



Laziness, Procrastination and Sloth

By Eric Ehrke, LCSW, LMFT

Fear is an insidious energy that pretends to protect us, but keeps us small, unproductive and alone when we attempt to leave our comfort zone. Being totally honest, present, and accountable to public scrutiny is a daunting proposition. Many of us get scared, hide and pretend we are less than we are. Self-sabotage occurs due to fear of success, effort and transparency. Laziness, procrastination, and sloth are some more of fear's minions. This article will examine how our reptilian, emotional and executive aspects of our higher brain must work together to overcome fear.

Similar in appearance to an actual reptile brain, our *reptilian brain* is responsible for autonomic respiration, heart rate and blood pressure. This primitive aspect of our mind sees danger everywhere,

processes new information very slowly, and believes the world remains the same as we personally experienced it in the past. The sedentary nature of our reptilian brain wants repetition and routine for pleasure and survival purposes. Prone to be rigid, it tends to be obsessive or compulsive as it tries to address or avoid the messy emotions located in our emotional brain. Our reptilian brain “checks out,” shuts down or dissociates during life threatening or traumatic events. Corrupted reptilian fear can develop into a major depression, chronic hopelessness and suicidal ideation. The best way to begin to feel safe again is by releasing our emotions by sourcing our emotional brain and accessing the healing wisdom of our higher brain.

An intuitive heart has an intelligence of its own and stores its wisdom in our *emotional brain's* memory banks. Safety considerations are integrated within our feeling nature to improve future social exchanges. Emotions can be likened to weather patterns, which reflect and influence our perception of reality. Change occurs when we want something new and have the passion/dedication to make our dream happen. Our emotional brain, which includes our hippocampus, the pituitary/pineal gland and the hypothalamus, is our motivational passion center that makes “value judgments.” When a peak or traumatic event slows time down or stops it altogether, our emotional brain is involved. Fear activates our adrenal glands or the black-and-white thinking of our amygdala. Fear activates stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. Survival depends upon quick thinking and prioritization because our reptilian brain anticipates negative consequences and predicts fearful outcomes, which can activate the fight/flight/freeze response of our emotional brain without the required healing wisdom from our higher brain.

The *higher brain* regulates our internal physiological states to match external cues from the environment and our social engagement skills. Speech, hearing and our face/heart circuit are located here, which regulate our emotional expression and attention, and these emotional aspects transform thought into action. Our prefrontal lobes are excited by interesting challenges, anticipate future outcomes and perform our highest executive tasks. Abstract thought, imagination and limitless learning potential resides here. Creating a new perspective or regulating our breath and heart rate are a few of the tools our higher brain has at its disposal to calm down an over-stimulated emotional and reptilian brain. It can modulate, govern, or apply the “brakes” to a fight/flight/ freeze or shutdown response if a social situation demands restraint. It is our higher brain that reminds us to take a deep

breath to access our enlightened inner voice within that sees the bigger picture and knows just what to do.



If intoxicants, drugs or alcohol numb the reptilian, emotional and higher brain, ill-advised adventures can ensue. Without wisdom and reptilian inhibition present to create prudence, our impulsive desires, expansive emotions, or guilty pleasures within the emotional brain can party hearty. We have all seen an inebriated individual, or heard stories about someone in such a state, or drank too much ourselves and said or did something we later regretted. Outlandish behavior is attractive to a dissociated or inebriated mind because our intellect is compelled to express our deepest unresolved issues. Illusion will play with our head like a banjo player and our intellect just masturbates to the music occasionally.

We are creatures of habit, and the reptilian part of our brain wants repetition, routine and the familiar for survival purposes. When interesting challenges excite our higher frontal lobes, the reptilian brain is programmed to react with fear responses. Fear triggers doubt and anticipates negative consequences so our higher brain can prepare for trouble. This process enables our

executive functions to counter negative possibilities and come up with solutions so that the new behavior or idea is balanced with well thought out strategies. This interchange helps promote the positive “checks and balances” aspects of our brain. When someone has an over functioning reptilian/limbic brain and an under functioning higher brain, fear will rule. The entrepreneurial aspects of our executive higher brain will diminish, and we become unbalanced in this situation. When the frontal lobe is too activated or the reptilian/limbic brain is numb with drugs or alcohol, ill-advised adventures can ensue. The goal is to have every aspect of one’s life in balance including our reptilian, emotional and executive aspects of our brain.

