angle, the futility of staying in negative emotions becomes clearer. Once their basic signal has been received, continuing to feed them, or acting out a mechanical impulse adds almost nothing; it simply burns Attention. But if we decline to feed, what happens to the Attention not spent? It is conserved and accumulated.

Over time, repeated acts of not-feeding and of staying present can create a surplus of Attention. In this framework, that surplus is the substrate for what we call Presence: the capacity to remain aware.

Presence: Being in the Present

First, we must distinguish Presence from Awareness.

- **Awareness** is the quality of separation. It is the moment of self-observation that cuts the link to automaticity, a tool we can use to intervene.
- **Presence** is the result of that intervention, a shift in experience.

Awareness is "I see the mechanism". Presence is "I inhabit the organism".

It is the felt sense of effortless coherent existence. It has weight, texture, and immediacy. In the Fusion Dynamics framework, Presence is the condition in which Balanced States can be maintained and felt as a whole:

- In Perception, Presence is the strength to receive facts in equanimity.
- In Regulation, Presence is the container that can hold sensation and distress peacefully.
- In Interaction, Presence is the gravity that makes us real to others, and others real to us.
- In Action, Presence is the steadiness that maintains momentum or that can be still.

What we experience as "Presence" in a Balanced State is a taste of the integration with reality, of encountering it without filters.

In pondering this, we must be careful. As mapped in the full vertical scale of consciousness (see Appendix C), Presence belongs to a quite different possibility that exists in ordinary conditions. This is a state of non-dual awareness or unitary experience that lies far beyond the ordinary band of our daily lives. Yes, it is, in theory, available, but in practice, like Balanced States (as presented in Chapter 4), Presence is best considered an ideal, or an aim, not a goal.

We do not need Presence to be constant for it to matter. Even brief moments are significant. They give the nervous system examples of another way of being. The Fusion Dynamics framework in a way could be considered as an indirect tool to nurture the grounds for Presence, but specific methods to directly work with it are not here presented.

The Primordial Positive Emotional Currents

Presence is the ground upon which positive emotions stand.

As the three negative currents (Moving Against, Moving Away, Moving Towards) are born from the corrupted triads, for every primordial negative current, there is a primordial positive counterpart.

These positive currents can be thought of as orienting signals within the map. They are:

- **Harmony: The Antidote to Moving Against**

The corresponding triads of this current are Order (312) and Evolution (213). Through it the impulse of Egoism ("me first") and Subjectivism ("my way") can be transmuted into Harmony.

This is the profound, quiet joy of "finding our right place", the cessation of friction against reality. Instead of trying to force the world to fit our private will, Harmony means finding resonance with the order that actually exists. It is the peace of recognizing that we are part of a larger whole and discovering our specific potential and responsibility within it.

- **Participation: The Antidote to Moving Away**

The underlying triads of Participation are Creation (123) and Interaction (132), where the impulse of Useless Imagination (fantasy) and Waste (meaningless activity) is transmuted.

This feels like what contemporary psychology calls a "flow state". It is the drive of actualizing potential and engaging in meaningful, "in-the-moment" relatedness.

- **Sovereignty: The Antidote to Moving Towards**

The triads of this current are Identity (231) and Freedom (321). Here, the impulse of Fear (of losing the self) and Identification (clinging to external objects) is transmuted into Sovereignty.

This is the internal stance of being secure and complete unto oneself. A sovereign organism does not seek external validation or lose themselves in others. They possess their own gravity and therefore are less organized around lack and less driven by craving.

These three currents are not separate from the Fusion Dynamics Map, rather they can be viewed as a simple way of capturing the felt wholeness of the eight Balanced States. They describe the same phenomenon but viewed through the lens of experience rather than mechanics.²⁰

Positive Emotions as Emergent Properties

It is important to pause here and clarify the nature of positive currents. We cannot simply "choose" to feel them.

If we are stuck in the oscillation between a negative current and a negative current, there is no point in trying to force a positive emotion directly, especially if there is no ground for it (Harmony, Participation, or Sovereignty).

When we have done our work of bringing Awareness to choose Moves which allow us to spend more time in Balanced States, these positive currents and corresponding positive emotions arise on their own. We do not need to categorize or study them as "targets", because we cannot manufacture them. We can only learn to navigate the path of balance and simply enjoy them when we are gifted and blessed with their appearance.

Unlike the binary emotions of the Constrained State (Like/Dislike, Fight/Flight), these are non-dual. They do not have an opposite, because they are born of integration, not separation.

The terms that follow are only pointers. They are static labels that will only stir up automatic associations rather than create real experience. To make them useful, it helps to approach them with a beginner's mind: as if we did not yet know what they mean for us in practice. Then, if something like these states does arise, we can notice it directly instead of forcing it into a pre-existing category. With that in mind, here are a few examples of positive emotions:

- **Peace** is not the absence of war; it is a state of Equanimity and Acceptance, underlying all positive emotions.
- **Love** is not the opposite of hate; it is a state of Union or Non-separatedness.
- **Compassion** is not the opposite of cruelty; it is a state of Empathy, the capacity to hold suffering, one's own or another's.
- **Faith** is not the opposite of doubt; it is a state of Clarity and Certainty.
- **Inspiration** is not the opposite of boredom; it is the feeling of being "breathed into" by another possibility.
- **Yearning** or **Wish** are not a hunger for an object to fill a void, but a "homesickness" for Presence, or simply missing a more integrated way of being.

²⁰ In structural terms, Balanced States are the coherent configurations of each Mode, Presence is the trait-level integration that results from repeated Balanced functioning, and the Positive Currents (Harmony, Participation, Sovereignty) are the qualities of the experience of this configuration.

- **Gratitude** is the natural response of Contentment for participating in life.
- **Bliss** and **Joy** can be thought of as the "reward signals" of the organism running without friction.

Positive emotions (as defined here) can also be distinguished by the fact that they do not depend on the environment being pleasant. They can arise in the midst of pain or loss.

As signaled before, from the Fusion Dynamics viewpoint, these emotions are best understood as emergent properties of a functioning organism: they arise more clearly and more often when Harmony, Participation and Sovereignty have been guiding the way, when Awareness has been applied or Presence has been available, and, consequently, when the organism spends more time in Responsive and Balanced States.

These emotions are not just pleasant; they are functional. From an evolutionary perspective, they can be thought of as a reward signal for an organism that is running coherently. They signal that the current configuration is both less painful and more viable for long-term learning, cooperation, and growth.

In simpler terms: happiness, in this deeper sense, is what it feels like when the organism is allowed to be, less dominated by Constrained States, when it is fulfilling its potential and functioning more coherently.

Grounded Happiness

This brings us back to the distinction we drew in Chapter 7 between Happenstance and Grounded Happiness. We can now define Grounded Happiness with greater technical precision.

By now, it is probably clear that it does not mean just "feeling good", but rather it is what it feels like when we inhabit Balanced States, and therefore, the experiencing of the three positive currents: Harmony, Participation, and Sovereignty.

In psychology, this resonates closely with the model of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) proposed by Carol Ryff:

- **Harmony** correlates to Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance: the sense that one's life has direction and that one is at peace with one's history and reality.
- **Sovereignty** correlates to Autonomy: the capacity to evaluate oneself by personal standards rather than looking for approval.
- **Participation** correlates to Environmental Mastery and Positive Relations: the ability to manage the complex world effectively and maintain warm, trusting relationships with others.

When we speak of "happiness" in this framework, we are referring to this specific configuration: a state of high functioning that can co-exist with difficulty, because it is rooted

in the capacity to process reality (Harmony), stand firm (Sovereignty), and engage fully (Participation).

The Biology of the Shift

The shift towards happiness has biological counterparts as well as psychological ones.

In Constrained States, the biology of the organism often resembles either sympathetic (fight/flight / BAS-like) activation or dorsal vagal (freeze/shutdown / BIS-like) dominance. In such configurations, Perception tends to narrow to survival scripts, Regulation is easily overwhelmed, and actions skew toward attack or withdrawal.

Again, these are not "wrong" per se, only old survival modes applied too broadly and without questioning.

In Balanced States, the organism is more likely to access what Polyvagal theory describes as the Ventral Vagal or Social Engagement system: the body relaxes enough that curiosity and empathy become possible. Subjectively, this can feel like “settled aliveness”.

Crucially, these are not fixed traits. They are trainable tendencies.

Every time we notice a Constrained State and successfully apply a Responsive Move, we send a signal to the nervous system: "Something different is possible here". If it happens once, it is a relief, but if it happens thousands of times, the default expectation of the organism can shift, becoming less convinced that every signal equals a threat.

This helps explain why “forced positive thinking” usually fails. If the body remains in a threat configuration while the mind repeats "I am calm, I am safe", the discrepancy only deepens internal mistrust.

The sequence for change must honor the body by firstly creating (through a Responsive Move) the biological signals of safety (e.g.: lessening tension, softening the muscles of the face, etc). Only then does it make sense to recognize, at the cognitive level, “I am a bit calmer”, “I feel somewhat safer”. When bodily cues and cognitive appraisal line up, the system can register the change as real.

So, the work is less about changing ideas about oneself and more about gradually retraining how the organism responds to life. Harmony, Participation, and Sovereignty are not abstractions, they are patterns that the organism can come to prefer when given enough repeated experience as evidence.

The Pendulum of Experience

The Fusion Dynamics framework proposes that through allowing the positive currents to lead the way, and given enough effort and time, we may gradually notice that the probability of certain Constrained patterns decreases, the speed of return from those patterns to more Balanced functioning increases, our default expectation that “change equals threat” is slightly

less convincing, and in practice, situations that used to trigger us, no longer do so, or do so with less intensity and for shorter periods.

It is important to understand that this process is not black or white. We do not “switch” once and for all into being a Balanced person. The automatic patterns remain even as a more present configuration gradually becomes more available.

A useful image is that of a pendulum. At first, it swings widely between the extremes of Constrained States. Over time, if work is carried out, the oscillation dampens: the swings are less violent, the extremes are not as extreme, and the time spent stuck in a Constrained State shortens.

As the amplitude decreases, the pendulum spends more time near the center, which in this framework corresponds to more frequent access to Responsive and Balanced functioning. The automatic patterns have not disappeared, but the power balance between them and the more present configuration begins to shift.

For most of us, this shift will take years, perhaps a lifetime. It is built out of thousands of small instances of noticing, bearing, and choosing differently. There is no final guarantee or point of arrival, only the possibility of gradually spending more of our life with a bit more Presence than before.

Chapter 12: Preparing to Meet Life (Daily Practices)

It is inadvisable to learn to swim in the ocean while in the middle of a hurricane. Likewise, if we wait until we are hijacked by a negative emotion to practice Awareness, we will likely fail. This is why we need a "gymnasium", a controlled environment where we can isolate factors and train without the distraction of immediate consequences.

This chapter presents a few practices that can help increase our capacity to navigate life as the framework proposes.

A Note on Practicing

With all the practices on the table, there is a very real risk: we can easily turn the whole thing into yet another project of the automatic self. If we are not careful, "inner work" quietly becomes Surplus Action-Internal (pushing ourselves constantly, never enough) and Surplus Action-Systemic (rigid routines, schedules, structures, all in the name of "growth").

A false spiritual personality can grow on top of that: a version of us that is always "working on themselves", always tense, secretly measuring, secretly comparing. From the outside it can look very "disciplined"; from the inside it often feels dry, joyless, and slightly afraid.

The work, to be sustainable, needs tension, yes, but also ease, humor and rest.

In meditation we apply effort (gathering Attention), but we also need the ability to let go into simple presence. The same applies to the rest of the practices. There are days to insist a little, and there are days to deliberately loosen the grip, for recovery, or plain leisure.

It helps to remember that the aim here is not to become a perfectly controlled being, but to be more available to life. If practice becomes another way of Moving Against ourselves ("I must improve or else") or Moving Away from life ("I will hide in spiritual routines"), we have lost the thread.

As a rough guideline:

- If the practice feels heavy, grim, and joyless for long stretches, it is worth checking for A-I or A-S Surplus in the background.
- If we notice that we are treating ourselves as a "project to be fixed", a beneficial Cooling Move might simply be relaxing and allowing ourselves to laugh at our seriousness, or doing something simple, ordinary and enjoyable on purpose.
- If we catch ourselves chasing "special states", we can gently return to the very simple question: is this helping me be a bit more present and a bit kinder in my actual life, or not?

We are not here to turn life into a burden of self-improvement. The practices are tools, not chains. This is a reminder to take ourselves less seriously and leave room for joy to not only arise but also to be savored.

Receptivity

Much of what is called work on oneself looks “active” from the outside, whether is carrying out a practice, being attentive to certain behavior or emotions or performing a Responsive Move. But there is very important foundation behind all of these, and it has to do with the receptive force (2).

In the middle of life, we do not fully control what arrives, and we rarely control the result from our efforts. What we do have is the option to choose how we receive what is already here.

This is what I mean by receptivity, an openness to the experience based on a foundational inner relaxation or distension, releasing unnecessary contraction. Often the most basic Move is to notice the body and let one layer of bracing go. Jaw. Belly. Shoulders. Breath.

This matters for a simple reason: when the organism is tense it tends to narrow. Perception tunnels. Regulation becomes more reactive. Interaction gets brittle. Action becomes either rushed or avoidant. Anyone can validate this by remembering how much more easily we say the wrong thing, or do the clumsy thing, when we are under stress.

A very simple micro-practice is:

1. Pause for one exhale that is slightly longer than the inhale.
2. Feel one concrete sensation (feet on the floor, hands, the weight of the body).
3. Release one obvious contraction (even a little).
4. Then proceed.

This is not “the solution”. It is a base. It creates a small pocket in which Awareness has a better chance to appear. With practice deeper relaxation states and receptivity can become a new baseline, from where outside conditions may be better met.

Meditation

When the mind is left to itself it tends to drift toward self-referential thinking, mental time travel, stories about past and future. In our language, that drift is the natural playground of several Negative Triads (Fantasy, Fear, Subjectivism, etc.). Meditation is the decision to borrow Attention from that automatic stream for a while and invite a different configuration: simple contact with what is actually happening now.

