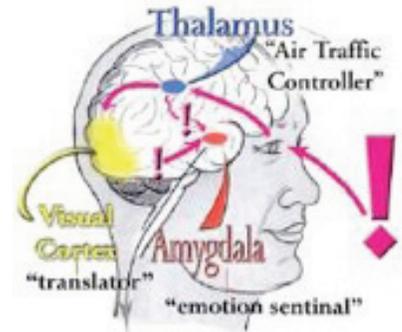


AMYGDALA HIJACKING – SURVIVE RESPONSE

This is what happens in your brain when something external happens.

The routes from sensation to action are depicted in this drawing of the brain. The journey begins with sensation (in this case, vision) which is routed to the thalamus. The thalamus acts as “air traffic controller” to keep the signals moving. In a typical situation, the thalamus directs the impulse to the cortex (in this case, the visual cortex) for processing. The cortex “thinks” about the impulse and makes sense of them. “Aha,” it says, “This is an exclamation mark! It means I should get excited.” That signal is then sent to the amygdala where a flood of peptides and hormones are released to create emotion and action.



In what Dan Goleman labeled “The Amygdala Hijacking,” the thalamus has a different reaction. Like any skilled air traffic controller, the thalamus can quickly react to potential threat. In that case, it bypasses the cortex—the thinking brain—and the signal goes straight to the amygdala. The amygdala can only react based on previously stored patterns.

Sometimes this kind of reaction can save our lives. More frequently it leads us to say something harmful, to escalate the situation, or even to violence.

From that hijacked state, that condition where your brain is flooded with electro-chemicals, you still have options. You do not need to stay hijacked; you still can choose actions. After all, the chemicals do not persist, and they will dissipate in three to six seconds. To minimize the damage from hijacking, it is important to practice patterns that lead to de-escalation. Increasing Emotional Intelligence happens here.



Complete

1. Have you ever had an amygdala hijacking?
2. What would be an example of a mild amygdala hijacking?
3. What would be an example of an amygdala hijacking in an interview?
4. What would be an example of an amygdala hijacking in a coaching session (for the coach and the person being coached)?
5. What would be an example of an amygdala hijacking in a team meeting?