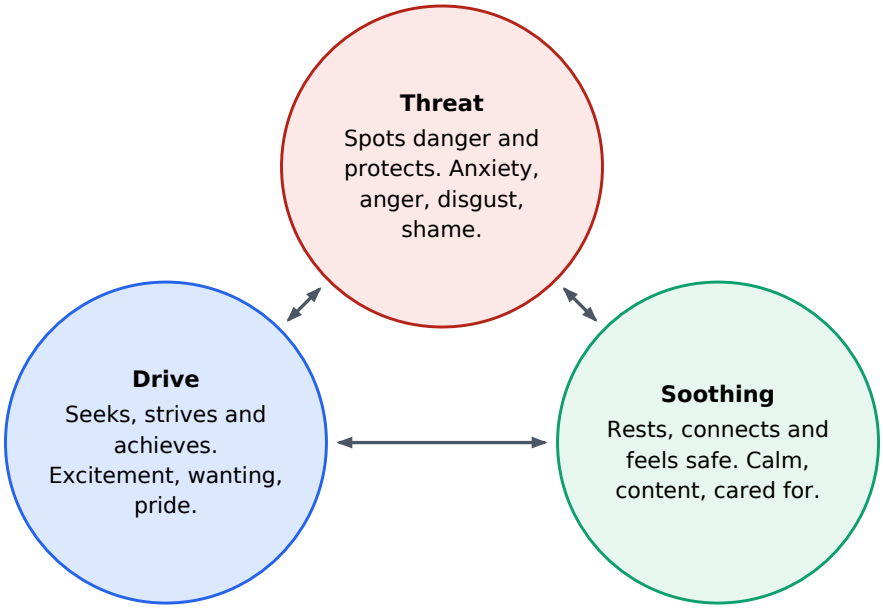
The three emotion systems

The threat, drive and soothing systems, and what happens when they are out of balance.

Our brains have three main systems for managing emotions. Each evolved for a reason, and each has its own feelings and body chemistry.



When the systems are out of balance

- The **threat** system is the fastest and loudest. It is built to be over-cautious: better safe than sorry.
- Many of us use **drive** to keep threat quiet. We achieve, please and keep busy so as not to feel like a failure. It works until we stop or fall short.
- The **soothing** system is what settles threat. It grows through experiences of warmth, safety and care. If those were in short supply early on, it may be under-developed. It can be built at any age.

Self-criticism and the threat system

Your brain reacts to an attack from inside much as it does to one from outside. Self-criticism keeps the threat system switched on. Kindness towards yourself activates soothing.

Building the soothing system

- Slow, steady breathing
- Kind, warm self-talk
- Time with people and animals you feel safe with
- Compassionate imagery
- Rest that is really rest

> **Not your fault**
> You did not choose your brain, your genes or your early life. You are still responsible for what you do now, and you can take that on without shaming yourself.

The three systems model comes from Compassion Focused Therapy, developed by Paul Gilbert.

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