Following the classical descriptions, and roughly compatible with what is known from neuroscience, we can distinguish two types of meditation, sometimes referred as well as two phases: concentration and contemplation.

Concentration (or Dharana)

This corresponds to an active effort. Here we train Attention to stay with a single object (the breath, a sensation, a sound) without immediately wandering off.

Concentration builds the basic strength needed to interrupt leaks. Each time we notice that Attention has gone somewhere else and gently bring it back, we are practicing the same movement we need when we catch a Constrained State and strive to maintain a Responsive Move. A simple protocol may be:

1. Choose one sensory focus as an anchor: the sensation of air at the nostrils, the weight of the body on the chair, the sensation of the hands, etc.
2. When (not if) Attention leaks into a thought, fantasy, plan, or memory, we do not attack ourselves for it. We simply notice it, let it go, and come back to the anchor.
3. Repeat. The point is not to never get distracted, nor stop thoughts from arising. Mental chatter will continue nevertheless, we are only practicing the act of recovering Attention and choosing where to place it.

Contemplation (or Dhyana)

This type of meditation is more receptive. If Concentration was like “tightening” a string, Contemplation is like loosening it slightly. Attention is still with the object, but in a softer way. The effort shifts from “holding on” to simply perceiving what is there.

Here the emphasis is on letting Awareness become more continuous: “something in me sees this happening”. We are no longer pushing Attention onto the object; we are resting in the observation of the whole situation (breath, body, thoughts drifting in and out).

A simple protocol may be:

1. Settle the mind by concentrating Attention.
2. Once we are able to maintain our Attention more or less stable on our chosen anchor, we soften the focus. Instead of looking at the breath, we allow the breath, sensations and sounds to come and go in a wider field.
3. We drop some of the “doing” attitude. Less “I am meditating” and more “this is being observed”. Thoughts and feelings can appear, move, and fade without us having to follow each one.

If it helps, a brief ritual before sitting like one or two slow breaths, a gentle stretch, or a quick body scan can make it easier to arrive, but the main point is simply that you are there and have started. The details are secondary to that shift from zero to one.

A quiet environment also helps, but it is not essential. Sooner or later there will be noises, interruptions, or discomfort. Part of the practice is precisely learning to keep Attention in the middle of those small disturbances, or even to include them as part of what is being observed, instead of waiting for “perfect conditions”.

If I had to condense the whole practice into one instruction, it would be something like this: during meditation, whatever the chosen anchor, try to sustain Attention at the same time that you actually experience what is being perceived, both together. Not forcing, not collapsing into the sensation, but keeping a small sense of “I notice that I am noticing”. The balance between attention and simple perception is where something begins to open.

In the stillness of a practice, we may even experience glimpses of positive emotions, flashes of “uncaused” Joy, deep Peace, or a sense of Union. These are profound “proofs of concept” that the self can function without friction. It is necessary to remember that these “peak” experiences are only confirmations of the path; they are not the path itself.

We do not meditate to escape life. We meditate to build the capacity to meet life. We train so that when a negative emotion is noticed, our Awareness is strong enough to pause, see, and help us direct our Attention to a chosen Move.

Continuous Mindfulness

Between practices lies the long stretch of our actual day, which is where the real work has to happen.

If you have ever tried to focus your Attention on anything for longer than ten seconds, you may have noticed that it wanders. It jumps from one fascinating thing to another: a call, a memory, a smell, hunger, and so on, unless there is a conscious effort to focus on something specific and create a moment in which Awareness can arise.

In the state of fascination (unawareness), when we are fully absorbed, there is nothing reminding us to notice and separate from the object of Attention, the situation fills the whole field of Perception. The practice of continuous mindfulness (also referred to as “choiceless awareness” and “self-remembering”) is the deliberate effort to reverse this total absorption. It is the attempt to keep a small part of Attention for our own purposes, not only for circumstances.

A helpful picture is that of a “double arrow” of attention. Instead of having all Attention outward, e.g.: “I see the tree”, we allot some attention to be held back in the organism, e.g.: “I see the tree, and I see myself seeing it”.

This is not an intellectual effort. Walking around thinking “I am remembering myself, I am remembering myself” is just more thought. So, to make it real, it can be helpful to use an internal physical anchor. For example:

- Inner arrow: While walking, talking, or working, we gently keep some Attention resting on a bodily sensation like the contact of the feet with the floor, the weight of the hands, or the whole body as a single mass in space. Not intensely, just enough so it is not forgotten.
- Outer arrow: With the rest of Attention, we do what needs to be done, we listen to a person, type an email, stir a pot, read a book.

When one part of Attention remains in the organism (interoception) and another part meets the world (exteroception), Identification has less room to fully close around any one thing. The “active force” of events cannot sweep us away quite as easily, because some part of us is already receiving, already observing.

Of course, this practice must be done in safe conditions (not while driving a car or receiving critical instructions, especially at the beginning), until we are more trained to separate the flow of Attention and still maintain proper Awareness of the environment.

This is not an easy practice. You may start by setting a one or two minute timer while doing a simple task like walking, and gradually increase time and complexity of the situation. You will fail often, but that is not the point. The point is to try, to exercise. The effort to come back and try again is itself a form of intentional friction.

It is also worth keeping in mind that any “gain” from a practice is fragile; we are always one day away from forgetting ourselves again. It helps to approach each attempt as a beginner, with fresh eyes, letting go of expectations about what should happen.

Daily Review

The Daily Review helps by showing how Attention was actually used in real life.

During the day, despite our best efforts, we will only catch a few moments of Awareness. Especially at the beginning, it is unlikely that we notice the exact moment in which Attention starts leaking; what is more available is to remember, after the fact, situations where we were probably caught in a Constrained State or stuck in a negative emotion.

The Daily Review is a simple way of processing that backlog. It lets us get a “taste” for those Constrained configurations, so that, over time, as Awareness becomes a bit more available, we can start recognizing the same kind of “stuckness” while it is actually happening.

Historically, versions of this practice were used by the Stoics, Pythagoreans, and others. The basic form is straightforward: at the end of the day, before sleep, we replay the main events of the day (some prefer reverse order, others chronological), as if watching a film.

The aim is not to judge (“I was bad”) or indulge (“I was hurt, again”), but to observe: “here I was anxious”, or “here I snapped at my colleague”, etc.

Several useful things happen at once:

- Looking back from a calmer position can take some emotional weight out of certain situations.
- Events that felt “unfinished” during the day have a chance to be digested, allowing us the chance to experience emotions or thoughts that we might not have had the chance to process, and reset our nervous system to try again the next day.
- We may begin to notice patterns: specific people, contexts, or topics that reliably trigger certain Constrained States or negative emotions. For example: “I notice that

whenever I speak to this person, I feel a rush of anxiety". The next time we are in that situation, we can go in a little more prepared, expecting our reaction and trying to observe it live rather than being completely taken by surprise.

Alternatively, especially if we want to dig deeper into a specific theme that has proven particularly bothersome, hurtful, or destructive, it can help to define a weekly or bi-weekly focus and do the review with special attention on that theme.

It is important to distinguish between guilt and remorse. Guilt is the automatic self-reproach that arises after we repeat a harmful pattern: the inner attack that says "I'm awful", "I'll never change". It tends to lock us into a Constrained State, feeding frustration, resentment, and self-pity, and usually leads either to paralysis or to repeating the same behavior again.

Remorse, by contrast, keeps the pain but changes its use. Instead of turning against ourselves, we can let the discomfort remind us to be more attentive next time. We can: (1) acknowledge what we did and feel the effects without excuses, (2) recognize that this is not the first time and probably not the last, and (3) ask how this situation can help us see the pattern more clearly in the future. The "error" is not erased, but it becomes useful.

I also find it important that, after making a pass through the "negative" material, we deliberately acknowledge the other side: the moments in which we were more attentive, when Awareness was present, or when we were simply more here, not "taken". The small positives of our intent to work and the "wins", however minor, also deserve a place in the picture: the time we saw the pattern live as it unfolded, the moment it showed up with a little less force, the situation where the expected negative emotion never quite arrived, or the instance in which we were able to choose a Responsive Move. These recognitions help balance the view and bring us closer to what is real. We are not "all good", but neither are we "all bad".

Prayer

Another functional stance that was briefly mentioned at the closing of Chapter 4 as the first component of the Evolution 213 Triad is receptivity.

By "prayer" I do not mean any particular theology. Functionally, prayer is the act of acknowledging a limit and opening to something beyond our current picture and resources. It is deliberately admitting: "As I am now, I cannot solve this alone. I am open to help", independent of "where" that help one thinks or believes may come from.

When that stance is genuine, a few things tend to happen:

- Letting go, even slightly, of "I must hold everything together" can ease some of the tension around outcome and control.
- When we are not clutching a particular outcome, the mind can loosen its grip on worst-case scenarios and rehearsed narratives.
- In that less-defended state, we are more likely to notice options, support, or perspectives that were invisible when we were fully locked into control mode.

This is close to what many traditions call Surrender. Here, Surrender does not mean passivity or giving up; it means a more radical honesty about what is not in our hands, while staying fully available to respond to what is. Phrases such as “Thy will be done” or “let go and let God” can be read in this light: not as magical formulas, but as reminders to stop fighting reality long enough for a different response to become possible.

Seen this way, prayer is objectively functional and does not need to be held by any specific beliefs or carry religious connotations. It is simply about relaxing an inner hold, dropping the illusion of control, and allowing a more open and flexible configuration.

Managing Stress

There is a practical limit, both biological and psychological to how much we can handle. If one is overworked, underslept, or simply too tired, it becomes much more difficult to be able to sustain life’s demands, as well as our efforts to work on oneself. Under stress it is also easier to fall into automatic and/or disproportionate reactions.

To avoid extremes, it is advisable to manage life’s load by, for example:

- paying attention to sleep debt and overstimulation,
- noticing when commitments were taken in a Surplus rush,
- reducing unnecessary inputs (noise, screens, conflict, endless “open loops”),
- creating simpler boundaries and more recovery time,
- and, when needed, renegotiating or dropping what is clearly unsustainable.

This is not about building a perfectly protected life. It is about keeping baseline stress within a range where Moves remain feasible. When stress becomes too high, Perception narrows: the mind stops seeing options, and even if we remember peace in theory, the system dismisses it as irrelevant or naïve. The result is a closed loop: “there is no way out,” which then makes Responsive actions feel impossible.

This is why recovery and receptivity matter. Even a small act of receptive stance can reopen the field just enough to remember a simple aim: “noticing this”, “not feeding the leak”, “breathe”, etc. When stress is manageable, we can use friction to grow. When it is not, the intelligent Move may be to prioritize safety and recovery first. As the conditions for well-being are created and nurtured, the capacity for receptivity also increases.

Reciprocity

When we repeatedly act from friction (Moving Against), the environment tends to return friction: people defend, withdraw, or escalate. When we live in chronic withdrawal (Moving Away), the environment gradually reflects isolation. Over time, the “field” we inhabit becomes harder to be present in.

This is one reason why relationships and meaning matter so much. They are not only “nice extras”, they are systemic conditions that support or undermine Balanced functioning.

From here, generosity can be seen as a functional Move. When we contribute clarity, safety, or care into our surroundings we are building a world that is slightly easier to be present in, for others, and therefore also for ourselves.

Some traditions call part of this blessing: deliberately wishing good upon others, or holding them in a wider view, even when we disagree or feel hurt. This is not sentimental. It changes the inner posture from contraction to distension and openness. It helps move us out of the narrow loop of self-concern, and it often brings a surprising kind of strength with it.

In familiar language this is close to: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Not as a moral badge, but as a description of how the field we create tends to feed back into our own lives. Or, in the opening line of the Prayer of St. Francis: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace”. Read functionally: may my presence reduce friction rather than multiply it.

Radical Simplification

This work does not have to feel complicated. Yes, the framework is filled with concepts, but the practice itself can be made very simple. Once the underlying mechanism is evident, all the maps and heuristics can be summed up in a single practical instruction:

Notice your current state. Ask yourself: am I aware?

This question is not a request for a mental answer. It is a functional trigger.

- To answer it honestly, you must stop the momentum of the conditioned mind.
- You must step out of the stream of thought and emotion and look at it.
- You must check your body to see if you are actually “here”.

If in the very split second it takes to look, Awareness appears, you are no longer the machine running the program; you are the witness observing (at least an aspect of) it.

It could be said that this entire framework, the Law of Three, the 40 Combinations of States and Modes, the heuristics, etc., can be read as a logical scaffolding around that single phrase: “am I aware?”.

The complex logic exists only to convince the automatic, conditioned mind to surrender to the simplicity of the practice. In a gap of silence, the Constrained State loses its grip, and the space for Freedom (321) is created.

You may not know exactly what to do next, and that is fine. The most fundamental Responsive Move is often simply to extend the pause. It is the act of raising your head to see the context or widening your view to include others.

From there, you may simply ask: “*Am I in Harmony, Sovereign, and Participating right now?*”.

And, you can let the answer to that question guide your next step.

Chapter 13: The Virtuous Path

I have often wondered why discussions about happiness so often feel incomplete. I think that what is usually missing is an explicit focus on the “vertical” axis of the map: the degree of consciousness with which life is lived. From this perspective, that vertical quality becomes a crucial dimension in how a human life can unfold, alongside the more familiar “horizontal” aspects of functioning which over time influence, our emotions, achievements, and many of the circumstances around us.

Two people can share the same external circumstances, similar jobs, similar family conditions, etc., but one may spend most of their time in Constrained States (chronic reactivity, fantasy, avoidance, etc.) while the other may still face difficulties but returns reliably to Responsive and Balanced functioning.

From the outside, they might seem "as happy" as each other. They may even experience the same amount of hedonic pleasure ("happenstance"), but from the inside, the quality of their lives is vastly different. This qualitative difference, how often Presence is available, is what "verticality" means in practice.

The Simple Equation: Dysfunction Generates Suffering

Before proceeding, I would like to point directly to something that has been stated implicitly: when Functions fail conditions for suffering are created, and so suffering emerges; often predictable, often repetitive, and often avoidable in degree (even when the original pain is not).

