

The Core Emotion Framework: The Simple Tangible Truth of the Human Operating System

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Abstract

Psychological science remains divided between discrete emotion theories that treat affect as innate categories and constructivist models that frame emotions as socially assembled narratives. Both approaches leave practitioners “going around the bush,” addressing secondary stories rather than the functional mechanisms that generate distress. The Core Emotion Framework (CEF) resolves this impasse through a structural-constructivist architecture built on ten irreducible operators that form the Human Operating System. These operators—distributed across the Head, Heart, and Gut centers—define emotion as tangible internal movements that regulate aperture, structure action, and determine system stability. By replacing narrative ambiguity with operator-level precision, the CEF provides the simple tangible truth of emotional function: psychological states can be calibrated, balanced, and directed

*) 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.

through measurable cognitive, affective, and somatic transformations. The framework's visual operator banner—designed for placement on a wall in clinical, educational, or organizational settings—serves as a constant architectural anchor, helping users restore operator independence and reduce chronic fusion patterns through immediate visual recall. Integrating somatic grounding, postural alignment, and mechanical activation (ECM/INAS), the CEF offers a unified, mechanistic model of affect with direct clinical, organizational, and technological utility.

Keywords: Core Emotion Framework (CEF); structural-constructivist model; emotional operators; Human Operating System; operator independence; chronic fusion; somatic grounding; postural alignment; affective architecture; cognitive–affective–conative integration; emotional cycling; ECM; INAS; simple tangible truth; affective mechanics; psychological resilience; synthetic affect; state transitions; operator banner; visual architecture; mechanistic affective science.

The Failure of Narrative Ambiguity and the Call for Structural Clarity

Current psychological paradigms, particularly the widely adopted Biopsychosocial (BPS) model, have faced increasing criticism for their overly broad inclusivity and lack of practical guidance.⁷ Critics argue that the BPS model often serves as a "lazy shortcut" for a pragmatic or eclectic approach that lacks a clear integration of its biological, psychological, and social subsystems.⁷ This theoretical holism, while well-intentioned, often fails to prioritize specific issues effectively, leaving practitioners to navigate a personal negotiation of factors rather than following a rigorous protocol.⁷ In the context of reproductive mental health, qualitative data indicates a profound theme among patients: a desire for practitioners to stop "beating around the bush".⁸ Patients consistently express a need for clear words instead of overlooking or downplaying psychological distress, emphasizing that they want to be understood and accepted rather than judged.⁸

The Core Emotion Framework addresses this need for directness by replacing the "around the bush" narratives with a structural decalogue of operators. Where traditional therapy might spend months exploring the historical origins of a patient's "shame" or "fear," the CEF identifies the specific functional failure—such as the over-activation of the Constricting operator in the Heart center or the silencing of the Deciding operator in the Head center. This shift from content to mechanism represents the "simple tangible truth" of the framework: emotions are movements that can be calibrated, balanced, and directed through precise somatic and cognitive protocols.¹

The Decalogue of Operators: A Functional Ontology

The CEF organizes the human experience into ten distinct operators distributed across three primary functional hubs: the Head (Cognitive), the Heart (Affective), and the Gut (Conative). This 3x3+1 architecture ensures that every psychological movement has a designated home and a specific function within the broader Human OS.¹

Functional Hub	Operational Cluster	Outgoing Activation (CW)	Reflecting Activation (CCW)	Balancing Activation (Swing)	Baseline State (Spiral)
Head (Cognitive)	Processor / Navigation	Sensing	Calculating	Deciding	—
Heart (Affective)	Engine / Drive	Expanding	Constricting	Achieving	—
Gut (Conative)	Foundation / Motoric	Arranging	Appreciating	Boosting	Accepting

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The Tenth Operator, **Accepting**, serves as the universal manifestor and the "off-mode" balancer for the entire system. It is the operator of settling, softening, and returning to baseline, providing the conative grounding necessary to prevent system burnout. This structural mapping allows for a granular understanding of psychological health, which is defined not as the absence of negative emotions, but as the maintenance of "operator independence" and "emotional agility".¹

