Emotional States

Emotions can be divided into those states we experience while in Reactive Brain (those that use up energy reacting to threat) and the states we experience while in Creative Brain (those that generate energy when there is a shift into creative response). Emotional states can also be placed on a range from most dense (none to little movement; slowest in frequency) to most expanded (more to most movement; faster to fastest in frequency).

While sequential in order, it is not necessary to pass through one state in order to get to the next one. Being triggered into reactivity means slipping down the emotional chute into whatever state we land in Below the Line; expanding our consciousness means we can start in one lower state and quickly shift into another that is much higher.

These descriptions are about human beings; however, as we begin to understand animals better, it is clear that we share many of these states with our mammalian, and even reptilian, relatives.

Below the Line

These states are listed from the least energized to the most energized, as you can see on the Inner Map.
Immobilized States

These dense states keep most of our focus turned inward and are often the result of reacting to attacks by people who are important to us. Physiologically, these very low-energy, self-focused states of immobilization keep people “in their place”—that is, in the Power-Under position, which is also the position of the Victim in the Drama Triangle.

- **Shame**
  When we feel ashamed and humiliated, it is as if our very essence has been threatened. We often respond by continuing the attack internally through self-denigration. When we’re ashamed, we feel cut off and shunned from our connection with people who are important to us. Shame also carries a physiological shutting down and numbing response that animals generate just before being killed. When we experience this frozenness in our bodies, we may translate it into an impulse to kill off ourselves by becoming suicidal.

- **Guilt**
  The state of Guilt has slightly more energy than Shame but still feels highly contracted. When caught in Guilt, we express hostility and recrimination toward ourselves for our actions, which is slightly more expanded than the
feelings associated with Shame, when we attack ourselves for our very existence.

- **Despair**
  When we feel Despair, our bodies are experiencing a physiologically chaotic response that comes from feeling totally helpless about being disconnected from people (or other beings) to whom we feel emotionally attached. Despair occurs when no one responds to our sobbing and wailing, which are natural protests about feeling disconnected. Despair is the outer expression of our inner experience of abject hopelessness.

- **Sadness**
  We feel sad when we feel loss—the loss of someone important, the loss of meaning, loss of material possessions, even the loss of our identity. There is some energy in Sadness, particularly when we can actually express our grief. Our experience of heaviness, as well as our tendency to turn our attention inward when we feel sad, can create a respite from our regular life that can give us time and space to adapt to the loss and begin to regenerate our spirit.

- **Frozen Fear**
  Fear is our response to a threat to our survival. We typically experience two types of fear: frozen (when the
threat is so great that our bodies are automatically preparing for death through an anesthesia-like response) and agitated (the classic “flight” response). When we feel frozen fear, it’s clear that we’re still in the immobilized side of Reactive Brain. However, a great deal of energy is happening in our bodies, expended through hyper-vigilance and muscle contractions.

Mobilized States

When in these mobilized states, we are increasingly motivated to place our attention on the external world. Physiologically, these states have increasing amounts of energy as we begin to shift to a Power-Over stance. When we are in the Hero and Villain roles, we typically keep Fear out of our awareness by taking the action of controlling those around us through expressions of Anger and Pride.

- Agitated Fear
  As our energy gets more freed up, Agitated Fear is the classic “flight” response. Our bodies become physiologically mobilized to do something in response to the threat, including getting away from it or trying to control it.

- Anger
  Anger is a natural reaction that occurs when we are thwarted or intruded upon; energy rises up through our bodies to push through the obstacle or to create a bound-
ary against the intrusion. Anger can hold a great deal of energy so that when we express anger, our words and actions can feel unpredictable and out of our control. Like gasoline, anger can be either a wonderfully energizing fuel for forward movement or it can be destructive and explosive.

- Pride

Pride holds more energy than Anger. However, as it is still Below the Line; when we feel Pride, we’re still using up energy, not generating it. We walk tall and feel strong, but our Pride also leaves us open to reacting out of defensiveness. And as “Pride goeth before a fall,” it’s a short trip from Pride down to Shame.

The Channel of Willingness

Willingness is the gateway, the channel between being Below the Line and Above the Line. Wanting to be willing is not the same as being willing, which is a palpable sensation of opening to a different way of experiencing reality. Willingness is like the first bit of sunlight that can stream through the clouds of Reactive Brain. Willingness is about actually facing into what is going on within and outside of us, to see and experience what is going on instead of resisting and defending against reality. The only way to
get from Reactive Brain to Creative Brain is to traverse the channel of Willingness.

**Above the Line**

These states are listed in the order in which they increase in expansiveness.

- **Neutrality**
  Once we’ve crossed the channel of Willingness, the next most expanded state we can shift into is Neutrality. Just “being with” our experience without judging it allows a continued expansion of our consciousness and a beginning sense of generating energy.

- **Acceptance**
  Accepting what is going on in our inner and outer world allows us to take a big step forward in expanding our consciousness. This acceptance takes us beyond simple neutral noticing as we meet “what is” with our open attention.

- **Appreciation**
  The emotional state of Appreciation generates huge energy and expanded attractor fields. Meeting our experience with Appreciation opens us not only to viewing reality as beautiful, inspired, and miraculous but also widens our perspective into a whole new world of potential.
- Love
  Accessing the emotional state of Love gives us all a taste of the ecstasy of true divinity. When in this state, we can connect with creative power that we might not have suspected exists in us. The energy of Love is enormously generative and healing.

- Joy
  Joy occurs when we can be in the ongoing energy of unconditional love and kindness to all of life, otherwise known as compassion. When we are in Joy, the beauty and perfection of the world is constantly available to our perception.

  Above the Line is where we find enlightenment. It is the territory of sages, avatars, and our most venerated spiritual beings—and it is available to anyone who is willing to go there.