A few examples of how this happens in ordinary life:

- **Skewed Perception (P):** we misread signals, assume intent, catastrophize, or build a private narrative that feels “obvious”. We then react to a story as if it were a fact. This results in constant tension, unnecessary conflict, and decisions made under false premises.
- **Skewed Regulation (R):** we either flood (overwhelm, panic, rage) or shut down (numbness, dissociation, deadness). We say things we later regret, or we disappear when we’re needed.
- **Skewed Interaction (I):** we cling, chase, test, manipulate, submit, or withdraw, effectively creating the very reactions we fear: people pull away, push back, or stop relating to us in some degree.
- **Skewed Action (A):** we push compulsively, or we procrastinate and rot in avoidance, leading to broken promises, self-contempt, loss of credibility, and the closing of options.

And this compounds: a distorted Perception drives dysregulation, toxic interactions reduce our capacity to act effectively, negative experience or results blinds us even further. The loop continues.

The core proposition of the framework is that proper functioning reduces avoidable suffering and increases well-being. Not necessarily because life becomes easier (which it may), but because we stop adding extra pain through mechanical reactions and we stop manufacturing environments that keep re-triggering us.

Our Possible Journey

Throughout the text I have touched upon the concepts of Freedom (321), Interaction (132), and Evolution (213), the three triads of the Create Cycle. We can now synthesize their functioning as seen from the perspective of a person trying to work on themselves:

- **Interaction** (132): we meet the concrete conditions of our life: family, body, work, society. We act, speak, interact with whatever patterns we currently have. When we “work” we stop treating conditions as mere obstacles and start using them as training: friction becomes material. This is how Interaction becomes Participation.
- **Freedom** (321): at certain moments, a small gap opens in which we are not entirely ruled by the situation and its patterns. A different response becomes possible. Freedom is the doorway to Sovereignty.
- **Evolution** (213): when that different response is taken and sustained, inner and outer conditions reorganize around it. This is how Evolution becomes the vehicle for Harmony.

The shift transforms our Interaction, and the loop can repeat: Interaction leads to Freedom, which enables Evolution, which changes the next level of Interaction.

Repeated thousands of times across a lifetime, this is the way conditions can be used to actualize available possibility. This is how verticality is embodied.

In Chapter 3 I briefly mentioned that the six Triads can be viewed as two interlocking loops: a “Creator” cycle (312 → 123 → 231) and a “Created” cycle (132 → 321 → 213). The first describes how meaning and identity stabilize a world; the second describes how lived conditions, shocks, and integrations reshape what becomes “normal”. When they run together, we get a pair of counter-running cycles: one maintaining life “from above” (pattern, interpretation), and one evolving life “from below” (contact, interruption, integration).

We can now unpack this concept.

In our palindromic arrangement of the six Triads, the three Created processes: Interaction (132), Freedom (321), and Evolution (213), sit, each in its own way, between pairs of Creator processes:²¹

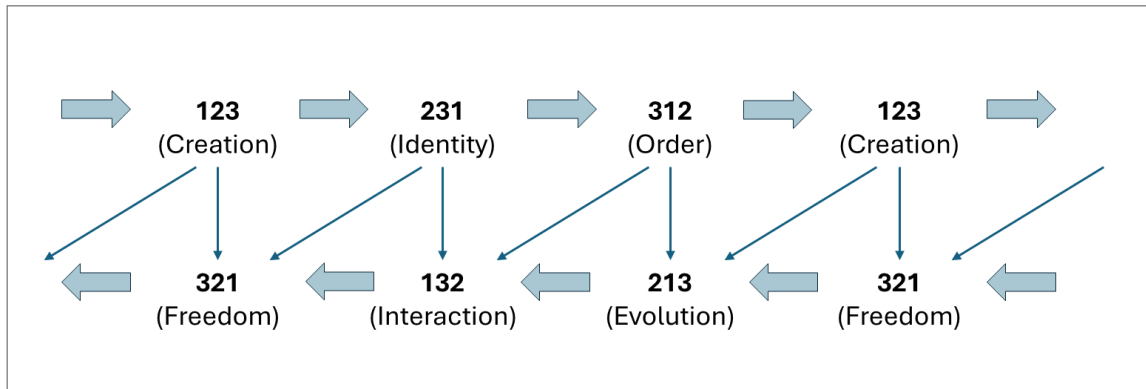


Figure 6: The Creator and Created Cycles

We can trace the specific relationship logics to see how this system works:

- **Evolution (213)** is influenced by **Order (312)** and **Creation (123)**. It is how conditions reorganize when lawful patterns (Order) and new acts (Creation) are allowed in.
- **Freedom (321)** is influenced by **Creation (123)** and **Identity (231)**. It is how conditions open when a formed self (Identity) is enacting its possibilities (Creation).
- **Interaction (132)** is influenced by **Identity (231)** and **Order (312)**. It is how the relational field behaves depending on "who we are" (Identity) and "the kind of world this is" (Order).

We must recall that these are the same influences that, when corrupted and running automatically, become the Negative Triads that keep us "stuck" in Constrained States. Interaction collapses into Waste, Freedom collapses into Identification, Evolution collapses into Egoism, etc.

This picks up a theme that has been present throughout the text: the same structures that produce our constraints can also be used as a path out of them. In the language of the triads, Evolution (213) presupposes Creation (123): what changes is not something separate from our existing patterns, but those patterns themselves being reorganized from within.

This echoes the classical Mahāyāna insight: "Samsara is Nirvana". The world of suffering and the world of freedom are not two different places; they are the same field, lived differently.

²¹ A similar figure could be presented showing the effect of the Created Triads into the Creator Triads.

This resonates across traditions. It can be found in the Christian mystery of the Incarnation (where the Divine becomes the material), it is the core of the Sufi Unity of Being (Wahdat al-Wujud) and the Hindu realization of Non-Duality (Advaita).

In every case, the theme is the same: The material of the constraint is the material of the liberation.

Gratitude and Acceptance

This realization can shift our fundamental stance toward life.

We enter a world where many factors are already determining: our genetics, our history, our patterns of constraint. This is the "given".

If we can come to terms with the idea that what has already been "created" for us, the conditions we find ourselves in, is not just a random pile of obstacles, we can begin to see it as the terrain of our work. The very features that create friction are also what make this terrain usable. Otherwise, if they did not rub against us, they wouldn't be very helpful for our purpose of growth; in this matter, they would be meaningless.

Therefore, our attitude towards reality does not need to be "positive" or "negative". It simply needs to be accepting of what is.²² Ultimately, if we could see the full mechanics of how our struggle fuels our evolution, the proportionate response would likely be a sense of Awe and Gratitude. We would see that the conditions are not punishments, but gifts.

However, when we are deep in a Constrained State (in the grip of trauma, depression, or grief) this perspective is often impossible to access. To demand Gratitude in those moments is a violence to our reality.

Therefore, the practical work does not begin with Gratitude; it begins with Acceptance. We simply acknowledge that this is what is happening, without adding the extra layer of wishing it were different. Gratitude is not the price of entry; it is an eventual discovery.

Acceptance here does not mean agreement or approval. It means no longer denying that these are the conditions that exist and ceasing to spend energy wishing for anything different.

In this Acceptance, comparison becomes pointless. Bitterness or envy ("Why these parents, this body? Others had it easier") becomes unnecessary. Each of us lives in our own microcosmos, uniquely equipped for our own specific path.

We may come to the understanding that reality is not something we control, but something we can participate in, and cooperate with. By contributing to it, rather than trying to dominate it, we create the conditions in which we ourselves can grow.

²² Likewise, "good" does not mean easy, pleasurable or morally aligned, it means the quality of less "stuckness" and more awareness; "bad" does not mean hard, uncomfortable or breaking a code, it means the quality of more "stuckness" and less awareness.

Reciprocity and the Field We Live In

At this point it is useful to recall that the PRIA loop is also a feedback system, and thus Action is never just an output, it becomes part of the next input.

When we consistently act from Moving Against (friction, attack), the environment tends to return friction: people defend, withdraw, or escalate. When we live in Moving Away (chronic withdrawal), the environment gradually reflects isolation back to us. Over time, the “field” we inhabit becomes harder to be present in.

This resonates with empirical findings that close, trusting relationships and a sense of meaning are among the strongest contributors to long-term well-being: they are not only “nice extras”, but systemic conditions that either support or undermine our capacity for Balanced functioning.

Concurrently, generosity can be thought of an important functional move. When we contribute clarity, safety, or care into our surroundings (represented in the Interaction-Systemic and Regulation-Systemic Modes), we are effectively reshaping the local field. We are building a world that is slightly easier to be present in, for others, and therefore also for ourselves.

Contribution and participation appear as integral drivers of our own well-being. We are happier when we give what we would like to receive. In more familiar language, this is close to the old saying attributed to Jesus: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, not as a moral accomplishment, but as a description of how the field we create eventually feeds back into our own lives.²³

Another form generosity is blessing, a practice used in many traditions. Deliberately wishing another well (and acting in ways consistent with that wish) is one of the simplest ways to stop feeding contempt and to nurture the relational field. The “benefit to the one blessing” is straightforward: the felt state you are wishing for must pass through your own system first.

The Accumulation of Effort

If we walk this path (accepting the Order, engaging in Interaction, finding moments of Freedom), what changes?

Over months and years, the ratio of time we spend in Constrained versus Responsive or Balanced states compounds into a different trajectory of life.

²³ A substantial body of research suggests that close, reliable relationships and a sense of meaning are central contributors to long-term well-being and even reduced mortality risk. Prosocial behavior, e.g. investing in others or contributing to something beyond oneself, tends to increase positive affect and meaning more reliably than purely self-focused pleasure.

If we live mostly in Constrained States, we are likely to produce fragile relationships (due to avoidance, aggression or pushing too much) and a skewed perception of oneself (either too self-deflating, e.g.: “I can’t, I don’t deserve, I’m broken”, etc., or too self-inflating, e.g.: “I am special, I can accomplish anything, I deserve this”, etc.). Whatever is created from there serves mostly for self-perpetuation.

Sometimes the friction becomes so intense, the pain so large, that we are pushed to “come to our senses”, if, and this is a “big if”, there are enough resources (context, support, guidance) to bear it without escaping or denying it. This is a path through crisis, and one most of us would rather not have to take.

The alternative is to proactively apply effort towards spending more time in Responsive and Balanced States, which is likely to produce relationships that can be repaired and nurtured, and a nuanced, more realistic self-story (“I tend towards anger, but I can try and hold it in awareness. I am not neither “good” or “bad” for this”).

Both kinds of lives will face illness, loss, and injustice. The difference is not the absence of pain, but how much extra suffering is generated by sleepwalking into our patterns, and what resources (trust, resilience, skill) are available when difficulties come.

At first, moments of Presence can be rare and fragile. Over time, if we keep returning to the Moves, repeated practice (as learning theory and neuroplasticity would predict) may lead to some changes:

- They become more frequent. Presence appears not only in “easy” times but occasionally in genuinely stressful situations.
- Their continuity increases. We still fall into Constrained States, but something in us remembers that they are states, not the whole of reality. The return path becomes more familiar.
- They begin to shape identity. The sense of “who I am” shifts, however slightly, toward “someone who can see and choose”, not only react.

From the outside, this might look undramatic: no sudden conversions, no spectacular experiences. From the inside, it can feel like a slow but real change. We begin to accumulate the capacity for Presence.

Each small act of Awareness, each moment of alignment, adds a grain to the scale. Over time, years perhaps, these moments accumulate into a “happier version” of ourselves.

In the language of psychological models this refers to self-actualization: the realization of potentials that were implicit all along but could not express themselves under chronic constraint. In the language of triads, it can be seen as the step from Creation (123) to Identity (231). Something new is being built.

This new identity begins to live alongside our usual, automatic self. It can begin to inform us, show us the way, inspire us, and quietly guide our day-to-day actions. It can remember to strive for Presence.

As mentioned earlier, however, Awareness also increases contrast: we see automatism more clearly, and we see how often it still wins. Because self-observation reveals the sheer depth of our automatic nature, it is natural to fall, at times, into discouragement or despair. The process of growth requires endurance.

Since it may take years to soften these patterns, Hope is not a sentimental luxury; it is a structural necessity. In this framework, Hope is not treated as blind faith, but as the decision to keep testing the hypothesis in real conditions: to stay in front of what we see without retreating or attacking, to give positive currents time to mature instead of forcing them, and to trust, on the basis of repeated validations, that the friction of seeing can become fuel for transformation.

We are not trying to eliminate our automatic patterns; they are made of the same functional energies we need to live. What changes is the priority. When Awareness is absent, those energies flow straight into Constrained States and create havoc. When Presence is given priority, the very same impulses can be taken up as Moves that recruit the same quality of these energies into proper use, towards a more coherent way of living.

We are building a structure stable enough that the "Happier Version" can not just visit, but inhabit.

The Invitation

It takes years to shift the power balance between our usual automatic selves and a new identity. It is a slow work of friction, failure, and return.

Still, is it not at least worth trying?

Trust in this process does not have to be blind faith. The framework and its links to existing psychological models can only create a compelling story for the mind, but the hypothesis still needs to be validated internally, in practice. And for that to happen, we first have to decide to practice; and that decision can only be made in the present moment. Always.

Can we give our innate impulse to grow the weight it deserves, and shape our lives so that the conditions for Grounded Happiness become a real priority? If not for ourselves, then maybe for others?

Conclusion

Looking back at the whole, hopefully the Fusion Dynamics framework can be seen not as a list of parts, but as a living system that organizes around the simple notion of conservation of Attention, through:

1. **Self-Observation:** By naming the configuration we may interrupt the leak of Attention into automatic reaction, and allow Awareness to help us realize that the observer is separated from the feeling or behavior: “Something in me is afraid” rather than “I *am* fear”.
2. **Concentration:** Within that Awareness, the Attention that is no longer being spent in reaction can be gathered and redirected towards a Responsive Move. Instead of feeding the old pattern, we may deliberately invest Attention in a different way of functioning.
3. **Presence:** When Attention is no longer leaking into reaction, it can be conserved and gradually accumulated. Over time, this accumulation supports the emergence of Presence: a condition in which Balanced States become more accessible and more stable, and a “new identity” can begin to live in the world with greater Harmony, Participation, and Sovereignty.

