



The 9 Functions of the Mid Pre Frontal Cortex

Understanding – at a cognitive level- what is happening in our brains in relation to trauma can be really supportive – in that it can create a level of safety along with an idea of what we are working towards.

When the mid prefrontal cortex is working well the energy running through our bodies is modulated efficiently, meaning we are able to bring more energy into our system when we are facing some stress that requires activation and that we are able to calm down when the difficulty has passed.

Essentially a functioning MPFC creates a sense of wellbeing within us – they support eudemonic pleasure of intelligent eros – the pleasure of being in service- and support embodied co-creation.

These 9 functions all work in relationship to our embodiment – they could be seen as paths to enlightenment.

When we are burnt out, stressed, triggered, by something in the environment, and disconnected from our bodies we lose our capacity for self-regulation, attunement and empathy and act out in ways which are harmful to self and others.

It's interesting to note the first 8 functions have been found to be the outcomes of secure infant attachment. Each of the insecure attachment styles have deficits in these areas, which make life more difficult from internal experience to outer relationships in work and home.

- **Body regulation**
- **Emotional balance**
- **Fear modulation**
- **Response flexibility**
- **Attuned communication**
- **Empathy**
- **Self-insight**



- **Morality**
- **Intuition**

Body regulation

This is created by the ANS (autonomic nervous system) which generally works with out conscious control and monitors and regulates functions such as the heart rate, breathing, digestion, vascular tone, inflammation and immune responses.

The MPFC monitors am I hot/cold/thirsty? When it's attuned I will naturally take care – I won't over ride myself.

Emotional Balance

Being able to balance between rigidity and chaos/arousal or to keep from being overwhelmed or becoming inflexible in one's emotional responses. Its about being able to feel fear and ager and feel it to meet peace and ease.

Fear Modulation

The capacity to modulate the amount of fear/anxiety we're experiencing through the sympathetic, parasympathetic and social nervous system. We can reprogram our fear response by calming the amygdala – the structure that registers threat.

Response Flexibility

The capacity to pause before we take action including how we respond to strong states in ourselves and another i.e. controlling our frustration and other impulses from boiling over into harmful action. We have time to pause, assess the on-going stimuli and choose from a selection of possible options and the initiation of action.

We can ask ourselves: can we be with the emerging data of ourselves or another and respond with attuned kindness i.e. can we respond with flexibility and choice for someone in a trauma response?

Attuned communication



To feel in our own neural networks how the other is feeling and to communicate this with empathy. We need attunement to feel close and connected to others.

Empathy

Conscious awareness and sensitivity to the mind of someone else. Compassion is empathy is action.

When there is attuned communication but no vagal activity we get psychopathy.

Self-insight

We make links by differentiating from the 'soup' of experience. We can link the past, present and future. We can integrate cortical representations of our autobiographical memory along with emotion. These insights support integration - which births kindness.

Morality

Rooted in empathy and a desire for all beings to be protected and cared for as much as possible by thinking of the needs of the larger social good and enacting those behaviours, even when alone. Can we play with our power and be in a win-win situation with the other? If I win too much or loose too much I'm at risk of being cast out.

Intuition

Registering the input from the neurons from the gut and heart - intuition teaches me from the inside. Can I be relaxed enough to received the data from my body - heart, guts, genitals, muscles?