

# The Neuroscience of Change

Change often produces reactions similar to those that result from conflict, and conflict triggers a physiological response that influences your behaviour and actions.

There is a small region of your brain called the Amygdala. When a threat is perceived, your amygdala signals your brain to release adrenaline and cortisol into your body.

These hormones send a signal to prepare for a response. That response could be fight (engage in conflict), flight (avoid conflict) or, in some cases, freeze (unable to respond).

If you think back to the last conflict you had, you can probably recall symptoms like your heart racing, feeling flushed, sweaty palms, wide eyes (dilated pupils), clenching your jaw.

This trigger response is referred to as an amygdala hijack – and can vary in intensity depending on the perceived threat.

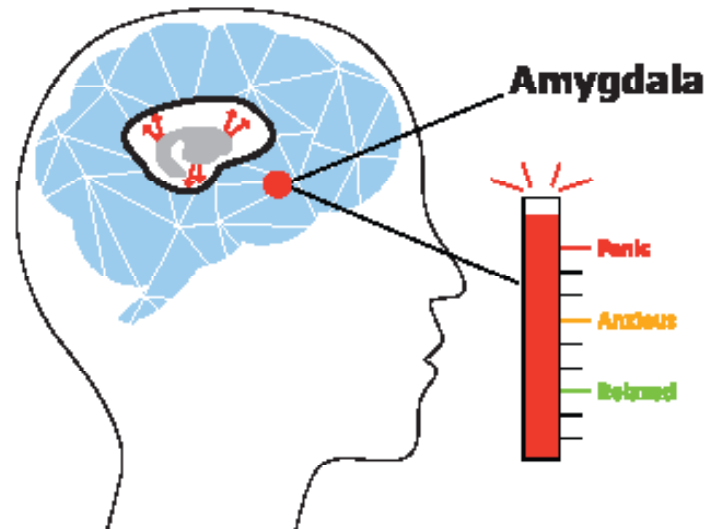
These symptoms result from a primal instinct that was designed to protect you from physical threats.

Our brain shuts down our ability to engage in a higher level of thinking or rational thought when we're experiencing an amygdala hijack.

Today, our brains don't differentiate between physical or emotional threats. We must work to train our brains to manage our physiological response so that we can remain calm and balanced.

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**What strategies do you use to regain your composure when engaged in a conflict?**



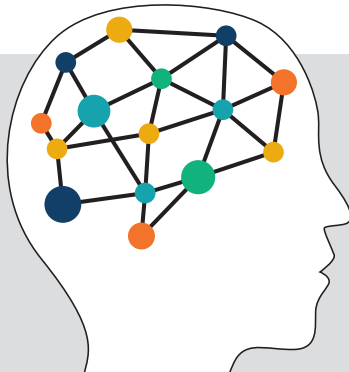
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Our brains are expertly trained to Maximize Reward and Minimize Threat.

**Dopamine**  
Feels Good  
Pursue  
Safety



**Adrenaline**  
Feels Bad  
Avoid  
Danger



Our brains develop neural pathways and the more we use those pathways over time, the more deeply embedded they become.

Our brains will always choose the most energy efficient path. With awareness, attention and practice it is possible to create new pathways.

What neural pathways exist in your mind when it comes to change?

What could you do to re-wire that pathway for a different and perhaps more positive outcome?

## How Does This Relate?

What does the brain have to do with change? It turns out, quite a bit. Your perception of a change will impact how you respond to change. Your mental state impacts how you process a change, and the impact that you perceive it will have. Understanding the neuroscience behind change helps you to remain open-minded and adaptable, key elements of the Change Contributor competency.