

## Interski 2019 Bulgaria Report

### Snow Pro Article

## Germany, Austria & Poland *'From Good to Great'*

### *'Psychological Aspects in the Training of Snowsports Instructors'*

Once of the keynote lectures at Interski was a collaboration by Germany, Austria and Poland. The lecture focussed on the psychological aspects of ski teaching.

A person that wants to develop beyond what they can currently do needs an optimal balance between security and challenge. It is the instructor's job to understand this and facilitate it during each lesson. They believe that these aspects are important to offer not only good, but great snowsports lessons.

The countries presented this from three perspectives:

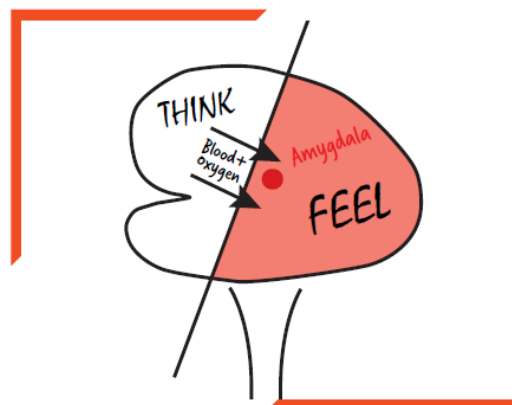
1. Individual – intrapersonal processes
2. Group – interpersonal processes
3. Coach – relevant attitudes of the instructor or trainer

### 1. Individual

#### **Amygdala Hijack (fight/flight response)**

When a human perceives a threat or feels scared (E.g. a big grizzly bear running towards you), there is a chemical reaction in the brain commonly known as the flight/fight/freeze response. Your heart rate goes up, your muscles tense up, and you start sweating.

Social neuroscience shows us that the brain uses similar circuitry for interacting with the social world. When a human being senses a threat, the resources available for overall executive functions in the prefrontal cortex will decrease. The result is literally less oxygen and glucose available for those brain functions involved in linear, conscious processing. People are then more likely to react defensively to stimuli. Small stressors are more likely to be perceived as large stressors. This is not to say we shouldn't put our students in challenging situations, but we must understand this cause-effect relationship in case our students are pushed too far.

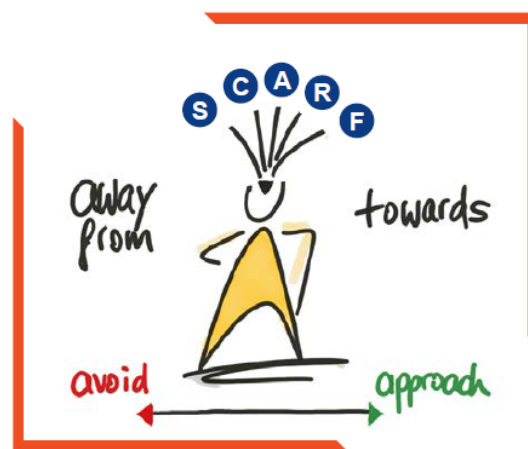


## The SCARF model

David Rock has developed a model that describes humans' five most relevant needs in social interaction.

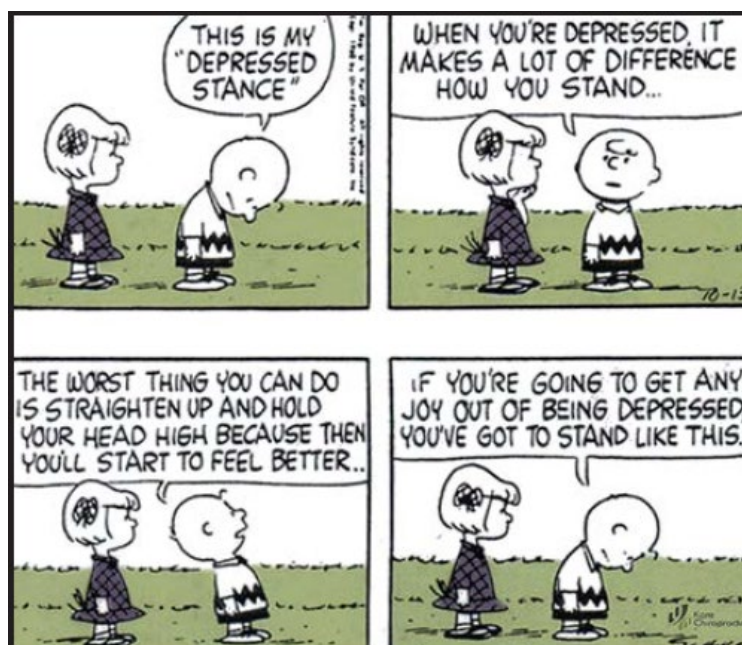
1. Certainty – the need for our brain to predict the future.
2. Relatedness – being “in” or “out” of a social group.
3. Status – is about relative importance, pecking order and seniority.
4. Autonomy – the perception of having things under control and having choices.
5. Fairness – the perception of having fair exchanges between people.

Each of these factors can be triggered ‘positively’ (approach) or ‘negatively’ (avoid).



## Posture

Our posture also effects our emotional state. By getting our students (and ourselves) to stand up with good posture, this puts us in a more positive frame of mind.



### **What does this mean for our lessons?**

If we want our participants to achieve their full potential, we must ensure that they are emotionally and mentally in their comfort zone – because only then will they be able to move beyond their physical comfort zone.

## **2. Group Dynamics**

### **Social**

The social surrounding has a deep influence on our learning possibilities. If you are left out of a social activity, this feels like real physical pain in your mind, meaning that the same regions of the brain are activated. None of us would even think about teaching a student something new when they are in pain (for example because of a boot bruise or 'shin bang') or under particularly difficult conditions (for example, in freezing cold weather). But there are socially difficult situations (which are painful, too) that occur in our ski groups every so often and are sometimes even caused by the group leaders themselves.

### **Belonging**

Humans are social beings by nature because they depend on their fellow human beings from birth. A sense of belonging is therefore a vital dimension, especially whenever we start working with a new group.



### **Participation**

Opportunities for participation and involvement in a group activity increase motivation. Power demonstrations of the instructor help him/herself more than his students. As a group leader it is valuable to have a second look at the black sheep of the group. What needs does he /she represent for the group?

### 3. Coaching

#### What is coaching?

Coaching was defined as “*assisting in achieving desired results or solving problems by setting in motion the talents and strengths of the coached person by asking good questions, expressing empathy or even by mere presence.*”

#### Coaching principles

By applying coaching principles, you can turn:

Instructing **into Coaching**

Authority **into Partnership**

Lecturing **into Engagement**

There were eight points presented to help achieve this:

1. Start each lesson on a lighter note – Smile, warm greeting, introduction and have a bit of fun and get to know each other better.
2. Form a contract – define the rules of working together to ensure confidence & trust.
3. Set goals – could be technical, methodical, social, fun, safe guidance.
4. Be an invisible leader – you’re not always at the front being the hero. It is the client that should come first and share opinions: which could be different from your own.
5. Use feedforward – focus on solutions and not problems when you give skier feedback.
6. Avoid your own agenda – wanting certain results or proving your skills.
7. A bit of pressure is good – accept it and use it to motivate you to do a better job.

#### **Report by Tom Langtry**

You can view the ‘Good to Great’ PDF at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WDUeV3tNJ4Hsb5a71yKyXQR32HsolQfy/view?usp=sharing>