

# TMFRS

LET'S MAKE SENSE OF YER STUPID FUCKING BRAIN

## Top Brain Concepts 2021

You ain't nuts. (probably)

Winter 2022

### How this fatty organ actually works

You know... we've been talking reflection around here... But the truth is, I ended 2021 and began 2022 on a bit of a downer emotional note. All the rough memories were finally getting time for processing and it resulted in some dark tides. Also, humans were continuing to drive my head off a cliff every day - and, you know, I got a bit focused on the social destruction.

But the truth is, for ALL the bad - which was a lot - there came... well, a lot of scrambling, re-education, and panicked re-assessment... but THAT came with a lot of learning, adaptation, and growth.

And, no, I'm not doing the "be grateful for your trauma" pitch. But I DID have a great year for brain changing.

On a PERSONAL scale, I'm going to tell you a bit of my learnings next time, with more insight into where I been.

But today, let's approach it from the perspective of the show. What did we learn together on the podcast as a byproduct of the consta-disaster dodging? You know this platform is a reflection of what I'm learning - and nothing makes you learn faster than unpredictable upset and chaos - meaning, 2021 was packed to the BRIM with new knowledge and understandings for Motherfuckers.

So let's do some less depressing talking here and get MEANING from it all - on a conceptual level. Today let's do a broader recap of what seem to have been the best *conceptual* lessons we picked up in 2021 from the show. As in, the topics that changed the way we're seeing our brains the most effectively and efficiently. Forever. In a way that we can never undo. The ideas that have laid the groundwork for... all our inner work, actually happening. AND the points that most successfully convinced us we weren't balls-crazy for thinking this thing or that one was happening in the past.

**First up. We HAVE to talk about DID.**

Dissociative identity disorder - fragmented personalities, trauma-derived brain programs. Whatever you want to call it... not only was it incredibly enlightening as far as my personal life - "WHY do I feel, think, and act like different people on a regular basis?" "Why do I seem to get stuck in certain me-archetypes?" But this was one lightning bolt moment after the next for my brain, as far as gathering the framework to understand SO MANY other brain mechanisms.

Oh, so we have thoughts, behaviors, and emotional states that are sortof "hardwired" together, as sets? If one of those areas changes, the rest follows? Suddenly we're a totally different person, in a way? And we have trouble switching back out to any *other* set of thoughts, behaviors, and emotions because the original system self-perpetuates its own activation? Well that says a lot about my experience so far, and the ways our brains seem to work from the outside.

So, for most of my life I've felt like I was one person by myself, a different person at work, another person in friendships, a whole other being in romantic relationships - and when any of those are dialed up to extreme circumstances, I'm either 1) someone I hate, who resembles my family's lowlight reel OR 2) someone I totally don't remember. I just blackout. Know I said some wild shit. But honestly I don't have memories of making those decisions, nor do I agree with with final output.

On a personal upset level, clearly this contributes to a lot of fights and family programming repeats that end in shame quicksand. Want to understand my tumultuous relationships? Easy - It's mostly about triggering shitty personality parts that were built in the family home.

On a day to day scale, though, DID has just been a disturbing obstacle to ever feeling, thinking, or acting, "consistent." I care about something one day, have no interest the next. My feelings shift as fast as the tides. My plans shift here or there, but stop nowhere in between. I lose sight, lose memory, lose that sense of stability and "self." Feel like I lose control, lose esteem, and lose my ability to thrive.

But, ya know...at least I understand it all. It's all just in my head. In my shame-compartmentalized neural networks. And that was foundational for understanding... pretty much everything else brain-centered that followed this past year.

Including:

## Thoughts as units

So, for the past few years I've had this ongoing battle with myself and academia. "What ARE memories?" Yes, cells firing... but how does that CONTAIN the dynamic information that we're able to draw up?

Well, learning about neural networks via Schema theory really helped in that fight.

Thoughts and memories are more or less the same thing - as in, your thoughts are really just composed of your memories... plus maybe some accessory, novel notions that are streaming in from whatever stimulation is immediately in front of you. Those data points are contained in your neural networks, which are the vast, highly interconnected webs of neurons in your brain. Every neuron is connected to every other neuron EVENTUALLY.