Mending a Schism

In contemporary discourse, psychology often maps the terrain of dysfunction while spirituality often maps the terrain of transcendence, and the two domains rarely share a common language. This can leave people either seeking psychological answers to daily conflicts while relegating spirituality to an unattainable ideal or chasing “transcendence” without establishing basic conditions of well-being in their daily lives. As if psychology and spirituality were separate realms.

From my earliest observations of human experience, and perhaps helped by the fact that I have neither formal training in psychology nor a religious upbringing, I have been able to look at this split from a more agnostic angle. The Fusion Dynamics framework starts from a different hypothesis: that both are concerned, in their own ways, with how life may be experienced. Under this lens, the very same functional elements that ground psychological constructs, diagnostics, and therapies can be superimposed onto the highest aims of religious and contemplative traditions.

We may not need to choose between symptom relief and spiritual growth, nor treat them as separate aims. Instead, they can be thought of as complementary paths that have simply lacked a common language. This framework offers a glimpse of that potential interface.

We could, in fact, let the tools of one domain support the aims of the other, since both are ultimately concerned with making it possible to enjoy simply being present in the world. This integration may shift how we live and what we aim for, so that we do not settle for

happenstance but cultivate a more stable form of happiness, less dependent on circumstance.

Finally, Meaning

As I began this journey, I set out to make sense of existence, to understand the meaning of life.

Writing these final words, I am struck by a sense of simplicity. It feels almost obvious, as if the question “What is life about?” is answered simply by the act of asking it with sincerity.

This reminds me of a time I briefly met the Dzogchen teacher Lama Surya Das. I asked him: “What am I supposed to do to find the meaning of my life?”

He replied: “Exactly what you are doing”.

For a long time, I struggled with that. But looking through this lens, I think I can finally make sense of his answer: meaning is not located somewhere else; it is something that can be allowed “here, now”. Many contemplative traditions point in a similar direction; as the Sufi poet Rumi put it: “What you seek is seeking you”.

Viktor Frankl popularized the phrase, “The meaning of life is to give life meaning”. As I was uncovering the mechanics of this framework, it became clear to me that Meaning, like the Positive Emotions of a Balanced State, is not something we can will or manufacture directly. We cannot purchase it like a service.

Rather, it is something that emerges from a specific type of effort. It arises when we stop leaking our attention and start participating in the moment. It seems as if there is nothing more than that, and nothing more to it.

The hypothesis has been presented. Its validation can only be carried out in the laboratory of our own experience.

My hope is that this framework can help transform the search for “meaning” from an abstract philosophy into a concrete, daily practice. That it can offer footing when the ground shakes, and remind us of our capacity for freedom when the walls feel as though they are closing in.

If, in difficult moments, it helps reconnect with Hope, find some solace, or gather the strength to choose a more responsive path, then this work will have served its purpose.

May we find ways, in ordinary life, to be a little more present, a little freer, and a little kinder. And may we find in ourselves the courage to do what we must. As Krishnamurti wrote: “To look at food and say that it is good will not satisfy a starving man; he must put forth his hand and eat”.

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Appendix A: The Architecture of Fusion Dynamics

This framework is built recursively. It begins with the fundamental unit of life (The Organism) and expands into a map of human possibility.

Level 1: The Foundation (The "What")

- **The Unit:** The Viable Organism.
- **The 4 Functions (PRIA):**
 1. **Perception (P):** Input / Sensing.
 2. **Regulation (R):** Processing / Stabilizing.
 3. **Interaction (I):** Exchange / Boundary.
 4. **Action (A):** Output / Will.

Level 2: The Engine (The "How")

- **The Law of Three:** The three forces behind change (Active, Passive, Reconciling).
- **The Expansion:** The interaction of the Creator Cycle (Systemic, for-whole) and Created Cycle (Internal, for-self) splits each of the 4 PRIA Functions into two expressions, yielding 8 Modes (P-I, P-S, R-I, R-S, I-I, I-S, A-I, A-S).

Level 3: The Map (The "Where")

- **The Horizontal Axis:** The 8 Modes (P-I, P-S, R-I, R-S, I-I, I-S, A-I, A-S).
- **The Vertical Axis:** The 3 Levels of Availability unfold into 5 Functional States:
 1. **Constrained State (Surplus)** (Too Hot / Aggressive)
 2. **Responsive State (Cooling)** (The Move)
 3. **The Balanced State** (The Coherent Center)
 4. **Responsive State (Warming)** (The Move)
 5. **Constrained State (Deficit)** (Too Cold / Blocked)
- This yields **40 Combinations** of human experience.

Level 4: The Navigation (The "Work")

- **The Fuel:** Attention (Directed tension).
- **The Leak:** Attention captured by Attractor States (Negative Emotional Currents: Moving Against, Moving Away, Moving Towards).
- **The Tool:** Awareness (Self-Observation).
- **The Heuristics:**

- *One-Step: "Am I aware?"*
- *Foundational: Cool the Next / Warm the Previous.*
- *Breakthrough: The Diagonal Cross.*

Level 5: The Outcome (The "Why")

- **The Positive Currents:**
 - **Harmony** (Antidote to Moving Against).
 - **Participation** (Antidote to Moving Away).
 - **Sovereignty** (Antidote to Moving Towards).
- **The Goal:** The shift from Happenstance (Luck) to Eudaimonia (Structural Well-Being).

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

Attention: A basic limited resource of the psyche. It can either be captured automatically by stimuli and habits (a “leak”), or directed by intention (concentration). In this framework it functions as the fuel: wherever Attention goes, that part of the system is strengthened or maintained.

Attractor State: A self-reinforcing loop of mechanical functioning that captures Attention and tends to sustain itself. In Fusion Dynamics, Attractor States refer specifically to the three Negative Primordial Emotional Currents-Moving Against, Moving Away, and Moving Towards-as they organize and maintain Constrained States, continually generating “evidence” that justifies staying as they are.

Awareness: The metacognitive act of noticing the movement of Attention and the content it is pulled toward. Awareness introduces a gap between the observer and the event (“I see that this is happening in me”), making a Responsive Move possible; without Awareness, the organism simply is whatever it is feeling or thinking.

Balanced State: The ideal, coherent “center line” of a Function or Mode: the configuration where its energies are appropriately tuned and integrated. Balanced States are not permanent or fully describable; they serve as orienting points and are experientially associated with the Positive Currents of Harmony, Sovereignty, and Participation.

Constrained State: A mechanical, low-Awareness mode of operation in which a Mode is pulled by Attractor States. Attention is captured and perception, thinking, and action are organized around automatic scripts; this is the familiar state of being stuck, reactive, or on autopilot.

Cooling Move: A Responsive Move (a conscious, mediating action) that de-escalates surplus or over-driven energy in a Function or Mode. A Cooling Move “takes the heat out” of a Constrained pattern-for example by pausing, widening perception, grounding, or postponing action-so that a more Balanced response becomes possible.

Creation: The (123) Transformation. The Active force flows directly into the Receptive force, with the Reconciling force present as the background field; it is the pattern of actualization in which latent possibilities become concrete forms.

De-conditioning (Purification): The functional process of loosening the automatic coupling between triggers and Constrained emotional reactions. It consists in repeatedly bringing Awareness to the full expression of a negative current, without acting it out or suppressing it, until its grip weakens; “purification” here is technical rather than moral.

Deficit State: A Constrained State characterized by “too little” energy or availability in a Mode (under-activation, collapse, withdrawal). Structurally, it parallels Behavioral Inhibition (BIS-like) patterns of avoidance, freeze, or shutdown when confronted with demand, threat, or conflict.

Diagonal Cross (The Diagonal Cross): A “breakthrough” heuristic that uses diagonal movement on the Map (linking a Mode to its diagonally related counterpart) to interrupt entrenched Attractor patterns. It represents a more advanced, high-effort reconfiguration, used when local Cooling/Warming is not sufficient to shift a Constrained configuration.

Eudaimonia: “Grounded Happiness”; a structural tendency toward well-being, clarity, and participation that is less dependent on external circumstances and more dependent on how we meet reality. In this framework it names the more stable form of happiness associated with Balanced States and Presence, as opposed to purely contingent good feeling (Happenstance).

Evolution: The (213) Transformation. The Receptive force leads, taking in new information, with the Active and Reconciling forces reorganizing around it; it is the pattern of internalization, learning, and gradual growth.

Fear: The -(231) Negative Triad. The identity fuses with a brittle sense of separation in the face of threat (“I am this endangered unit”); perception narrows around danger and vulnerability, and behavior organizes around protection and withdrawal. It is closely related to the Negative Current of Moving Away.

Freedom: The (321) Transformation. The Reconciling force leads, harmonizing active and passive tendencies in a new configuration; it is the pattern of release in which constraints are relaxed so that new possibilities and directions of functioning can emerge.

Happenstance: “Contingent happiness”; a feeling of pleasure, relief, or satisfaction that depends heavily on external circumstances aligning with our mechanical preferences. Happenstance can coexist with Constrained States and is therefore unstable, even if subjectively intense.

Fusion Dynamics: The name of this framework, and of a companion app designed to apply it in practice. The term denotes the full architecture (PRIA, Modes, Map, States, Currents, Presence) and its practical applications.

Harmony: One of the three Primordial Positive Currents. Harmony is the felt tone that arises when Perception and Regulation are in touch with reality as it is, rather than only as we want it to be; it is the experiential antidote to Moving Against (Friction).

Heuristic: A practical rule-of-thumb for navigating the map, not a rigid law. Heuristics such as “Cool the Next” or “The Diagonal Cross” summarize typical, helpful patterns of Responsive Moves across Modes while allowing for exceptions and clinical judgment.

Identification: The -(321) Negative Triad. Attention fuses completely with a given thought, emotion, or role (“this is just the way I am / the way it is”); the sense of an observing self disappears, eliminating the gap needed for Awareness and a Responsive Move. Identification is the basic condition of mechanicalness.

Identity: The (231) Transformation. A relatively stable pattern of self-organization that binds experiences, values, roles, and commitments into a coherent sense of “I”; identity can be

more or less aligned with Presence, expressing Essence more fully or being built largely from Constrained States and Attractor narratives.

Intentional Friction: The consciously chosen willingness to remain in contact with moderate, appropriate discomfort instead of automatically escaping it, in order to collect Attention, sustain Awareness, and open the possibility of a different response. It is the “clean pain” of presence: the friction we accept upfront to interrupt automatism and buy Freedom later.

Interaction (I, function): The Function of exchange, relationship, and boundary management. Interaction links parts to each other and to the larger wholes they belong to (people to people, roles to systems, inner parts to the wider psyche); it is one of the four PRIA Functions.

Interaction (Transformation): The (132) Transformation. The Active force engages the Reconciling force, with the Receptive force as field; it is the pattern of contact and mutual influence, covering exchange, dialogue, and coordination among distinct elements.

Internal Mode: One of the two Functional Modes. The expression of a Function oriented to the integrity, maintenance, and self-understanding of the individual organism—the “for-self” mode, answering how this Function operates for the sake of the self.

Law of Three: The foundational organizing principle that any real process involves three distinct forces: Affirming (Active), Denying (Passive), and Reconciling. In this framework, the Law of Three is used as a structural lens: the six Transformations (Triads) represent lawful patterns of how these forces can be ordered, rather than metaphysical claims about reality.

Leak (The Leak): The characteristic way Attention is “lost” in this framework: being captured by Attractor States driven by Negative Emotional Currents (Moving Against, Moving Away, Moving Towards). The Leak names the ongoing drain of Attention into mechanical loops, which Responsive Moves seek to stop or redirect.

Moving Against / Moving Away / Moving Towards: The three Negative Primordial Emotional Currents. Moving Against (Friction) involves aggression, resistance, and attack; Moving Away (Withdrawal) involves fear, shutdown, and escape; Moving Towards (Fusion) involves clinging, merger, and over-attachment. These currents function as Attractor States that organize Constrained emotional patterns and capture Attention.

Negative Emotional Currents: The three Primordial Negative Emotional Currents, Moving Against, Moving Away, and Moving Towards, that act as Attractor States for Constrained functioning. They capture Attention and organize Surplus/Deficit patterns, generating unintentional friction when they run unchecked.

Negative Triads: The corrupted versions of the six lawful Transformations (Triads) of the Law of Three. They describe typical patterns of negative emotion and mechanical functioning—such as Useless Imagination, Waste, Fear, Self-Centeredness, Subjectivism, and Identification—and act as engines of Constrained States.

Order: The (312) Transformation. The Reconciling force leads, organizing Active and Receptive elements into a structured pattern; it is the imposition or discovery of stable structure (norms, laws, frameworks) that coordinate behavior and experience.

Participation: One of the three Primordial Positive Currents. Participation is the felt tone of being actively engaged in meaningful roles and contributions, where self and world meet in concrete action; it is the experiential antidote to Moving Towards (Fusion).

Perception (P): The Function of input and sensing. Perception registers “what is happening” both internally (sensations, emotions, thoughts) and externally (environment, others); it is one of the four PRIA Functions.

Positive (Emotional) Currents: The three Primordial Positive Emotional Currents, Harmony, Participation, and Sovereignty, that describe lawful, coherent tones of experience when Functions and Modes are operating in a Balanced State. They function as experiential “antidotes” to the three Negative Emotional Currents and provide a compass for Eudaimonic happiness.

Presence: The accumulated capacity for integrated, sustained Awareness in action. Presence emerges when Attention and Awareness repeatedly cooperate across Functions and Modes, leading over time (via neuroplastic and regulatory changes) to a more coherent baseline of functioning; it can be experienced as a state and, with practice, as a more trait-like quality.

PRIA: The acronym for the four foundational Functions of any viable organism: Perception, Regulation, Interaction, and Action. These Functions describe what a system must do to remain alive, coherent, and responsive to its environment.

Regulation (R): The Function of internal processing and stabilization. Regulation modulates intensity, rebalances after perturbation, and integrates conflicting signals (affective, cognitive, physiological); it is one of the four PRIA Functions.

Responsive State / Responsive Move: The non-mechanical level of operation in which Awareness is present and a Constrained pattern is being mediated. As a State, it names the experiential configuration of “seeing the pattern and not being fully inside it”; as a Move, it refers to the specific action taken from that State to shift the Map (for example a Cooling or Warming Move).

