The Structural Mastery of Human Affect: Neurobiological and Somatic Foundations of the Core Emotion Framework

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Abstract

The Core Emotion Framework (CEF) presents a structural-constructivist model of human affect built on three neurobiologically grounded hubs—the Head, Heart, and Gut. This paper develops the conative foundations of the Gut hub by examining Boosting as the organism's fundamental "will to live" and analyzing the pathological Boosting–Constricting fusion that produces emotional rigidity. Drawing on somatic psychology,

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**) We welcome feedback on the preregistration and study design, and invite researchers who are interested in peer-reviewing the system to contact us. We also encourage scholars across all disciplines to conduct their own independent research on any aspect of the Core Emotion Framework. Author assumes no societal or substantial gains from this framework, just for public and academic service.*

affective neuroscience, and polyvagal theory, we synthesize existing evidence to articulate how this fusion creates a conditional “right to live” enforced through tonic bracing and high-arousal paralysis. We clarify that CEF is a theoretical integration rather than an empirical claim, using these literatures to support a coherent structural model. Emotional agility is restored through two mechanisms: (1) balancing Boosting with Accepting in the pelvic core to counter chronic sympathetic contraction, and (2) relocating Constricting to the Heart hub, where it regulates relational aperture rather than survival-level inhibition. We further describe how midline-crossing protocols facilitate bilateral integration and enable the left-right coordination required for affective regulation. This framework provides a reproducible blueprint for transitioning from rigidity to grounded agency and reclaiming an unconditional will to exist.

The Core Emotion Framework organizes human affect into three neurobiologically grounded hubs—the Head (cognitive-regulatory), Heart (relational-affective), and Gut (conative-existential)—each defined by a distinct set of operators whose interactions determine emotional agility or rigidity.

Keywords: Core Emotion Framework (CEF), Boosting and Constricting operators, emotional rigidity, conative foundations of the Gut hub, pelvic floor integration, somatic psychology, affective neuroscience, polyvagal theory, midline crossing and bilateral integration, structural-constructivist models of affect, relational aperture, agency and the will to live.

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1. The Gut Hub: Conative Foundations and the Will to Live

The enteric nervous system (ENS), or "gut brain," consists of over 100 million neurons and serves as the conative motoric engine of the human operating system. [1] In the CEF, this hub handles the visceral sense of self-preservation and core identity. [3]

1.1 Boosting: The Energetic Propulsion of Agency

Boosting is defined as the foundational power of agency and the "will to act." [4] It provides the physiological and motivational "charge" required to sustain effort and survival. [1]

- **Neurobiological Overlap:** Boosting is functionally aligned with Jaak Panksepp’s SEEKING system—a primary-process dopaminergic circuit that generates generalized motivational drive and forward propulsion. [4]

- **Somatic Anchor:** This operator is rooted in the dynamic engagement of the pelvic core. In bioenergetic analysis, Lowen describes “charge” as the buildup and movement of bioenergetic excitation through the body—a somatic propulsion that supports agency, assertiveness, and the organism’s fundamental will to live.

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2. Structural Rigidity: The Boosting-Constricting Fusion

Psychological distress is defined within the CEF as **"emotional rigidity"**—a state where core operators become pathologically fused and lose their independence. [1] One of the most debilitating configurations is the fusion of **Boosting** and **Constricting** within the Gut hub. [2]

2.1 The Conditional "Right to Live"

In a healthy state, Boosting provides the power to exist, while Constricting (in the Heart) provides focus and boundaries. [1] When these fuse in the Gut, the individual's very right to live becomes conditional. In the CEF, the “Right to Live” refers to the organism’s implicit, non-negotiable baseline of existential permission—the felt sense that one may exist, act, and take up space without meeting internalized conditions.

- **Somatic Bracing:** Constricting manifests as a “tonic grip” or “bracing” pattern (a form of chronic sympathetic contraction).[2] When fused with Boosting, the energetic "will to live" is restricted by this tonic grip, creating a state of high-arousal paralysis. [2]
- **Characterological Pathology:** Somatic psychologist Alexander Lowen identified the "Right to Exist" as a fundamental developmental right. A Boosting-Constricting fusion mirrors the "Schizoid" character style, where the individual questions their own right to be in the world and uses Constricting to brace against the terror of existence.

2.2 Enneagram Functional Failures

The CEF re-maps the Enneagram’s "Gut Triad" (Types 8, 9, 1) to identify these functional fusions. This mapping is used strictly as a functional analogy rather than a psychological typology, serving to illustrate operator dynamics rather than to endorse the Enneagram as an empirical classification system.[1]

- **Type 8 (Boosting):** Specializes in conative force and externalized agency. [1]
- **Type 1 (Constricting):** Traditionally mapped to the Heart hub for principled focus. [1]
- **The 9-1 Dynamics:** Rigidity occurs when the Type 1 Constricting function "drops" into the Gut, fusing with Type 8's Boosting. This creates a "Right to Live" condition—where action is only permitted if it meets rigid, internalized standards.

