



The Social Brain is the Big Boss

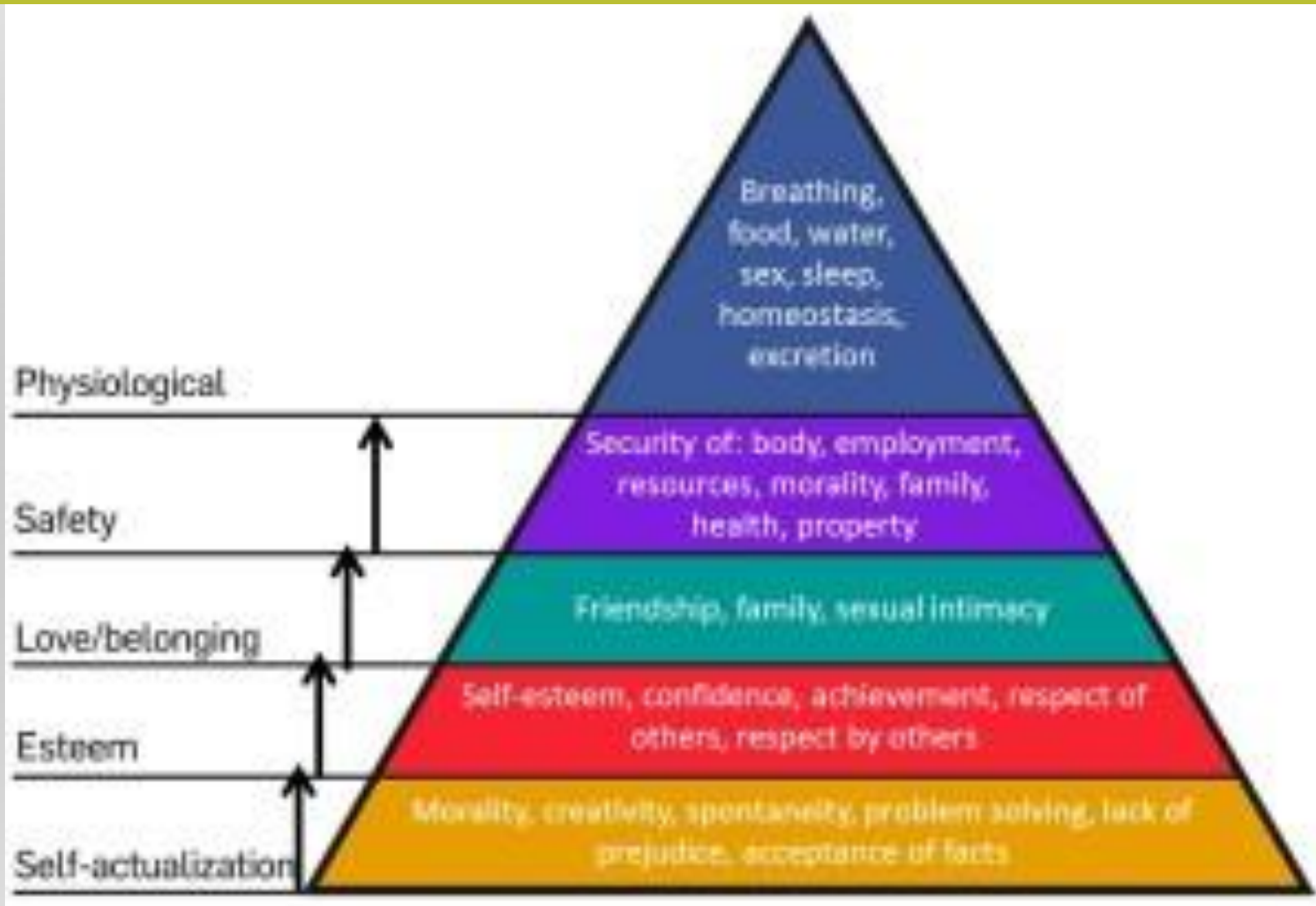


**Business
Agility**

9.9.18

The brain's primary function is regulatory

Maslow upside-down



Belonging is the brain's single most powerful driver

Social uncertainty is the most costly kind of stress



The value of our exchanges is experienced via brain chemicals

Co-regulation is rewarded with pleasure

The brain's primary function is regulation:
like an omniscient CFO, ensuring that the
right amount of energy is allocated to the
most important functions.