And that organization sheds a lot of light about how your thoughts tend to automatically proceed.

Immediately, this "neural network" model helps you to see events linked tightly to other events, because those thoughts closely follow each other. Ways that things are categorized in your head, because they come as a bundle. How emotions might be stringing memories together, because one moment of "sad" leads to a lifetime of recollective mourning.

Things like that, which can actually help you understand the layout of your own, individual, particular brain - where certain traits, skills, and memories are stored and which ones are apparently very incompatible or very distanced in your brain networking. And that can be enlightening!

i.e. my "work network" is very separate from my "social network" and so are the personalities that both elicit. Helpful to see. Shows me why I become a hermit when I'm focused on output.

Plus - to take this one step further... It turns out that human brains really only form thoughts in one language. Logic. Your brain only works in one direction,  $A + B = C$ . Therefore,  $C = A + B$ . And that's the same for everyone else's.

The problem is, a lot of us have very different *definitions* of those variables, depending on what we have and haven't experienced. Certain elements are unrealistically weighted more heavily than others. Some values might be positive or negative for you, versus your comrades. Logic is the language of human programming. But some of us have learned bad math in the past, which we're still plugging into our modern day computations and getting errors.

So, in this way... knowing we can only follow LOGIC, and pinpointing the holes in what equation is being presented... you can actually start to SEE people's thoughts and therefore understand how their brain operates. Even when they aren't immediately sensible.

Thoughts are UNITS of data, encoded in neurons... and when you slow down enough to understand those informational points, you can figure out how to work DIRECTLY with them, based on their FUNCTION, HISTORY, and ORGANIZATION.

### **Top-Down vs Bottom-Up Influences**

This is a simple one, at face value. In real life, I don't think it's easy to understand most of the time.

So first, of all, we accept by now that our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors all drive each other in a swirling orgy that most of us don't have the present-moment luxury of teasing apart. SECONDLY, we have two *methods* of sparking our own thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and overall brain activities.