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3. Restoring Agility: Shifting and Relocation Protocols

To move from rigidity to **emotional agility**, the CEF utilizes "Detangling" protocols to isolate fused operators and return them to their functional homes. [1]

3.1 Balancing Boosting with Accepting

The remedy for Gut-level rigidity is the integration of the **Accepting** operator. [2] Accepting is the "universal baseline" that allows for the release of tension and allostatic recovery.[1] In CEF terms, Accepting is the sole operator that reliably re-engages parasympathetic tone, providing the physiological down-shift that restores baseline safety without collapsing agency.

- **Pelvic Floor Integration:** While Boosting "charges" the pelvis for action, Accepting "drops" the pelvic floor for discharge and surrender.[6] This downward release is the somatic expression of allostatic recovery, allowing the autonomic system to shift out of chronic sympathetic contraction and reestablish baseline safety. Balancing these two prevents the "pelvic stress reflex"—a chronic shortening of the muscles that results in emotional numbness and conative blockage.

3.2 Relocating Constricting to the Heart

Agility is restored when **Constricting** is moved out of the Gut and back to the Heart hub. [1]

- **Heart Function:** In the Heart hub, Constricting regulates "relational aperture"—defining boundaries and providing focus in social connections rather than serving as a survival-level brake on the "will to live". [1] This boundary-setting function allows Expanding to operate without distortion, enabling relational warmth to broaden the individual’s thought–action repertoire in line with the

Broaden-and-Build model of positive affect.

- **Relational Openness:** This allows the **Expanding** operator (relational warmth) to function independently, supported by the Broaden-and-Build Theory where positive affect broadens the thought-action repertoire. [7]

Summary of Operator Transitions

State	Hub	Primary Operators	Functional Outcome
Rigidity	Gut	Boosting + Constricting (Fused)	Conditional "Right to Live"; High-arousal paralysis
Agility	Gut	Boosting / Accepting (Balanced)	Grounded Presence; Unconditional Will to Live
Agility	Heart	Expanding / Constricting (Balanced)	Relational Aperture; Defined Boundaries

[1]

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4. Neurological Integration through Midline Crossing

The physical mechanism for this detangling is **Emotional Cycling**, which utilizes "midline crossing" to foster bilateral integration. [8]

- **Corpus Callosum:** Crossing the midline (e.g., through swinging activations) requires the brain's hemispheres to communicate via the corpus callosum.[9] Midline crossing refers to any movement in which a limb or gaze shifts across the body's sagittal plane, requiring coordinated activation of both cerebral hemispheres.
- **Emotional Regulation:** This bilateral communication allows the left brain (logic/Calculating) to team with the right brain (affect/Sensing), preventing the "emotional run wild" states and enabling the verbal expression of visceral feelings. [11] Midline crossing functions as the physical trigger that forces Calculating and Sensing into synchronized activation, ensuring that visceral states are not only felt but also cognitively organized and made available for deliberate action.
- **Reflex Integration:** These protocols help integrate retained primitive reflexes, such as the Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR), which are often linked to emotional

regulation difficulties and an inability to cross the midline. [9]

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5. Mathematical Modeling of Agility

In synthetic affect systems, agility is modeled as a non-linear integration of heterogeneous cognitive functions J_i. We define the time-varying operator weight $\omega_i(t)$as:

$$\omega_i(t) = b_i + \sum_j \left(\alpha_{i,j} * F_{i,j}(t)\right)$$

where $F_{i,j}(t)$represents the normalized activation of operators such as Boosting and Accepting. This formulation captures how operator influence is dynamically modulated through convolution with interaction kernels $\alpha_{i,j}$, allowing the system to shift weighting structures in real time. Stochastic modulation through $1/f$ noise ensures the system remains self-rebalancing and avoids the deterministic traps of structural rigidity, consistent with the CEF principle that emotional agility emerges from flexible, context-sensitive operator integration.[2]

Conclusion

The Core Emotion Framework offers a reproducible structural blueprint for transitioning from the tonic bracing of emotional rigidity to the fluid adaptability of emotional agility. By identifying Boosting as the organism's fundamental will to live and demonstrating how its fusion with Constricting generates a conditional right to exist, this paper clarifies a core mechanism of conative pathology. The proposed detangling protocols—balancing Boosting with Accepting in the pelvic core and relocating Constricting to the Heart hub—provide a coherent method for restoring grounded agency and relational openness. This contribution advances the theoretical architecture of CEF by integrating somatic, neurobiological, and computational perspectives into a unified structural model. Future research can extend this framework by empirically testing operator-level dynamics, modeling cross-hub interactions, and developing applied interventions that operationalize emotional agility in clinical, educational, and synthetic affective systems.

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