Our brains are exquisitely attuned to every
nuance of every exchange.

Although our entire physiology becomes
more rigid as we age, we can cultivate
plasticity.

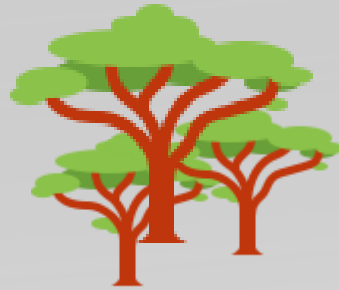
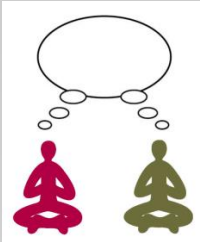


Value is all about vulnerability

Designing new ways to coordinate is the driver of 'progress'

It started when the weather shifted and food became scarcer...

Running out of acorns, how can we make it to the next grove without losing our kids?



Around 299,999 generations later...

What are people doing who don't want Alexa in their homes?



Deciding what is important: highly vulnerable

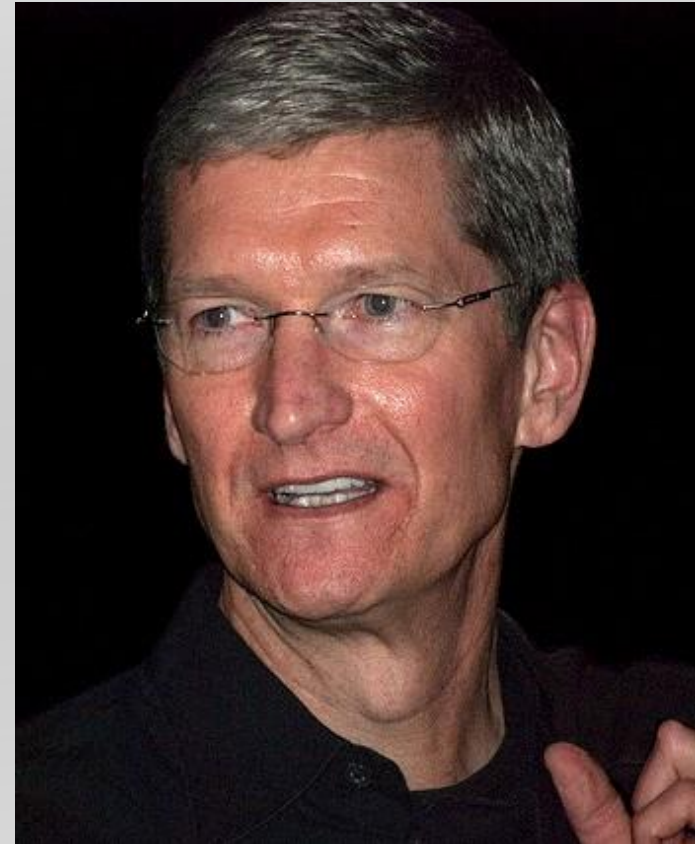
•I look at my own life, and I couldn't make it through a workout without music. I don't go to the gym for the fun of it. You need something to push you, to motivate you, and for me, that's music. It's also the thing at night that helps quiet me. I think it's better than any medicine...