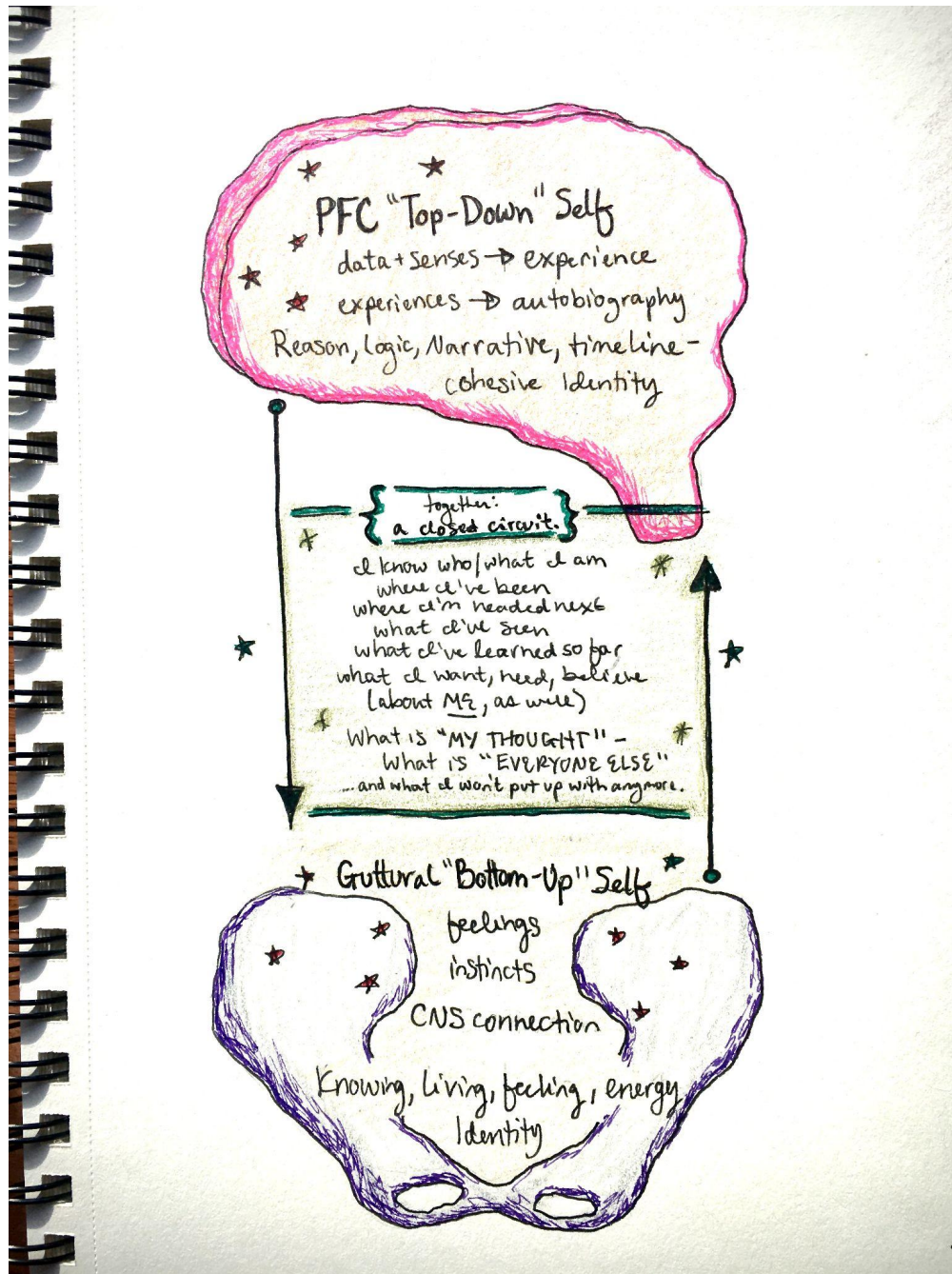
There's a top-down approach, in which your thoughts are directing the show. Information flows through your head, you make decisions based on that, and your emotions and behaviors are also along for the ride. Your cognitions are the bus driver, and the movements are coming from the top-down.

And then... there's a bottom-up approach, in which your emotions and other internal reactions are the driving force for everything. Your thoughts and behaviors change because of something internal, occurring from the "bottom-up" of your human robot suit.

So, you can visualize this as having a "start point" for your entire inner experience in your brain AND in your gut. For me, figuring out where thought patterns, loops, and behavioral shittery is coming from might be a really important part of discerning where some of my less purposeful activities are coming from. Like, mood swings, ruminatory thoughts, unpleasant memory recollections. Inside or outside? From my own thoughts or from my sea of mysterious emotions?

What sparks your system into action? Is it originating in your own head - created by some old recollection you just had OR some stimulus you just observed that cascaded into this cognitive direction? OR, is there a deep-down-driver bubbling up from the bottom? Like a burning, churning, knot in your stomach that's creating thoughts of health failure and loneliness?

Know where it's coming from, and you're one step closer to knowing what's REALLY happening inside yourself. THEN you know how to REALLY start addressing it before it overrides the whole operation. With all our phantom feelings, physically affected bodies, and unprocessed memory triggers, this is a helpful concept for me to sleuth into my trauma brain operations and react as kindly "slash" neutrally as possible.



## Utility of abuse

In line with those past two points, in 2021 I think we discovered the major POINT of abuse in our relationships.

IS there a point? You might be asking, immediately outraged. Yes. There is. And it's nothing more than an unstable brain demanding that another brain becomes its support system - filling in the gaps where there's a void or point of ambiguity.

And by that, I mean... Abuse is just the need for control. It's a fear and shaky-confidence response. A brain that doesn't know how it really feels about this or that, so it requires verification, a sense of control, and continual validation of its anxious concerns. Unfortunately, enacted through trying to manhandle others.

So, when someone is emotionally abusive - they're just trying to get your brain to match THEIR brain. Agree that it's correct. Interact with it in the ways that they're accustomed to, so they can trust that their brain programming is alright and therefore they are what they believe they are. It's ego or "self image" maintenance.

