

SCARF

(Human Emotional Needs)

Recent research in neuroscience has shown that the brain (which pretty much dictates how we feel, think and act) has a simple but well-developed method for deciding if things are good for us or bad for us.

Whenever something happens, our brain responds and creates a response that results in us feeling 'pain' or 'pleasure'. This causes us to instinctively have a towards (positive) or away from (negative) response to that stimulus. This causes us to be curious, excited and accepting (more towards) or to defend, reject or attack (away from).

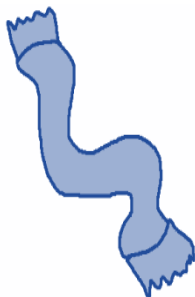
AS you would expect, 'towards' stimuli ,make us feel good, but 'away from' stimuli lead to negative feelings and can contribute to feeling stressed.

In his book 'The Brain at Work' David Rock identifies the things that the brain values (and judges each stimulus against):

SCARF Model of Social Threats and Rewards



In simple terms, these factors mean:



- **Status:** Our relative importance to others
- **Certainty:** Our being able to predict the future
- **Autonomy:** Our sense of control over events
- **Relatedness:** Our sense of safety with others
- **Fairness:** Our perception of fair exchanges between people

Examples of what triggers 'pleasure' and 'pain' in each of these factors

Factor	'Away From' Response (Pain)	'Towards' Response (Pleasure)
Status	Performance reviews Uninvited feedback New people joining the team at the same or higher level Job title	Thanks for a job well done Public recognition Personal improvement 'Winning' competitions Job title
Certainty	Any unplanned change Lack of clarity in goals/expectations New processes/procedures Unanswered questions/lack of information	Clear goals and expectations 'Tried and tested' techniques Planned and predictable change Being kept informed Confidence in leaders
Autonomy	Not being consulted/involved in decisions that affect you Being told 'no' Being micro-managed Being reliant on others	Having some input into decisions that affect you Being able to make your own choices (however small) Being trusted to get on with things Deciding how to spend your time
Relatedness	Feeling 'different' or separate from others Working or feeling alone Lack of social support or friendship groups Not being involved in the wider team – feeling 'left out'	Good relationships with colleagues Social and professional networks Having a 'friend' at work Being coached and developed
Fairness	Feeling that you are being treated less favourably than others Unpredictable/inconsistent management or reward Promises not being kept	Open and honest communication Consistency in decisions Clarity in expectations and consequences that is applied to all Democratic decisions taken (when possible)