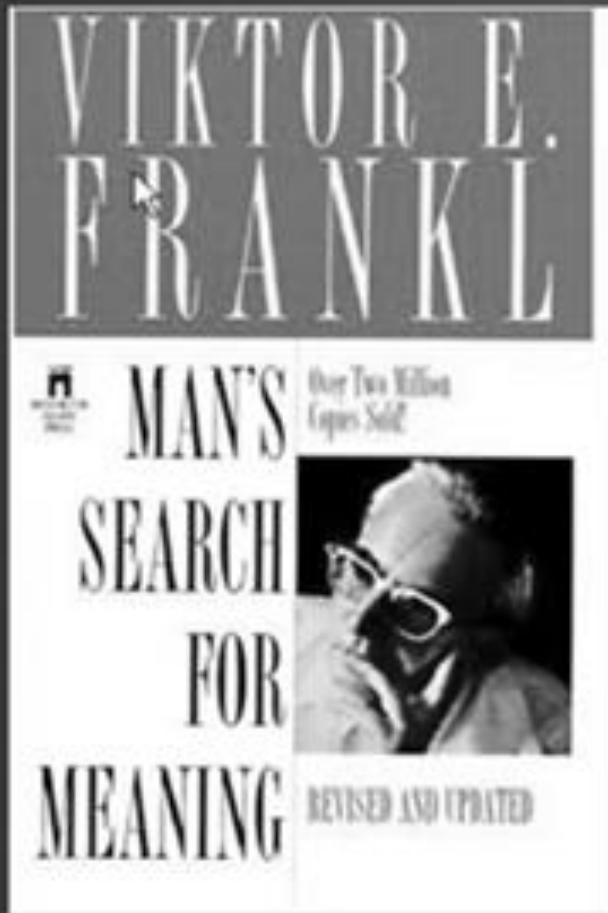
•There is more noise in the world than change. One of my roles is to try to block the noise from the people who are really doing the work. ...in the scheme of things versus our revenue, we're doing very few things.

•Think about the production that goes into a recording of a song. Great artists spend enormous time thinking about every detail. If you get this little squeaky speaker, all of that is gone! All of the art and craft of music is gone. [HomePod] is the realization that that is important. Part of the enjoyment in music is hearing the full sound.

...

And it's that goal that drives everybody to keep working ungodly hours and trying to do the best work of our lives.





We who lived in the concentration camps can remember . . . that everything can be taken from a man but one thing:
The last of his freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances . . . to transform a personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement.



Brene Brown
The Power of Vulnerability – is
one of the top five most
viewed TED talks in the world
with over 30 million views