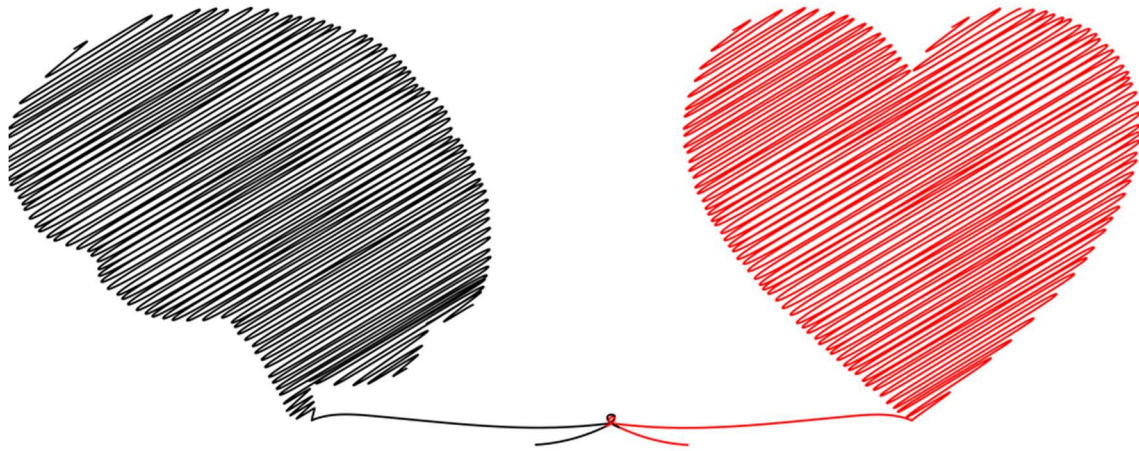
Let’s break down the brain even further. When our higher neocortex/frontal lobe is operating well, it loves adventures, new challenges and enjoys life. It wants to explore and lives off the energy of the heart and soul. When these aspects of our brain feel a connection to Source and all creation, many good things happen. As this information is shared with the reptilian/limbic brain, we feel safe and secure in our world. This process also enhances our connection to self, family and everyone and the universe around us. Productive people have operated from this level of enlightenment and self-actualized power since the beginning of time.

People who are depressed, fearful and overcome with negative self-talk, self-doubt and programmed ignorance, tend to have an over-functioning reptilian/emotional (limbic) brain. This part of the brain sees danger everywhere, takes forever to process new information and believes the world is just as it was in the past. If early traumas were problematic, fraught with pain and/or struggle, then the world is viewed from that perspective. Unfortunately, fear can dominate our thought processes. Laziness, procrastination and sloth prevent us from seizing opportunities, releasing despair and/or pursuing our creative impulses.



Fear and suffering let us know, what we are doing isn't working. People infected with fear start to drift away from the divine, forget their own divinity and question anything spiritual. The brain tends to resort to intellect and reason to survive, while intuition, heartfelt passion and soul connection diminish. When our intellect is disconnected from our heart and soul, we will likely find ourselves depressed, isolated and grasping for obsessions, compulsions and/or addictions to feel better. When we choose activities that do not help our heart and soul, sloth, depression, and a general malaise follows. It is never desirable to have parts of our brain and/or our life force working at cross-purposes. Procrastination is a sign of personal disconnection. Whenever an aspect of our personality knows what would feel good in the long run and another aspect is stuck in fear...deal with the fear, find the illusion that is hiding and bring it into the light.

Our heart and soul generally know and can feel the truth of any situation. The intellect can dissociate away from emotional and energetic connection to the cosmos. It can justify any crazy rational and begin to believe it. Notice how politicians do this, when they flip-flop depending how the wind blows. So don't let fear run your life. Connection to our heart, soul and emotional life is necessary for a deep access to the cosmos and our shared divinity present in everyone. When we feel connected, we are reminded of our secure place within a loving universe. This relaxes the reptilian/limbic brain and frees up the higher functioning parts of our brain to take over. Then the executive aspects of our higher brain feel safe to create and be completely present in the world.



The courage required to bring our disowned shadows, illusionary beliefs and dysfunctional habits under our conscious control is immense at times. Fear is a difficult emotion to face, especially when it is tackled with intellect alone without the help of our emotional/higher brain that enjoys a solid spiritual connection. Most people fail to see that a spiritual connection in addition to balanced reptilian, emotional and higher brain interaction as the answer to all their fears. All addictions, patterns of pain and suffering have a standard solution, if people could consider it. Find a spiritual practice, balance the three aspects of your brain, then focus your behavior, emotions and intellect in the same direction towards your highest good. Every spiritual master and enlightened soul used these same principles during their time on earth. You can to.

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