Self-Centeredness: The -(213) Negative Triad. The impulse for growth (Evolution) is directed almost exclusively toward the self as end point; others and the wider system are reduced to means or background, and feedback is filtered primarily for self-enhancement.

Self-Observation: The act of non-judgmental witnessing of one’s inner state in real time: noticing sensations, thoughts, emotions, and tendencies without immediate action or suppression. Self-Observation is the practical mechanism that ignites Awareness.

Six Transformations: The six permutations of the three forces in the Law of Three: 123, 132, 213, 231, 312, 321. They represent the basic lawful patterns of process used in this framework, each with a characteristic feel and typical role (for example Creation, Interaction, Evolution, Identity, Order, and Freedom).

Source / Verticality: Structural coordinates used in the model to denote an orienting “upward” reference point, akin to “North” on a map, rather than a dogmatic metaphysical

claim. “Source” and “Verticality” name the lawful pattern of functioning that the Vertical Path aims toward, providing direction for work without requiring agreement on ultimate ontology.

Sovereignty: One of the three Primordial Positive Currents. Sovereignty is the felt tone of standing in oneself with clarity and firmness while remaining connected; it is the capacity to regulate boundaries without isolation and to act according to one’s values rather than purely mechanical pressures and is an experiential antidote to Moving Away (Withdrawal) and certain forms of Fear.

Subjectivism: The -(312) Negative Triad. The impulse for order collapses around the subject’s internal frame (“my view is reality”); evidence that contradicts that frame is minimized or ignored to preserve internal consistency, and the system becomes organized around defending its own narrative.

Surplus State: A Constrained State characterized by “too much” energy or activation in a Mode (overdrive, urgency, compulsion). Structurally, it parallels Behavioral Activation (BAS-like) patterns of pushing, chasing, or escalating action beyond what the situation actually requires.

Systemic Mode: One of the two Functional Modes. The expression of a Function oriented to the coherence and development of the larger whole it belongs to-the “for-whole” mode, answering how this Function operates for the sake of the system or context.

Unintentional Friction: The painful friction generated when Negative Triads and Negative Emotional Currents run on automatic and drag Attention with them. It corresponds to the “dirty pain” of reaction: we avoid, resist, or over-analyze experience and pay later in the form of exhaustion, broken relationships, and deepened Constrained States.

Useless Imagination: The -(123) Negative Triad. The creative impulse is decoupled from reality-testing or implementation; Attention cycles through fantasies, rehearsed arguments, or imagined futures/pasts without leading to concrete action or learning.

Vertical Path: The larger developmental trajectory described in Appendix C, situating the day-to-day work on Constrained and Responsive States within a broader scale of increasing availability of Awareness and finer energies. It frames the Fusion Dynamics practices as steps in a vertical reorganization of one’s “operating system”. rather than as isolated symptom fixes.

Warming Move: A Responsive Move (a conscious, mediating action) that adds energy, engagement, or contact where there is Deficit or withdrawal. A Warming Move “ignites” a blocked or frozen Function-for example by reaching out, expressing, or experimenting in a safe way-so that a more Balanced State becomes accessible.

Waste: The -(132) Negative Triad. Interaction continues but accumulates no real change or integration; typical examples include aimless activity, empty talk, circular arguments, or gossip that consumes Attention and energy without serving any functional purpose.

Appendix C: The Vertical Path

The main body of this framework describes a practical map of function: how we perceive, regulate, relate, and act, as it takes place within a specific bandwidth of experience: the transition from Automaticity to Awareness.

This appendix zooms out to place that work in a larger vertical context. It asks: Where does this shift lead?

But before we proceed, two notes:

1. On classification: The main body of this framework uses a functional classification (PRIA, Modes, States) designed for psychological utility. This appendix uses an energetic classification derived from the Bennett/Gurdjieff lineage. These are not competing systems, but as two complementary lenses on the same class of phenomena. I introduce this deeper layer here because it helps us explain the vertical path within the framework.
2. On terminology: Throughout the text the terms “Source” or “Verticality” function as structural coordinates. This usage does not seek to define the ultimate nature of reality, but neither does it dismiss it. I treat these concepts as foundational axioms, necessary realities that orient the psychological work, much like “North” orients a map.

The Spectrum of Energies

Before we can map the stages of growth, we must understand the quality of fuel available to the organism. Drawing from Bennett’s Systematics, we can distinguish three primary energies at work at the level we must assume we are currently in:

1. Automatic Energy: Captured Attention or Inattention

- **The Dynamic:** The energy of habit, reflex, and association. It flows downhill, following the path of least resistance.
- **In Fusion Dynamics:** It powers the Constrained States (Surplus/Deficit). It is attention hijacked by automatism.

2. Sensitive Energy: Directed Attention (Contact with the Object)

- **The Dynamic:** The energy of actively sensing and contacting the object of attention. It requires effort to generate, concentration. It corresponds to the capacity to feel the body, hold a focus, and contact the present moment.
- **In Fusion Dynamics:** It is the energetic foundation required to execute a Responsive Move. the qualitative shift of the Move itself belongs to Awareness (Conscious Energy).

3. Conscious Energy: Awareness (Separation from the Object)

- **The Dynamic:** It is the "Reconciling Force" that breaks the fusion between subject and object.
- **In Fusion Dynamics:** It is Awareness. When this energy manifests momentarily, it appears as the spark that permits choice; when such moments accumulate and stabilize, the resulting configuration of the system is what we call Presence.

The strategy described in this framework may now be clearer: We cannot manufacture Conscious Energy directly. We must work with Sensitive Energy. By using directed Attention to stop the leak of Automatic Energy, we create the stable platform where Awareness can appear and the capacity for Presence be increased.

The Geometry of Growth: Three Triangles

We can visualize vertical growth not as leaving the world, but as shifting the "Apex" of our operating system (recall Figure 5: The Dynamic Triangle in Chapter 5).

In this model, the base of the triangle represents our conditions, real or imagined. The Base does not change as we will always remain "human", meaning subject to the push and pull of external and internal conditions. What changes is the apex, the ruling principle that organizes the organism.

We can visualize this as series of superimposed triangles, where the first triangle acts as the proverbial base for the next one.

Fusion Dynamics focuses strictly on the lower triangle: the work of stabilizing the organism that is the structural prerequisite for any higher development, by working with Sensitive and Conscious Energy.

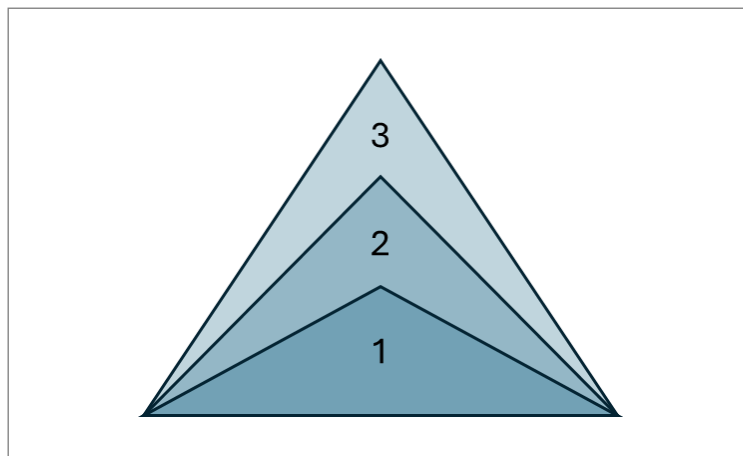


Figure 7: The Vertical Path

Triangle 1: The Scope of Fusion Dynamics

This is the domain of ordinary human life. It is the work of moving from automatic reaction to proper functioning. We use here the actual terms coined by Gurdjieff and Bennett:

- **The Base: Constrained States:** structurally parallel to Gurdjieff's World 96 and Bennett's Material Self. The dominance of automatic conditioning, the Negative Triads and "False" Personality.
- **The Sides: Responsive States:** The Work, the active generation of Sensitive Energy (Directed Attention) to stop the leaks. When sustained, it creates the vessel that attracts the spark of Awareness.
- **The Apex:** From the perspective of Energies, this corresponds to Conscious Energy, and from the perspective of the Fusion Dynamics framework, to the initial realization of Balanced States and our aim.

Triangle 1 as a whole corresponds to Gurdjieff's World 48 and Bennett's Reactional Self.²⁴ The "taste" of Awareness and Presence may be experienced as Harmony, Participation and Sovereignty. At this level, Presence is not a permanent possession; it is a dynamic ideal. The Reactional or "functional" self becomes capable of honest interaction, serving as the necessary vessel for higher possibilities.

Triangle 2: The Divided Self (Essence)

Triangle 1 serves as the base for this next level. As Sensitive Energy is the dominant fuel (not Automatic) Conscious Energy becomes the new effort which can be met with higher Energies, hypothetically (for our purposes) leading to a new, higher level of "Balanced States".

Triangle 2 corresponds to Gurdjieff's World 24 and Bennett's Divided Self. Here, the "I" separates from the personality. It is called "Divided" not because it is broken, but because it can simultaneously inhabit the spiritual and material worlds without losing itself. It is the birth of Essence, where Presence may be more stable.

Triangle 3: The True Self (Individuality)

Corresponding with Gurdjieff's World 12 and Bennett's True Self. The integration of Essence into a singular, indivisible Will. In this tradition, this is described as the domain of genuine Individuality, where "I" and "Will" are one.

²⁴ "Reactional" here refers to the self that interacts with the world. When balanced, it is the "True" Personality, a healthy, regulated vessel capable of honest interaction

Beyond: The Universal Self

Gurdjieff's World 6/3 and Bennett's Universal Self. In that lineage, this level is described as one in which the individual will merge with the Universal/Divine Will, a state traditionally associated with Saints and Prophets.²⁵

Possible Correlations with Wisdom Traditions

The table below maps how different traditions describe this vertical ascent. Note that not all traditions map to all levels; this chart looks for structural resonance, not exact equivalence.

Fourth Way (Bennett)	Sufism (Nafs)	Kabbalah (Worlds)	Christian Mysticism	Yoga / Vedanta
Reactional Self (World 48)	Nafs al-lawwama (Accusing/Aware Self)	Yetzirah (Formation)	Purgative Way (Cleansing)	Manomaya (Mental Body)
Divided Self (World 24)	Nafs al-mulhima (Inspired Self)	Briah (Creation)	Illuminative Way	Vijnanamaya (Wisdom Body)
True Self (World 12)	Nafs al-mutma'inna (Contented Self)	Higher Briah	Illuminative Way (Late)	Anandamaya (Bliss Body)
Universal Self (World 6)	Nafs al-radiya (Pleased Self)	Atziluth (Emanation)	Unitive Way (Theosis)	Atman / Brahman

The Law of Order

A common trap is to imagine oneself living in Triangle 2 or 3 without having stabilized Triangle 1. This bypassing has been referenced to as "spiritual ego": considering oneself as a "Universal Self" while still leaking Automatic Energy through negative emotions and dysfunctional behavior.

In these lineages, there is a strong claim about order: enduring movement to a higher level requires a sufficient degree of stabilization at the previous one.

²⁵ As we move up, definitions become vague on purpose as I restrict to verbatim references of the original sources.

We must therefore assume that we cannot reliably inhabit Triangle 2 or 3 without having done the foundational work of Triangle 1. Temporary glimpses may occur, but without foundation they would not hold or integrate.

Hence, we must first build a healthy personality (Triangle 1): learn to perceive facts, regulate affect, and interact fairly, and only Hope to be touched by higher consciousness. The "mundane" work of applying the Heuristics in our daily lives is not a distraction from the spiritual path. It is the structural prerequisite for it.

Appendix D: The Full Map

The Fusion Dynamics Map has:

- 8 columns (Modes) - the PRIA functions split into Internal / Systemic modes.
- 5 rows (States) - Surplus Constrained State, Cooling Move, Balanced State, Warming Move, Deficit Constrained State.

Each combination of this 8×5 grid is described below as:

- Column number and Mode
- Row (Surplus Constrained State / Cooling Move / Balanced State / Warming Move / Deficit Constrained State)
- Phenomenological label
- Definition and examples
- Technical resonances (conceptual, not 1:1 equivalences)

Column 1 - Perception-Internal

Reality Contact: immediate sensing of what is happening (outside and inside)

1.1 Surplus Constrained State - Over-Focusing (Biased Facts)

Definition.

A pattern of zooming in on details that confirm an existing belief while filtering out anything that contradicts it. Attention becomes tight, narrow, and defensive: facts are “cherry-picked” to protect a narrative or fear. One sees a lot, but only through a keyhole.

Examples.

- Someone convinced a colleague “is out to get them” notices every small delay in email but ignores multiple instances of support.
- Before a medical exam, a person obsessively searches for worst-case scenarios and ignores base rates or benign explanations.

Technical resonances.

Conceptually overlaps with confirmation bias, threat-oriented attentional bias, and rumination. Related to higher Neuroticism (worry, vigilance), sometimes combined with narrow Conscientiousness-Orderliness and lower Openness (reluctance to consider disconfirming data). Connects to HiTOP facets in Anxious-Misery and some Obsessive-Compulsive tendencies (over-checking, over-monitoring) and to difficulty shifting attention (executive function).

1.2 Cooling Move - Widening Inquiry

Definition.

The deliberate act of broadening one's view and testing one's own assumptions. Rather than letting attention lock on confirming evidence, one asks, "What am I not seeing? What would count as disconfirming evidence?" It is a kind of epistemic deep breath.

Examples.

- Someone in conflict re-reads a message looking for any line that might show goodwill, not just the upsetting phrases.
- Before deciding, a person asks two trusted people who disagree with them to explain why.

Technical resonances.

Resonates with cognitive flexibility, inhibition of first interpretations, and updating working models (executive functions). Close to intellectual humility and actively open-minded thinking in epistemic literature. In ACT terms, parallels cognitive defusion and contact with the present moment as applied to thoughts-as-hypotheses.

1.3 Balanced State - Objectivity

Definition.

A state of clear reality contact: one can take in relevant cues without exaggeration or denial. The person can acknowledge both threatening and reassuring information and hold them together without collapsing into panic or avoidance.