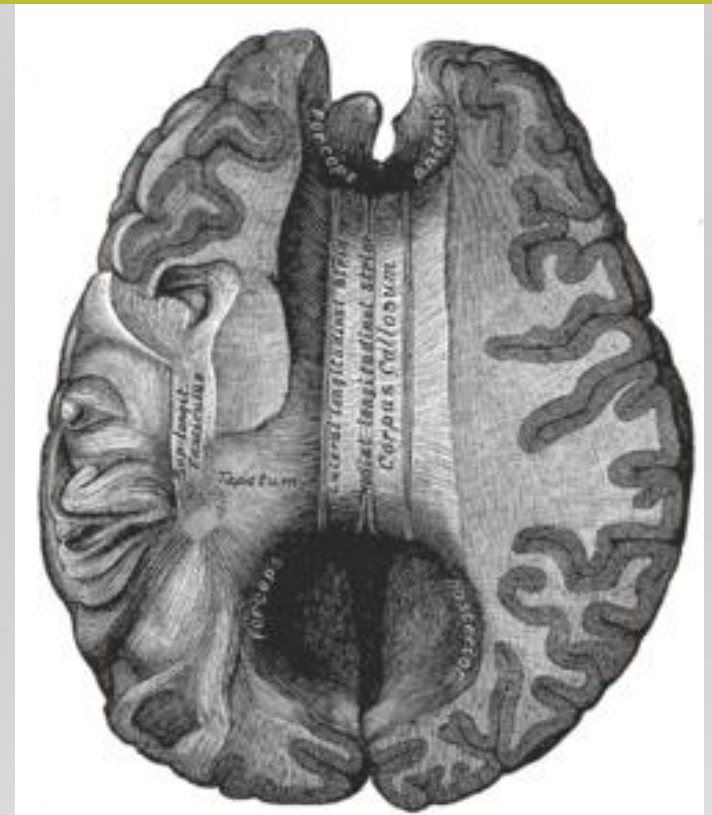
The brain is bilateral

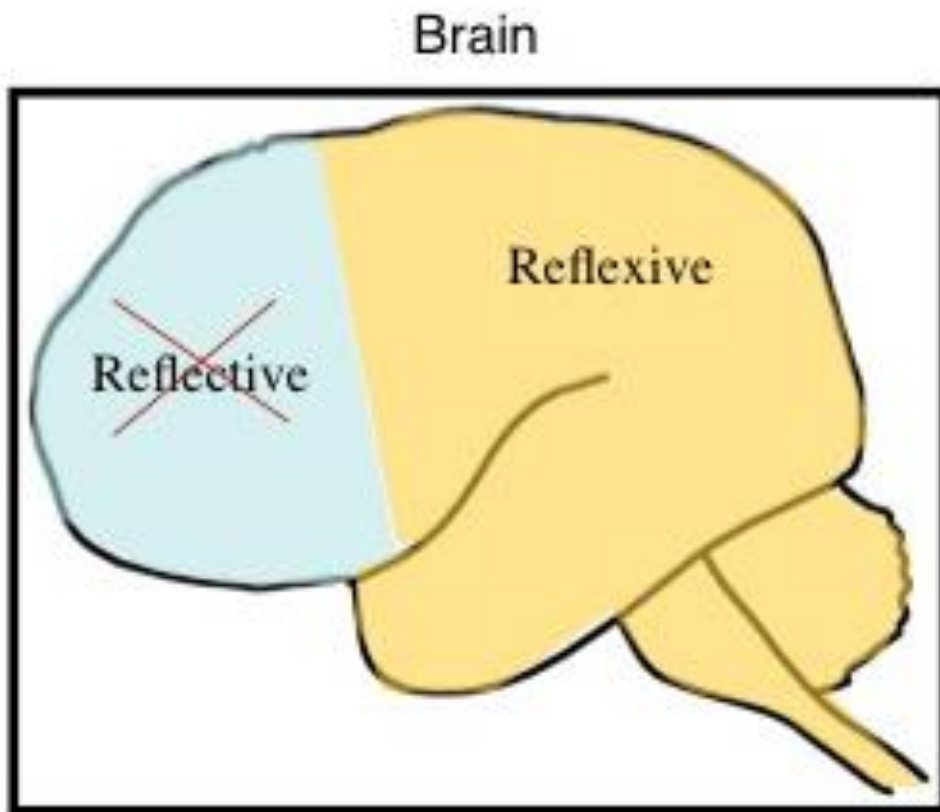
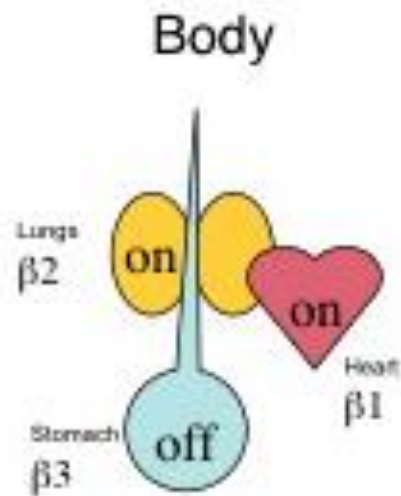
Stress hinders the ability to process anything new.

The corpus callosum is a large bundle of nerves - a very important structure that connects the two sides of the brain

It's exceptionally sensitive to stress.