When they're physically abusive, it's similar. "Validate that I'm okay or nothing is going to be okay." And then come the survival responses, and the other party loses control of their own aggression when they can't get the reassurance that they're demanding.

Abuse is committed by needy brains with an underlying lack of confidence in their own perceptions of self, of control, and of validity - thus, they have a lot of anxiety and often explode when any of the janga blocks aren't being adequately held in place by others.

Stable, self-sufficient brains don't NEED to have everyone agree with them - they already KNOW how they feel, and it's a waste of time trying to push, pull, and intimidate others into agreeing. You do you, I know what I'm doing, and it makes no difference if we agree.

Abusers might present as grandiose and confident, but that's exactly the image they're counting on you to perceive and support. If you don't, there will be manipulative, desperate for validation, hell to pay.

And all that being said... I think it's pretty clear why trauma leads to abusers. Same issue as usual. Lack of sense of Self.

## Covert narcissism / the “victim entitlement” pattern

As long as we're talking abuse... you know, that covert or vulnerable narcissism discovery was really something this past year.

DO I think NPD is weirdly overplayed and misused right now? Yeah. DO I think we create a lot of labels for describing the same underlying issues? Yep. Like the entire psychological diagnostic system.

But at least this gave a new category for understanding abuse. It's NOT always direct, confident, and blatant. Immediately aggressive and full of intimidation or physical threat. It IS often quiet, unassuming, and difficult to pinpoint.

A different route than the brute force approach... is the hijacking your feelings and undermining your own memories approach. Using *weakness*, *social pressure*, *victimhood empathy* and *obligatory repayment of past duty* to manipulate the other party.

So, this is the category of stereotypical “mother abuse.” You know - the shit that's popularized and normalized in our society. Mom guilt, mom shame, mom feigned helplessness, mom obligation and lifelong repayment for the pain of being born and having basic needs afterwards.

We all shrug and say “that's moms for you!” Creating a societal narrative of obligation to this “I made you, so you owe me” narrative.

So. No, abuse is NOT always loud or intimidating. Sometimes it's quiet and “voluntary” at first - until you don't pony up and do what's demanded of you, that is. THEN it gets increasingly loud, personal, and based on redacting security. Meaning its a counterintuitive ploy to be a victim who deserves to be worshipped for all their sacrifice, followed by an eruption when the entitled ego doesn't get what it's looking for. Then, likely, social punishment via use of agents and exile.

It's baffling to see in real life.

It's hard to mend the discrepant sides of the coin together. One second feeling indebted and connected, and the next second seeing that blow up in your face as evidence that you somehow aren't doing enough... and here comes the punishment from that person who just claimed to love you more than life, itself.

So learning about vulnarcs was insightful for learning about emotional abuse, altogether. First they soften you and implant positive expectations, then they hack those emotions to direct your thoughts and behaviors downstream. Love-bombing a direct line between their will and your brain overriding itself. Kind of simple.

## **“Relationship” brain programming: Connection, fawning, syncing, boundaries, codependency**

All in all, I think this year was an enlightening one on the relationship versus brain operations front. Clearly, it was for me... this was my major focus, based on my own life events.

Turns out... because of our social nature as animals, we don't have that much mental control, choice in personality, or free will at all. Not from the point of brain development, which is determined by your early experiences. The forming of your neural structures, which is dependent on the reactions trained by others. Or the way modern day interactions can hack your brain processes and cause internal reactions that become external self-abandonments.

Essentially, we learned that our brains and neural connections were developed off the blueprints laid out by our families, and this is biologically favored.

From that point forward, every interaction is another trial in call-and-response brain training. Positive engagements reinforce what you're doing. Negative reactions make your brain shame itself into another mode of operation - and might even disintegrate that “portion” of your personality from the rest.

And all of this is based largely on our drive for connection - seeing similar brain structures in another meatbox. Our biological penchant for cognitive and emotional syncing - aligning our inner landscapes with others to conserve energy. Our fawning response - syncing with predictive hypervigilance and behaving in line with their desires, too. Codependency - a continual “validation system” between two organisms, in which neither brain is operating autonomously and therefore feels more safe and externally regulated.