Examples.

- Receiving mixed performance feedback and being able to see both the strengths and the criticisms as real and workable.
- Noticing bodily anxiety before a social event but also recalling previous occasions that went reasonably well.

Technical resonances.

Aligns with lower Neuroticism and higher Openness-Intellect (especially the "Intellect" facet). Compatible with reduced cognitive biases and more accurate judgment under uncertainty. Affectively, it corresponds to accurate tracking of core affect (valence and arousal), not distorted by defensive denial or exaggeration.

1.4 Warming Move - Selective Allowing

Definition.

The choice to let in a small, manageable amount of new or uncomfortable information when

one would normally avoid it completely. Rather than opening every channel at once, one opens a narrow, intentional inlet.

Examples.

- A person who avoids health information decides to read a short, reliable summary instead of either googling compulsively or ignoring the topic.
- Someone who “can’t handle feedback” asks for one specific, limited suggestion from a trusted colleague.

Technical resonances.

Resembles graded exposure and acceptance in ACT and CBT: a stepwise approach to feared information. In executive terms, it supports gentle updating of one’s model of reality without sensory or emotional overload.

1.5 Deficit Constrained State - Shutting Out / Refusing Input

Definition.

A pattern of mentally turning away from information, especially when it is novel, complex, or emotionally challenging. This can appear as denial, minimization, disinterest, or an “I don’t want to know” stance. The person keeps the lights dim to avoid seeing what might hurt.

Examples.

- Ignoring repeated signs of financial trouble (“I’ll worry about it later”) despite mounting evidence.
- Refusing to listen when a partner calmly raises the same concern for the third time.

Technical resonances.

Conceptually linked to experiential avoidance (ACT), low Openness (closed to new information), and aspects of HiTOP Detachment and Avoidance. Can co-occur with the Negativity/Pessimism or Vulnerability to Harm schemas when reality is felt as too painful to face directly.

Column 2 - Perception-Systemic

Pattern Insight / Essence Recognition: seeing what the situation is really about

2.1 Surplus Constrained State - Over-Patterning / Dogmatism

Definition.

A tendency to force every event into a single, rigid explanatory frame (“this is always about X”). Ambiguity is intolerable; alternative patterns are dismissed out of hand. The person clings to a worldview, ideology, or story as if it were reality itself.

Examples.

- Interpreting every disagreement as “disrespect” or “narcissism”, regardless of context.
- A leader reading every setback as proof of one grand conspiracy or one single “toxic” person.

Technical resonances.

Maps onto low Openness, high need for cognitive closure, and stability of schemas. Relates to Unrelenting Standards or Entitlement when the pattern is “my way is the only way”. In extreme forms, can drift toward suspiciousness or quasi-paranoid patterning (HiTOP Psychoticism facets).

2.2 Cooling Move - Widening Contemplation

Definition.

A softening of one’s current story by holding it as a hypothesis rather than a fact. The person still sees a pattern, but allows others to co-exist, inviting complexity and nuance.

Examples.

- Someone who tends to say “I’m always the victim” pauses and asks, “Are there situations where I have more agency than I admit?”
- A supervisor holding their initial explanation (“they’re lazy”) alongside others (“they might be overwhelmed; I may have miscommunicated”).

Technical resonances.

Draws on cognitive flexibility, mentalizing, and perspective-taking. In ACT, similar to stepping into self-as-context and allowing multiple narratives without fusing with any one. Related to higher Openness-Intellect and lowered dogmatism.

2.3 Balanced State - Clarity

Definition.

A felt “click” of understanding of what is really at stake. The person sees the pattern, the priorities, and the deeper meaning of a situation without exaggerating or oversimplifying. The pattern feels coherent and proportionate.

Examples.

- Realizing that repeated job conflicts are not “bad luck” but tied to one’s avoidance of assertive conversations.
- Seeing, in a family dynamic, that the real issue is not “who is right” but an unresolved fear of abandonment.

Technical resonances.

Resonates with healthy Openness-Intellect and adaptive schema updating. It is what many meaning-making and narrative therapies aim at: a coherent, flexible life story. In values models (e.g., Schwartz), clarity often reflects a better alignment between personal values and situational demands.

2.4 Warming Move - Discriminating Inputs

Definition.

The deliberate effort to gather diverse pieces of information and test how they fit together, when one feels scattered or overwhelmed. The person begins sorting noise from signal, asking “which details matter for the pattern?”

Examples.

- After a confusing week at work, someone lists key events and marks which ones truly affect their long-term project.
- In a relational crisis, a person separates “what was actually said” from imagined motives or future catastrophes.

Technical resonances.

Related to goal-directed attention, structured problem-solving, and selective updating. Conceptually sits between raw information intake and higher-order integration. It is a “warm-up” for systemic perception, similar to using values and context as filters in ACT.

2.5 Deficit Constrained State - Hazy Confusion / Spurious Links

Definition.

An experience of foggy, incoherent understanding: events do not form a stable picture, or they form tangled, implausible ones. The person may either see everything as random or weave chaotic, shifting narratives that do not hold up.

Examples.

- Feeling that “nothing makes sense” in one’s life and being unable to identify any recurring themes.
- Stringing together unrelated coincidences (“they wore blue, then it rained, then I got sick - it’s all connected”) without proportion.

Technical resonances.

At milder levels, relates to distractibility and unstable schema formation. At more extreme levels, can echo elements of thought disorder or Psychoticism (HiTOP; odd beliefs, loose associations). Also resonates with Insufficient Self-Control schema when life feels chaotically unstructured.

Column 3 - Regulation-Internal

Inner Steady-State / Emotional Regulation

3.1 Surplus Constrained State - Indulgence / Hedonism

Definition.

A pattern of chasing immediate relief or pleasure at the expense of longer-term stability. The person tries to regulate internal discomfort by overdoing food, substances, scrolling, sex, or other soothing activities, losing the capacity to tolerate ordinary discomfort.

Examples.

- After a stressful day, automatically drinking to excess, then repeating the cycle despite consequences.
- Avoiding all unpleasant conversations by binge-watching or gaming until late night, then feeling more dysregulated the next day.

Technical resonances.

Conceptually aligns with Disinhibition (HiTOP), Negative Urgency (acting rashly under distress), and low Self-Discipline. Related schemas include Insufficient Self-Control and aspects of Entitlement when one's desire for comfort feels unquestionable. Also touches reward-sensitivity in BAS-dominated regulation.

3.2 Cooling Move - Centering

Definition.

The act of grounding attention in simple, present-focused sensations to stabilize the system. Instead of pursuing more stimulation or relief, one returns to the body as a neutral reference point.

Examples.

- Pausing in a conflict to feel one's feet on the floor and observe the breath for a few cycles before speaking.
- During craving, shifting focus to the sensation of air on the skin and tension in the shoulders until the urge passes.

Technical resonances.

Core to mindfulness-based and DBT skills: present-moment awareness, grounding, and basic distress tolerance. Supports down-regulation of physiological arousal and enables more effective top-down regulation by Regulation-Internal.

3.3 Balanced State - Equanimity

Definition.

A state of inner composure in which one can feel joy, fear, sadness, and anger without being swept away or shutting down. Emotions are fully present but do not dictate behavior automatically.

Examples.

- Hearing criticism and feeling a sting, yet being able to stay in the conversation and respond thoughtfully.
- Sitting with grief waves after a loss, neither suppressing nor drowning in them.

Technical resonances.

Aligns with low Neuroticism and high emotion regulation capacity. Matches ACT's acceptance plus committed action, and DBT's emotion regulation and distress tolerance outcomes. Contributes strongly to eudaimonic well-being.

3.4 Warming Move - Awakening Wish

Definition.

A quiet movement from numbness or apathy toward a small, genuine desire for aliveness. It is not yet action, but a re-kindling of "I would like to feel more awake" when one has been shut down.

Examples.

- In depression, noticing "I would like to care again, even a little", and letting that wish be felt.
- After a long period of over-detachment, feeling a faint draw toward music, art, or human contact and not pushing it away.

Technical resonances.

Resonates with values contact in ACT and with early stages of behavioral activation (moving from pure inertia to minimal interest). Motivationally, it reflects the first re-ignition of Autonomous motivation (SDT) and vitality.

3.5 Deficit Constrained State - Emotional Numbing

Definition.

A felt sense of inner flatness or distance from one's own emotions. Experiences that would normally evoke feeling register as "blank", "foggy", or purely cognitive; life becomes muted and uncoloured.

Examples.

- Knowing intellectually that one has suffered a loss but feeling "nothing", with a sense that something is missing.

- In relationships, registering that one “should” feel happy or angry but instead feeling empty or indifferent.

Technical resonances.

Conceptually close to alexithymia (difficulty identifying and describing emotions) and to HiTOP Detachment facets (Restricted Affectivity, Anhedonia). In schema terms, resonates with Emotional Inhibition and Emotional Deprivation turned inward. Common in trauma-related dissociation and chronic stress responses.

Column 4 - Regulation-Systemic

Mutual Care and Limits / Aligned Ecosystem

4.1 Surplus Constrained State - Submission / Self-Sacrifice

Definition.

A pattern of chronically putting others’ needs, preferences, or moods ahead of one’s own, even when it causes harm. Conflict is avoided at almost any cost, and self-assertion feels dangerous or selfish.

Examples.

- Always saying “yes” to extra work to keep the team happy, despite burnout and resentment.
- Staying in a relationship where one feels consistently diminished, telling oneself “it’s my job to keep things smooth”.

Technical resonances.

Directly linked to Subjugation and Self-Sacrifice schemas (Young). Commonly associated with anxious/preoccupied attachment in group/family contexts. Personality-wise, can reflect high Agreeableness-Compliance and low assertiveness.

4.2 Cooling Move - Self-Accepting Limits

Definition.

The recognition that one’s own needs, preferences, and limits are legitimate parts of the ecosystem. One begins to say “no” appropriately, without framing it as selfishness or betrayal.

Examples.

- Turning down a third consecutive favour from a friend and saying, “I care about you, and I also need rest tonight”.
- Letting a family member know that a certain topic or tone is not acceptable and will end the conversation.

Technical resonances.

Related to assertiveness training and healthy boundary-setting. Counters Subjugation and Self-Sacrifice schemas. In SDT terms, restores Autonomy and reduces controlled motivation in relationships.

4.3 Balanced State - Empathy & Kindness

Definition.

The capacity to care genuinely about the wellbeing of others and of the group while also caring for one's own integrity. One can feel for others without collapsing into self-erasure or coldness.

Examples.

- Comforting a colleague in distress while also holding realistic limits around how much time and energy one can give.
- In parenting, being firm about boundaries while remaining emotionally available and warm.

Technical resonances.

Aligns with high Agreeableness-Compassion and stable secure attachment in group contexts. Integrates concern for others with self-respect, and fits with prosocial values such as Benevolence (Schwartz).

4.4 Warming Move - Connecting to a Larger Good

Definition.

The conscious choice to widen one's field of concern beyond personal comfort, without denying it. One remembers or re-engages with a sense of service, contribution, or shared good.

Examples.

- A team member, tempted to withdraw from a difficult project, reconnects with the project's importance for clients.
- In family tension, someone reflects, "Beyond who is right, what would be better for the children's long-term wellbeing?"

Technical resonances.

Conceptually tied to values such as Benevolence and Universalism (Schwartz) and to ACT's values clarification process, extended to the collective domain. Also resonates with spiritual and existential notions of service and "working for something larger than oneself".

4.5 Deficit Constrained State - Self-Interest (Comfort First)

Definition.

A stance where one's own comfort, ease, or short-term benefit is habitually prioritized over the needs of others or of the system. Empathy is muted; costs to others are minimized or rationalized.

Examples.

- Insisting on personal convenience (noise, mess, schedule) in shared spaces regardless of impact on others.
- In group work, consistently avoiding unpleasant tasks and assuming "someone else will pick up the slack".

Technical resonances.

Overlaps conceptually with low Agreeableness and low Honesty-Humility (HEXACO), especially Callousness and Self-Centredness facets. Relates to schemas of Entitlement / Grandiosity when sense of special rights dominates. In HiTOP, fits within Antagonism.

Column 5 - Interaction-Internal

1-to-1 Relational Attunement

5.1 Surplus Constrained State - Craving / Enmeshment

Definition.

A pattern of intense, anxious pursuit of closeness and reassurance in 1-to-1 relationships. The person fears abandonment or rejection and may lose sense of self in the other, over-disclosing, clinging, or monitoring.

Examples.

- Constantly checking if a friend or partner is upset, sending repeated texts, and feeling panicked if there is a delay.
- Adopting the other person's opinions, tastes, or schedule to avoid any distance.

Technical resonances.

Closely aligned with Attachment Anxiety (adult attachment models). Resonates with Abandonment, Emotional Deprivation (inverted), and Approval-Seeking schemas. Mapped to Negative Affectivity and dependency-related facets in HiTOP / PID-5.

5.2 Cooling Move - Satiety & Boundaries

Definition.

The movement from relating out of hunger to relating from a sense of inner fullness. One reclaims self-worth and recognizes that connection can be reciprocal rather than desperate.

Examples.

- Choosing to delay sending a checking text and instead reminding oneself of shared history and one's own value.
- Leaving time alone after a date, allowing one's own feelings and preferences to surface instead of immediately merging.

Technical resonances.

Reflects building an internal secure base and self-soothing capacity. Overlaps with self-compassion and corrective relational experiences as used in attachment-based and schema therapies.

5.3 Balanced State - Fair Attunement

Definition.

A state in which both people in a dyad feel "met" - neither over-responsible nor neglected. There is live responsiveness, mutual disclosure, and respect for each other's limits.

Examples.

- A friendship where both parties initiate contact, offer support, and can say "no" without drama.
- A therapeutic alliance where the client feels understood and challenged in a proportionate way, and the therapist is neither distant nor over-involved.

Technical resonances.

Embodies secure attachment at the dyadic level. On the interpersonal circumplex, sits near balanced Communion (warmth) with appropriate Agency (neither domineering nor submissive).

5.4 Warming Move - Seeking Connection

Definition.

