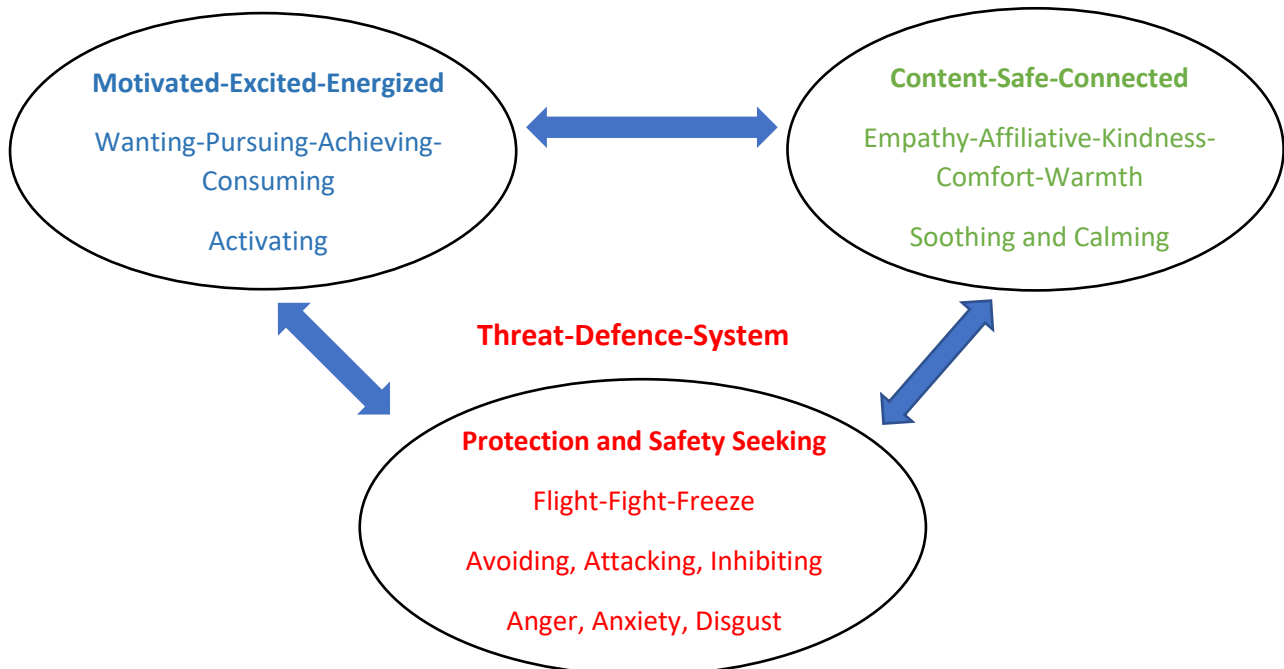


THE THREE EMOTIONAL SYSTEMS (Paul Gilbert)

Drive-Resources Seeking System

Care-Giver Soothing System



The three emotional systems contribute to our survival and wellbeing. The aim is to achieve balance so that we have a rich and fulfilling life. We experience well-being and resilience when we move between the three systems freely according to our situation and needs.

The Threat-Defence System ensures our survival and is activated when we perceive danger or threat. The aim of the stress response of fight, flight, disgust or freeze is to protect us but, often it is overly activated and we assume or exaggerate the threat contributing to excessive feelings of anxiety, anger, hate, sadness and insecurity. If in doubt we fear, attack, disgust or run away just in case it is not safe! This is also the system that is activating the inner critic, directing us out of fear, anger or disgust.

The Drive System motivates and energizes us to seek, to engage with the world to meet our perceived needs and wants, to fulfil our desires (lust, power, control, greed) and values. It activates our reward centre and propels us into action to seize opportunities, to take on challenges, to achieve, to accomplish. In this state, we experience a sense of pleasure and excitement when obtaining the object of our desires or meet our goals.

The Soothing System leads to feelings of calm, warmth and contentment. It creates experiences of safeness, comfort and ease. We enjoy the affection and a sense of being connected to one another, the feeling of belonging, being accepted, supported, cared for and valued by others. Here, we can rest, being more accepting and non-judging. This system allows us to savour the good times, to be grateful, to observe and to gain a greater perspective. This powerful system can moderate the other two systems of Drive and Defence when they are overly active.

Modified from *The Compassionate Mind*-Paul Gilbert <https://compassionatemind.co.uk>

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