And boundaries... the mysterious way to actually avoid all of this mentally-undermining nonsense by finally recognizing where the borders of your person end - including your thoughts, emotions, and responsibilities. Then you can determine what IS you and what IS someone else trying to creep in, and put an end to it before your head gets corrupted.

Boundaries - the key to keeping steadily on a path that you believe in, rather than letting the influences of everyone else become your experience. The thing we never learned, because it would jank up the whole system for our social contacts.

And on that note...



**Of course, the concept of “Self.” Which is different than “personality.”**

We spent a ton of time talking about both of these in the past year. Self, it turns out, is a top-down construct led by the prefrontal cortex that says “these are your experiences so far and how to continue forth.” It’s also a bottom-up influence, if you ask me, that originates in some emotional, energetic, unmarred by the trials of the world, observing and directing force in your guts. This sortof “pure you” vibration that you can tap into and weirdly 1) manage your brain and 2) reconnect with your younger selves through.

And THIS Self-contained system is, altogether, seems to be the way that we obtain “long term recovery” - even in the face of life not being so dandy.

BUT. It’s important to mention that Self is NOT your personality. Not even close.

Personality, we learned, is just a set of common behaviors, which are driven by your learned experiences on the surface, which are driven by your typical reactions, thoughts, and emotions underneath the shallow exterior.

Personalities change. They’re developed adaptively, based on your social environment and life circumstances. And they don’t mean much of anything about YOU, your Self... that is, unless you realize you have been operating a shitty personality and decide not to change it.

But for the most part, outside of this little nook of the internet, I feel like we don’t think about personality as being something in our control, or a fluid set of mental instructions that might not be relevant anymore... We think “personality” equals “value,” “viability,” and “correctness.” Some karmic judgement of your worthiness. Some model of “self.”

It’s not.

Your “Self” is what you need to focus on - your set of instructions for what really matters and what you really believe. Strengthen your Self, and it’ll determine how you operate each day, thus possibly creating changes in your personality... but the two are not the same thing. AND we really need to shift our perceived importance of each.

Self is king. Self is a stable life-directing force that empowers your brain and de-emphasizes the influence of the planet. Personality is a construct created by adapting to our environments, plus or minus mental ticks that we’ve likely never examined.

Speaking of which...

## **You don't know what you didn't come to find out**

You know that phrase, "So I come to find out..." and then, generally, the whole story shifts very rapidly and discrepantly from expectations?

It's pretty telling as far as brain operations and potential pitfalls, actually. Especially when we're talking about early life trauma.

Essentially "you don't know what you don't know... until you encounter it. At that point, woah-boy, your brain may have a lot of rewiring to do after being drastically mistaken all along."

Well, for a lot of us, we didn't encounter what the "average" person did early in life. Those early, experience-dependent development events, for instance. Not to mention, just basic social skills. We're missing a lot of foundational experiences, self-management, and life-skill education, seeing as we come from fairly dysfunctional roots in one way or another. A hell of a lot of us don't even know what genuine care or love is. There's a lot of experiential catchup to do.

Meaning, in the aftermath, in order to relate to our peers and the expectations of the world, we've had to work doubly hard in adolescence and adulthood to close the gaps. To appear acceptable to social standards and to arrive on the scene with understandable actions and reactions. But all of this takes a lot of effort AND opportunity. So, we still might be missing some important pieces, even as we crawl into old age.

Our personal outcome all depends on what we've been able to encounter in our lives. And, for us, we're semi-bound by what our original lack of education has created downstream, which likely exacerbates the issue of having very limited experiences to learn new information.

As in, if you grow up with super anxious parents who teach you to barely leave the house because everything outside is scary and unstable... well, you're going to probably stay indoors most of the time, reducing your opportunities to ever get alternative experiences and reinforcing their original dysfunction in YOU.

But we don't REALIZE that. We just operate our brains to the best of our brain's abilities. You don't know what programming ISN'T in your thinkbox. You only know what inventory DOES exist.