The act of taking a clean, proportionate step toward 1-to-1 contact when one has been withdrawn or resigned. It is initiative in the relational domain.

Examples.

- Inviting a colleague for coffee after weeks of avoidance, with no hidden agenda beyond contact.
- Sending a short, honest message to a friend after a period of silence: "I've been off the radar; I'd like to reconnect".

Technical resonances.

Parallel to behavioral activation targeting social approach, and corrective experiences for

attachment avoidance. Supports rebuilding of Relatedness (SDT) through low-pressure engagement.

5.5 Deficit Constrained State - Withdrawal / Emotional Deprivation

Definition.

A stance of pulling away from close relationships, often with the conviction that one's emotional needs will not or should not be met. Contact may feel pointless, unsafe, or humiliating.

Examples.

- Rejecting offers of support (“there’s no point, nobody really cares”) while complaining of loneliness.
- Avoiding intimacy in partnerships by staying busy, changing the topic, or keeping everything on a surface level.

Technical resonances.

Links to Emotional Deprivation and Social Isolation schemas. Maps well onto Attachment Avoidance in adult attachment models. In HiTOP, sits within Detachment (Intimacy Avoidance, Social Withdrawal).

Column 6 - Interaction-Systemic

Social Role and Contribution

6.1 Surplus Constrained State - Policing / Punitiveness

Definition.

A pattern of over-identifying with the rules, norms, or moral codes of a group and enforcing them rigidly. The person takes on the role of judge, critic, or enforcer, often at the expense of warmth and flexibility.

Examples.

- Publicly shaming colleagues for small mistakes while ignoring context or human limits.
- In parenting, focusing almost exclusively on punishment and “teaching them a lesson” rather than guidance.

Technical resonances.

Strongly resonates with Punitiveness and Unrelenting Standards schemas. On the interpersonal circumplex, reflects high Dominance and low Warmth. In HiTOP, draws from Antagonism (Hostility) and sometimes Anankastia (rigid perfectionism).

6.2 Cooling Move - Role Acceptance / Humility

Definition.

The recognition that one is part of the system, not its owner. One steps back from over-control and attends to one's actual role and its limits.

Examples.

- A manager stops micromanaging every detail and focuses on clarifying expectations and supporting the team.
- In a volunteer group, someone lets go of the need to be the moral arbiter and instead does their agreed tasks well.

Technical resonances.

Aligns with appropriate dominance, cooperation, and acceptance of role boundaries (organizational psychology). In ACT, echoes self-as-context, loosening identification with the "judge" or "policeman" self-story.

6.3 Balanced State - Transparent Order

Definition.

A state in which roles, rules, and expectations are clear, fair, and visible. People understand the structure and can trust it; power is exercised in a way that is predictable and accountable.

Examples.

- A team where responsibilities are explicit, feedback channels are known, and consequences are consistent rather than arbitrary.
- A family system with clear, age-appropriate rules and room for negotiation, not hidden taboos.

Technical resonances.

Connected to role clarity and justice perceptions in organizational research. Personality-wise, supported by Honesty-Humility and Agreeableness (fairness, cooperation).

6.4 Warming Move - Finding Contribution

Definition.

The process of exploring where one can genuinely be of use within a system. Rather than withdrawing or complaining of uselessness, one experiments with roles and tasks to discover a "right-sized" contribution.

Examples.

- Trying out different volunteer roles in a community until one finds a place that fits strengths and availability.
- At work, asking, “Where can I make the most difference given my skills and constraints?” and testing hypotheses.

Technical resonances.

Supports Competence and Relatedness (SDT) through role fit. Overlaps with vocational and career-development ideas of person-environment fit and vocational identity formation.

6.5 Deficit Constrained State - Feeling Useless / Aimless

Definition.

A pervasive sense of not having a place, role, or value within groups or systems. The person may feel invisible, unnecessary, or fundamentally unfit to contribute.

Examples.

- A new team member silently doing the bare minimum, convinced “no one would notice if I disappeared”.
- In family, feeling like the “extra” who has no defined function besides taking up space.

Technical resonances.

Relates to Failure and Defectiveness / Shame schemas in a social-role key. Connects to HiTOP Detachment (Work Inhibition, Anhedonia) and common depressive themes of worthlessness and loss of role.

Column 7 - Action-Internal

Initiative / Personal Will

7.1 Surplus Constrained State - Recklessness

Definition.

Acting quickly and intensely without adequately checking context, consequences, or one’s own limits. Movement itself becomes the goal; slowing down feels intolerable.

Examples.

- Quitting a job impulsively after one bad meeting, without a plan.
- Engaging in risky behaviors (speeding, impulsive spending, substances) when distressed, then regretting it.

Technical resonances.

Associated with Disinhibition, Risk Taking, and Impulsivity (HiTOP, PID-5). Often tied to high

Extraversion-Assertiveness with low Conscientiousness-Cautiousness. Mirrors Negative Urgency (rash action under distress).

7.2 Cooling Move - Tempering Drive

Definition.

The choice to keep one's will "online" while pacing speed, intensity, and timing. One does not suppress motivation; one channels it in proportion to reality.

Examples.

- Writing a heated email but waiting until the next day to send it (and editing it in the morning).
- Deciding to test a new idea in a small pilot instead of reorganizing everything overnight.

Technical resonances.

Uses inhibition, planning, and delay of gratification. Related to DBT skills like "check the facts" and "wise mind" decisions. Supports more adaptive use of high drive and ambition.

7.3 Balanced State - Initiative

Definition.

A stable capacity to translate intention into action at an appropriate moment and scale. One can start, continue, and complete tasks without extreme procrastination or impulsivity.

Examples.

- Beginning an important but mildly aversive task (e.g., taxes, hard conversation) within a reasonable time window.
- Regularly starting personal projects (learning, health, relationships) and following through at a sustainable pace.

Technical resonances.

Corresponds to healthy Conscientiousness (Industriousness) and Extraversion-Assertiveness. Reflects autonomous goal-directed behavior (SDT) with adequate self-regulation.

7.4 Warming Move - Purpose Re-Alignment

Definition.

Reconnecting with the underlying "why" behind an action when one has gone flat or entangled in obligation. Purpose here is not abstract ideology but a personally felt value or meaning.

Examples.

- Remembering that exercise is about long-term vitality and presence with one's children, not just appearance.
- Reframing a tedious task as part of a larger project one cares about.

Technical resonances.

Core to values work in ACT and to Autonomous motivation (SDT). Shifts behavior from controlled or amotivated states to intrinsically or identified motivation, which counters inertia.

7.5 Deficit Constrained State - Inertia / Dependence

Definition.

A state in which the will feels frozen. Starting actions feels impossible or pointless; one waits for external forces (deadlines, crises, other people) to move things instead.

Examples.

- Staying in a deeply unsatisfying situation for years, repeatedly saying “I can’t” or “it’s not the right time”, without testing any small changes.
- Relying on others to decide, initiate, or organize everything, then feeling resentful or ashamed.

Technical resonances.

Resonates with Dependence / Incompetence and Failure schemas. In HiTOP, links to Detachment and Negative Affectivity (low energy, pessimism). Behaviorally overlapping with avoidant coping and depressive passivity.

Column 8 - Action-Systemic

Creation Beyond Self

8.1 Surplus Constrained State - Over-Achievement

Definition.

A compulsive drive to produce, outperform, or “win” in ways that serve image, status, or worthiness more than genuine purpose. Resting or doing “enough” feels unsafe.

Examples.

- Working late every night, even when tasks are complete, to avoid feeling “lazy” or “behind”.
- Taking on more projects than any person could handle, framing it as “ambition”, while relationships and health deteriorate.

Technical resonances.

Closely linked to Unrelenting Standards / Hyper-Criticalness and Approval-Seeking schemas. Personality-wise, high Conscientiousness plus shame- or fear-driven perfectionism. In HiTOP, overlaps with Obsessive-Compulsive traits and sometimes Antagonism when achievement becomes competitive and dismissive of others.

8.2 Cooling Move - Constrain to One Next Step

Definition.

The move from grandiose scope to concrete, right-sized action. Rather than trying to fix or build everything at once, one asks, “What is the next useful step I can actually take?”

Examples.

- Breaking a huge project into one 25-minute focused work block, then re-evaluating.
- Instead of rewriting a whole book, editing one chapter carefully.

Technical resonances.

Uses planning, task chunking, and reduces overwhelm. Similar to behavioral activation strategies that emphasize very small, achievable actions. Moderates perfectionistic standards toward more adaptive performance.

8.3 Balanced State - Creation

Definition.

Sustained, meaningful effort that brings something new and genuinely useful into the world: a project, relationship, practice, or structure. The work feels connected to values and does not chronically sacrifice health or relationships.

Examples.

- Developing a community program that is maintained over years without burning oneself or others out.
- Writing, building, or leading in a way that is challenging but enlivening, not depleting.

Technical resonances.

Embodies high-quality Autonomous motivation (SDT: Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness engaged together). Associated with flow, meaningful work, and generativity in lifespan theories.

8.4 Warming Move - Inspiration

Definition.

Opening oneself to new ideas, meanings, or sources of guidance that can re-energize work

when it has gone stale or collapsed into hopelessness. Inspiration is not fantasy escape but contact with something that feels both larger and more real.

Examples.

- Reading or listening to a story of someone who faced similar obstacles and finding renewed courage to continue.
- Revisiting the original reasons one cared about a project, or quietly sensing what wants to emerge now rather than clinging to an old plan.

Technical resonances.

Related to positive affect and Openness, as well as to existential and spiritual experiences of meaning. In ACT, functions as a re-connection to values and self-as-context, opening new behavioral options.

8.5 Deficit Constrained State - Hopeless Resignation

Definition

A state in which one has given up on the possibility that new, meaningful action could matter. It can feel like numb cynicism (“nothing matters”) or quiet despair (“nothing I do changes anything”).

Examples.

- Abandoning creative or meaningful pursuits entirely, insisting that “it’s too late” or “the world is broken anyway”.
- Staying in harmful, stagnant conditions with no internal or external moves to alter them.

Technical resonances.

Converges with demoralization and learned helplessness in depression research. Linked to Failure, Defectiveness, and Pessimism schemas. In HiTOP, overlaps with high Negative Affectivity and Detachment (Anhedonia, loss of initiative).

Appendix E: The Landscape of Constraint

This appendix maps the terrain of "Constraint". It overlaps the Constrained States of the Fusion Dynamics Map with established models of biology, personality, and dysfunction.

Its purpose is to provide a functional overlay, translating:

- Biology: How temperament and affect underpin the Constrained States.
- Traits: How personality models describe habitual postures on the map.
- Schemas: How psychological wounds freeze specific Modes into chronic deficits or surpluses.

E.1 Biological Underpinnings

E.1.1 Core Affect (Valence & Arousal)

- Surplus States: Generally correlate with High Arousal (Sympathetic activation: mobilization/fight/flight). The organism is flooded with energy it cannot metabolize.
- Deficit States: Generally correlate with Low Arousal (Dorsal Vagal shutdown: freeze/faint). The organism conserves energy through collapse.
- Balanced States: Correlate with Regulated Arousal (Ventral Vagal safety). The organism is alert but not defensive.
 - Note: Perception-Internal reads this raw somatic data; Regulation-Internal processes it.

E.1.2 BIS/BAS Sensitivity (Temperament)

- High BAS (Behavioral Activation System): A biological sensitivity to reward and approach. It biases the organism toward Surplus States (Impulsivity, Aggression, Craving).
 - Implication: High-BAS individuals often require more Cooling Moves (De-escalation).
- High BIS (Behavioral Inhibition System): A biological sensitivity to threat and punishment. It biases the organism toward Deficit States (Anxiety, Withdrawal, Inhibition).
 - Implication: High-BIS individuals often require more Warming Moves (Initiation).

E.2 Personality Trait Models (Big Five / HEXACO)

From the Fusion Dynamics perspective, a "Trait" is simply a statistical cloud of repeated functional configurations over time.

E.2.1 Neuroticism / Emotional Stability

- High Neuroticism: Reflects frequent Constrained States in Regulation-Internal (R-I) (difficulty metabolizing emotion) and Perception-Internal (P-I) (threat-biased interpretation).
- Emotional Stability: Reflects available Balanced Regulation-Internal (Equanimity) and objective Perception.

E.2.2 Agreeableness

- Compassion: Maps to Balanced Regulation-Systemic (R-S)-genuine concern for the whole without self-erasure.
- Politeness: Maps to boundary management in Interaction-Internal (I-I) and Interaction-Systemic (I-S).
- Dysfunction: Low Agreeableness often manifests as Deficit R-S (Callousness) or Surplus I-S (Hostility).

E.2.3 Conscientiousness

- Industriousness: Maps to Balanced Action-Internal (A-I) (Initiative/Will).
- Orderliness: Maps to Balanced Action-Systemic (A-S) (Structure/Organization).
- Dysfunction: The "perfectionism/burnout" loop is often Surplus A-S (Over-Achievement) driving Deficit R-I (Exhaustion).

E.2.4 Openness / Intellect

- Intellect: Maps to Balanced Perception-Internal (P-I) (Cognitive flexibility/Analysis).
- Openness: Maps to Balanced Perception-Systemic (P-S) (Pattern recognition/Meaning).
- Dysfunction: Surplus P-S leads to idiosyncratic or paranoid patterning; Deficit P-S leads to rigid literalism.

E.2.5 Extraversion

- Enthusiasm: Maps to Warming Interaction (I-I / I-S)-enjoyment of contact.
- Assertiveness: Maps to Warming Action (A-I / A-S)-willingness to mobilize energy.

E.3 Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS)

Schemas act as "scripted" Constrained States. They are cognitive stories that lock the organism into a specific mechanical loop.