When stressed, the two halves don't communicate - we lose mental dexterity





Turning off prefrontal cortical control of behavior during stress may have survival value, but may make us more vulnerable to neuropsychiatric illness

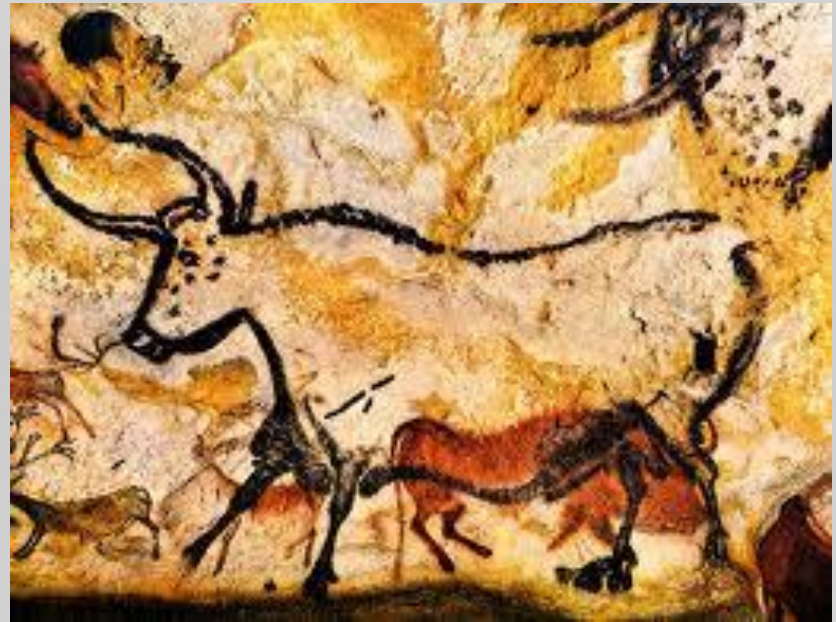
Copyright, Dr. Amy F.T. Arnsten, Yale University, 2005

Commerce and the brain co-evolved

The adult brain is built to rely on what it already 'knows'

For most of human history people lived and worked in small groups. They knew each other all their lives.

Those who made it to puberty were well-versed in the demands of their environment and secure in their role in sustaining the group's welfare.



At puberty, the brain shifts allocation of energy away from 'learning' – an energy-intensive process - and relies on neural networks proven up to that time.

Societies have attempted various forms of certainty

Our world seldom evokes certainty

*The church speaks
the word of God*

*People will
buy anything we
sell on TV*

*Your mother-in-law gets
the left hind-quarter
of your kills*

*People are pairs
of hands*

*Design is for
Bohemians*

*Success is doing
the same thing cheaper
and cheaper*

Coal is free

*An MBA is your
ticket to security*

*Business is money: all
about transactions*

*You'll learn your
father's trade*

*You were born under a full
moon, your first born
will be a boy*

*You're third born son,
you'll be a priest*

Embracing the extreme social vulnerability of modern exchanges

"Don't tell anyone I said so, but all the best teams have single mothers."

- Pharma exec



Our businesses are challenged to create conditions that provoke peoples' 'smarts'

Emotions evolved to keep us interested in co-regulating



Proffer inclusion

Finesse social uncertainty and US/Them

Cultural context

- Clear company core promise
 - everyone empowered to fulfill
- Branded rituals foster inclusion
 - employ all 5 senses
 - celebrate new questions
- Rest, recreation, play, fun, well-being, variety of learning, including conversational and social skills. Ensure slack time
- No multi-tasking; SLOW DOWN
- Regularly refreshed metrics with clear line of sight to strategy

Role model Leaders

- Conversational intelligence skills:
 - Inclusive questions with commitment to mutual satisfaction
 - Promises honored, built on clear specs
- Social intelligence skills:
 - Welcoming
 - Shared vulnerability
- Public learning via ongoing variety of models and tools
 - generate new questions
 - all value partners invited

With gratitude for the teachers, students, thinkers and researchers who illuminated the path



[Marsha Shenk](#) is a veteran consultant, a pioneer of Business Anthropology. Her syntheses of the cultural, biological, and historical influences that impact modern commerce have empowered business leaders for four decades.

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