Until the day you finally get that new knowledge... AND THEN necessarily your brain has to rewrite your entire backlog of experiences and behavioral instructions to match the sudden shift, that is.

Which, you know... Sucks. It's a real cursed-feeling event, even though it's a gift in the end. It feels horrible. It feels like being untethered. It feels driftless and very confusing. It might be the basis of psychosis or derealization. There's a lot of distress involved, and maybe a lot of shame as you now reassess events that you couldn't see clearly before in the absence of this new data.

So, in a way, it can be a new trauma, in and of itself to find out you were wrong all along. Your thoughts take a rapid left turn, and you have a lot of gaps to fill in now.

But... there's no other way, as defined by the limitations of our brain. That's the process of learning. Improving. Making our heads more comprehensive and capable. Reconsolidation of memories.

We have to address what we thought we thought, before we knew what we now know. Integrate the new information, even if it's going back 20 years and altering a lot of relevant stories you've been telling yourself before you knew BETTER information.

And it's best to see it that way. Not a PERSONAL deficiency. Just an EXPERIENTIAL one. Your brain can't encode what it hasn't seen before. It has to collect data from its experiments to make sense of anything.

So growing everyday. Improving continually. Reconsidering past events, assumptions, and ways of thinking... that's how brains are DESIGNED to work. Restructuring memories and rewriting instructions for the future, based on the most current metrics, which are ever-changing.

In other words, brains are *meant* to question themselves as they get new input. But you also have to be careful of people taking advantage of that. Your SELF has to decide how it wants to frame new information. Not everything *has* to be absorbed. You don't *have* to change course just because one anomaly popped up. But, you know, our hypervigilant brains don't always see it that way.

You don't know what you don't know until you know it. You can only do your best and that's the best you can do. Reality is subjective to the experiences of the beholder.

And that all means, growth is continual. Nothing has to be permanent. What you've seen so far isn't the determinant of who you can be in the future.

And that's kindof hopeful to me, while also explaining why life tends to equal suffering if you aren't living in an echo chamber, blocking out novel experiences. Especially when your head has a lot of past shame, confusion, and negative regard that you're trying to rewrite - you know,

reformatting our histories when we learn something new can be healing, but it's gonna hurt like a motherfucker in the moment.

It's okay. It's just the reorganization of your signalling neurons, which will reorganize your life. Just make sure you're Marie-Kondoing your skull with your Self determining what seems relevant and sparks joy. NOT redesigning and reorganizing every single thing in your place because someone dropped off a free pillow that smells like cat pee.

## **Wrap up**

And, uh... that's about it. These have been the top concepts of 2021.

Except, you know... I think this year we also learned a really important lesson implicit in everything we just talked about.

The actual role of the brain - which it seems we're often unclear about.

How to view it in your daily activities and self-appraisals. How to reframe it with evolutionary biology realizations that it's just an animal brain from a few billion years of development, covered in a shiny "logical" wrapper. It's neutrality. It's methods of development and patterning. It's limitations. It's incredible capabilities. It's desire to process information (whether you want to or not) and reorganize itself - for better or for dissociative identity formation. It's penchant for protecting you with disassociation.

Plus, how to be a better brain operator. How to keep it cleaner. How to view its automatic behaviors. How to be at peace with the times it's not behaving. How to help it behave better - and long term. How it gets trained by our experiences with rewards and punishments. How it becomes a neural echo of the people around you and your experiences. How it can be changed with critical examination of past evidence, boundaries, and reliance on self-direction.

And what it all really means about YOU. The energy that observes the brain as you ride around in your human robot meat suit.

Which isn't much. Your brain's like a parrot, really. That is... until you get all this information in hand, and have no choice but to start taking control of it for your own purposes, the people you love, and betterment of the lifelong blueprint that you were originally drafted from.

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Meaning... guess you're on the hook now, Motherfucker. Thanks to this year of experiments in keeping a brain from completely dissolving, we all know better. Sounds like we've all got a lot of inner electrical work to do.

Another gift and curse of 2021.

Hail your Self. Hail your Brain. Hail the power to strengthen both. Hail Archie.

And cheers to shitty years.

I guess... the fastest way THIS MF can learn.