Table 2: Associations to Early Maladaptive Schemas (EMS)

Schema Domain	Schema	Constrained States
Disconnection	Abandonment	Surplus I-I (Clinging) + Deficit R-I (Panic).
	Mistrust / Abuse	Surplus P-S (Paranoid reading) + Deficit I-I (Guardedness).
	Emotional Deprivation	Deficit I-I (Isolation) + Deficit R-I (Unmet needs).
	Defectiveness / Shame	Deficit R-I (Internalized shame) + Deficit I-I (Hiding).
	Social Isolation	Deficit I-S (No role) + Deficit P-S (Alienation).
Impaired Autonomy	Dependence	Deficit A-I (Inertia) + Deficit R-I (Anxiety).
	Vulnerability to Harm	Surplus P-I (Hypervigilance) + Surplus R-I (Arousal).
	Enmeshment	Surplus I-I (Fusion) + Deficit A-I (Low autonomy).
Impaired Limits	Entitlement	Surplus A-S (Exploitation) + Surplus R-S (Special rules).
	Insufficient Self-Control	Deficit R-I (Low tolerance) + Surplus A-I (Impulsivity).
Other-Directedness	Subjugation	Surplus R-S (Submission) + Deficit A-I (Muted will).
	Self-Sacrifice	Surplus R-S (Over-responsibility) + Deficit I-I (Cannot receive).
	Approval Seeking	Surplus I-S (Image focus) + Surplus A-S (Validation seeking).
Over-Vigilance	Negativity / Pessimism	Surplus P-I (Threat scanning) + Surplus R-I (Gloomy affect).
	Emotional Inhibition	Deficit R-I (Numbing) + Deficit I-I (Avoidance).
	Unrelenting Standards	Surplus A-S (Perfectionism) + Surplus R-I (Inner Critic).
	Punitiveness	Surplus R-S (Punitive stance) + Surplus I-S (Rigid enforcement).

E.4 Interpersonal Models

- **Attachment Styles:**
 - Anxious: Surplus I-I (Craving).
 - Avoidant: Deficit I-I (Withdrawal).

- Secure: Balanced I-I and R-S.
- **Interpersonal Circumplex:**
 - Communion (Warmth): Maps to Regulation-Systemic and Interaction-Internal.
 - Agency (Dominance): Maps to Interaction-Systemic and Action-Systemic.

Appendix F: The Landscape of Change

Most evidence-based therapies share a "skeleton" that aligns with the Fusion Dynamics heuristic:

1. Recognize Mechanicalness (Identify the Constrained State).
2. Ignite Awareness (The Reconciling Force).
3. Execute a Chosen Move (The Active Force).

This appendix maps how major therapeutic schools navigate this sequence using the Fusion Dynamics Map.

F.1 Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies (CBT)

- Focus: Perception (Cognition) and Action (Behavior).
- Mechanism:
 - Cognitive Restructuring: Operates as a Cooling Move for Perception-Internal/Systemic (e.g., Widening Inquiry to counter catastrophic thinking).
 - Behavioral Activation: Operates as a Warming Move for Action-Internal (e.g., Initiating small steps to counter Deficit/Inertia).
 - Exposure: Teaches the system to tolerate Surplus Regulation-Internal (Anxiety) without engaging in Deficit Action (Avoidance).

F.2 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

- Focus: Regulation-Internal (Acceptance) and Action-Systemic (Values).
- Mechanism: ACT systematically dismantles the Negative Triads:
 - Defusion: Counters Identification (Cooling P-I).
 - Acceptance: Counters Fear/Avoidance (Warming R-I).
 - Self-as-Context: Establishes Awareness (The Reconciling Force).
 - Committed Action: Ignites Action-Internal/Systemic (Warming A-I/A-S).

F.3 Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

- Focus: Regulation-Internal (Emotion Regulation) and Interaction (Interpersonal Effectiveness).
- Mechanism:

- Mindfulness: Builds the Responsive State.
- Distress Tolerance: Strategies to survive Surplus Regulation-Internal (Overwhelm) without making it worse.
- Opposite Action: Explicit instruction to apply a Responsive Move that contradicts the mechanical impulse (e.g., Approaching when fear says Avoid).

F.4 Schema Therapy

- Focus: Chronic Constrained States in Regulation and Interaction.
- Mechanism:
 - Limited Reparenting: The therapist models Balanced Interaction-Internal to repair the patient's Deficit.
 - Mode Work: Directly addresses the "Child" (Deficit R-I) and "Critic" (Surplus R-S) modes to integrate them into the "Healthy Adult" (Balanced State).

F.5 Psychodynamic Approaches

- Focus: Interaction-Internal (Transference) and Perception-Systemic (Insight).
- Mechanism: Uses the live dyad to expose Mechanicalness in relating. The therapist acts as a container (Balanced Regulation) to help the patient metabolize previously unbearable affect.

F.6 Motivational Interviewing (MI) & Coaching

- Focus: Perception-Internal (Ambivalence) and Action-Internal (Will).
- Mechanism:
 - Exploring Ambivalence: Uses Balanced Perception to hold both sides of a conflict in Awareness.
 - Change Talk: Elicits a Warming Move for Action-Internal (Self-Motivation) rather than imposing it.
 - Supporting Autonomy: Strengthening the Balanced Regulation of the patient.

F.7 Summary of Approaches

Seen through Fusion Dynamics, these therapies are different ways of walking the same terrain:

- Cognitive lines focus on Perception and Action.
- Emotion/Relational lines focus on Regulation and Interaction.
- All, in practice, are trying to increase the vertical availability of Modes (less time in Constrained States, more time in Responsive/Balanced).

Appendix G: The Landscape of Flourishing

While Appendix E mapped the terrain of dysfunction, this appendix maps the terrain of flourishing.

It connects the "Positive Currents" of Fusion Dynamics (Harmony, Sovereignty, Participation) to:

1. The Nutrients: What the organism needs (Self-Determination Theory).
2. The Correlates: Validated constructs (PWB, Resilience).
3. The Outcomes: Measurable well-being (PERMA).

G.1 The Nutrients: Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT identifies three basic psychological needs:

- **Autonomy:** The need to feel that one's actions are self-endorsed. Supported by: Balanced Regulation (self-governance) and Balanced Action (volition).
- **Competence:** The need to feel effective in one's environment. Supported by: Balanced Action-Internal (initiative) and Action-Systemic (impact).
- **Relatedness:** The need to feel connected and cared for. Supported by: Balanced Interaction (connection) and Regulation-Systemic (care).

Within the Fusion Dynamics Map, we can extend this list to five by noticing which Modes are not yet explicitly represented. When we do so, we obtain:

- **Safety:** The need to feel that one's basic conditions are sufficiently safe and predictable that the organism does not have to organize around constant threat. Supported by: Balanced Regulation-Internal (stability) and Perception-Internal (accurate sensing of internal danger/safety signals).
- **Coherence / Meaning:** The need to experience both one's inner life and one's world as intelligible and sufficiently integrated, so that experiences, roles, and values form a livable whole. Supported by: Balanced Perception-Systemic (seeing larger patterns and context) and Interaction-Internal (inner integration, parts in dialogue rather than conflict).

In this framework, "self-actualization" or Eudaimonia is what it would look like if all five needs were reasonably satisfied over time.

G.2 The Positive Currents: Validated Correlates

In Chapter 11, we introduced three Primordial Positive Currents. This section validates them against psychological research.

G.2.1 Harmony: The Antidote to Moving Against

- Fusion Dynamics Definition: The cessation of friction. Perception and Regulation are aligned with reality.
- Construct Correlation:
 - Sense of Coherence (Antonovsky): Specifically, the components of Comprehensibility (Clarity/P-S) and Manageability (Equanimity/R-I).
 - Self-Acceptance (Ryff): The output of Equanimity-stopping the friction against one's own history.

G.2.2 Sovereignty: The Antidote to Moving Towards

- Fusion Dynamics Definition: The capacity to stand in oneself. Boundary maintenance without isolation.
- Construct Correlation:
 - Autonomy (Ryff/SDT): The regulation of behavior from within.
 - Differentiation of Self (Bowen): The ability to remain emotionally connected (R-S) without being hijacked by the other (I-I).

G.2.3 Participation: The Antidote to Moving Away

- Fusion Dynamics Definition: Engagement. Converting potential into kinetic action.
- Construct Correlation:
 - Environmental Mastery (Ryff): The competence to shape contexts (Action-Systemic).
 - Flow (Csikszentmihalyi): The optimal state where skill meets challenge, requiring Transparent Order (I-S) and Initiative (A-I).

G.3 The Outcomes: Well-Being frameworks

How do we measure if the Fusion Dynamics work is succeeding? We look to global well-being models.

G.3.1 Subjective Well-Being (SWB)

In conventional research, SWB is often used as a proxy for how happy people feel at a given time. In this framework, we treat it as a rough indicator of Happenstance, a useful thermometer, but an unreliable guide, as high SWB can sometimes exist within Constrained States (e.g., a successful narcissist).

G.3.2 Psychological Well-Being (PWB - Ryff)

PWB is one of the main empirically grounded models of eudaimonic well-being. Conceptually, it is the closest current match to what this framework calls Structural Well-Being. The six dimensions of PWB can be read as overlapping with the Balanced States of the PRIA functions measured over time, rather than being identical to them.

G.3.3 PERMA (Seligman)

The PERMA model describes the pillars of a flourishing life. Fusion Dynamics provides the granular mechanics to build them:

Table 3: Associations to PERMA

PERMA Pillar	Emerges From...
P (Positive Emotion)	Balanced Regulation-Internal (Equanimity & Coherence).
E (Engagement)	Balanced Action (Flow & Participation).
R (Relationships)	Balanced Interaction (Fair Attunement).
M (Meaning)	Balanced Perception-Systemic (Harmony/Pattern).
A (Accomplishment)	Balanced Action-Systemic (Creation).

Appendix H: The Mechanics of Consciousness

In Appendix C I introduced the distinct Energies that fuel vertical growth. To summarize: Automatic Energy powers Constrained States (Surplus/Deficit), Sensitive Energy supports Directed Attention and Responsive Moves, and Conscious Energy corresponds to Awareness and the stabilization of Balanced States (what we subjectively experience as Presence).

In common parlance, the terms Attention, Awareness, and Presence are often used interchangeably. In the Fusion Dynamics framework, however, they refer to three distinct functional components of the organism's operating system.

Distinguishing them is not a matter of semantics; it is a matter of engineering. If we confuse the fuel (Attention) with the tool (Awareness) or the result (Presence), we cannot effectively navigate the map.

This appendix defines these terms with technical precision, outlines their relationship, and connects them to established concepts in cognitive science and neurobiology.

H.1 The Triadic Hierarchy

To understand how the organism shifts from a Constrained State to a Balanced State, we must view these three elements as a causal chain:

1. Attention is the Currency (The Fuel). It is a limited resource that must be managed.
2. Awareness is the Mechanism (The Tool). It is the act of separation that allows us to manage the currency.
3. Presence is the Capacity (The Result). It is the accumulated state of integration that arises when the currency is managed well.

H.2 Attention

Definition: Attention is the raw, directional energy of the psyche. It is a vector; it always has an object (it points at something). Fusion Dynamics Context: In the PRIA loop, Attention is the signal carrier. It is what highlights a specific Perception or energizes a specific Action.

The Mechanic: Capture vs. Direction Cognitive science (e.g., Kahneman's limited capacity models, Posner's attentional networks) defines attention as a finite budget. It operates in two modes:

1. Bottom-Up Capture ("The Leak"): Attention is hijacked by a salient stimulus—a loud noise, a flash of anger, or a worry loop. In Fusion Dynamics, we call this a Leak. When in a Constrained State (e.g., Surplus P-I), attention is fully captured by the threat. The organism loses agency because its fuel is spent on the reaction .

2. Top-Down Direction ("Concentration"): Attention is volitionally guided to a specific object. This is the function of the Concentration phase of meditation.

Key Distinction: Attention creates contact, but not necessarily freedom. One can be intensely attentive to a movie (or a panic attack) while being completely identified with it.

H.3 Awareness

Definition: Awareness is the meta-cognitive act of observing the movement of Attention. It is "seeing the seeing". Fusion Dynamics Context: Awareness is the Reconciling Force (Force 3) in the Law of Three. It creates the "Third State" that breaks the binary deadlock of Push (Surplus) and Pull (Deficit).

The Mechanic: Separation The primary function of Awareness is Separation. It introduces a gap between the Observer and the Event.

- Without Awareness: "I am angry". (Fusion).
- With Awareness: "I notice that anger is present". (Differentiation).

This aligns with the therapeutic mechanism of Decentering or Reperceiving (Shapiro) and Self-as-Context (Hayes/ACT). It is the switch that converts "captured attention" back into "free attention". allowing a Responsive Move to be chosen.

H.4 Presence: The State of Integration

Definition: Presence is the accumulated quality of being "online". coherent, and available. It is the lived experience of the organism when Sensitive Energy (Directed Attention) is met by Conscious Energy (Awareness).

- Fusion Dynamics Context: Presence is the capacity that stabilizes the Balanced States. In subjective terms, this accumulated integration is felt as a stable, grounded way of being. Throughout the text we have referred to in from different angles (phenomenological, energetic, and neurobiological).

The Mechanic: Accumulation & Integration While Awareness is a momentary act, Presence is a continuous state. It correlates with:

1. Integration (Siegel): The linkage of differentiated parts into a functional whole. When Perception, Regulation, Interaction, and Action are aligned, the subjective experience is Presence.
2. Ventral Vagal State (Porges): The physiological state of safety and social engagement. Presence is not a mystical ghost; it phenomenologically resembles the biological sensation of a nervous system that is alert but not defensive.

The "Accumulation" Principle: This is not a metaphysical claim, but a working interpretation grounded in neuroplasticity. Repeated moments of sustained Awareness are thought to

contribute to strengthening the neural pathways of regulation. Over time, this can plausibly shift the organism's baseline from reactive fragmentation toward more stable coherence. In that sense, Presence can increasingly function as a trait, not just a fleeting state.

Key Distinction: One cannot "do" Presence directly. One can only "do" Awareness. Presence is the residue of that effort.

H.5 Summary: The Economy of Practice

This hierarchy clarifies the practical work of the Fusion Dynamics framework. We treat our psychology as an energy economy.

1. The Problem: We are leaking Attention into Constrained States.
2. The Intervention: We use Self-Observation to ignite Awareness.
3. The Act: Awareness creates a gap, allowing us to concentrate Attention on a Responsive Move.
4. The Outcome: The attention saved from the leak pools into Presence, increasing our capacity for Sovereignty, Harmony, and Participation.

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