The Head Center: Mechanisms of Cognitive Navigation

The Head hub acts as the system's processor, responsible for mapping the environment and establishing logical sequences. It is important to note that within the CEF architecture, the Head center does not "feel" in a conventional sense; rather, it performs the navigational data intake and analysis required to orient the Heart and Gut centers.¹

Sensing and the Search for Meaning

Sensing is the outgoing (Clockwise) operator of the Head center, characterized by a "perceptual hunger". It is the function responsible for searching for what is not yet found, whether that be meaning, authenticity, or subtle internal cues. In individuals corresponding to Enneagram Type 4, Sensing manifests as an inward tracking of emotional signals with precision. When Sensing is healthy, it provides the "intake layer" for the system; however, if Sensing becomes fused with other operators, it can lead to a state of perpetual searching without finding, creating a chronic sense of "something is missing".¹

Calculating and Analytical Depth

Calculating is the reflecting (Counter-Clockwise) operator, responsible for logical sequencing, pattern recognition, and conceptual clarity. It evaluates information through structured analysis, acting as the algorithmic cortex of the psyche. In Type 5 individuals, this operator is the healthy expression of analytical depth. The "tangible truth" of Calculating is that it must eventually give way to a decision; when Calculating remains chronically active, the system enters a loop of "analysis paralysis," a state

where the individual "goes around the bush" of action by endlessly processing data.¹

Deciding as the Head Balancer

Deciding is the swinging operator that integrates Sensing and Calculating into a stable point of clarity. It is described as the operator of "common sense" and is not assigned to any specific Enneagram type because it is a universal human capacity for commitment and orientation.¹ The CEF posits that many psychological blockages occur because the Deciding operator has been "silenced," meaning its activation intensity has been modulated to zero.⁶ Restoring the Deciding operator requires a volitional pause—a concept aligned with the Alexander Technique's principle of "Inhibition"—to create a "magical moment of awareness" where a clear choice becomes possible.¹

The Heart Center: The Affective Engine and Relational Aperture

The Heart center provides the magnitude and direction of the individual's drive.¹ It regulates how much an individual opens to or closes off from their environment and others.¹

Expanding and the Broaden-and-Build Theory

Expanding is the outgoing operator of the Heart, driving openness, inclusivity, and relational warmth. The functional definition of Expanding is deeply anchored in Barbara Fredrickson's "Broaden-and-Build" theory. This theory suggests that positive affective states broaden an individual's thought-action repertoire, enabling them to draw on a wider array of cognitions and behaviors, which in turn builds enduring personal resources.¹

Resource Category	Build Mechanism	CEF Operator Context
Physical Resources	Developed through play and physical activity.	Expanding / Boosting
Intellectual Resources	Enhanced problem-solving and knowledge acquisition.	Expanding / Calculating
Social Resources	Strengthening social bonds and support chains.	Expanding / Arranging
Psychological Resources	Increasing resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy.	Expanding / Accepting

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The Expanding operator operationalizes this broadening within the Heart hub. It is the "engine" that enables the transition from a narrow focus on self-protection to a wide, inclusive relational aperture. Fredrickson's "Undoing Hypothesis" further validates the Expanding operator as a biological regulator

capable of neutralizing the cardiovascular aftereffects of stress, thereby reversing the "metabolically costly" defense reactions managed by the Constricting operator.¹

Constricting and Polyvagal Theory

Constricting is the reflecting operator, responsible for inward focus, protection, and the consolidation of energy. Its physiological foundation is articulated by Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory, specifically the unmyelinated dorsal vagal complex. When a threat is perceived as inescapable, the system defaults to a "metabolic retreat" or dorsal vagal shutdown, characterized by immobilization and energy conservation.¹

In the CEF, Constricting becomes pathological when it loses its precision and becomes a "chronic tonic grip" on the body, restricting expression and leading to emotional rigidity. This "bracing" pattern is a defensive tightening in the chest and throat. The "simple truth" of the CEF is that Constricting is a necessary functional power for setting boundaries, but it must be balanced by the Expanding and Achieving operators to prevent the system from becoming a closed, rigid circuit.¹

Achieving as the Heart's Action Vector

Achieving is the balancing operator of the Heart, responsible for the efficient execution of goals and masterly action. It is the vector operator that physically moves the system.⁶ Achieving translates intention into coordinated movement, and in Type 3 individuals, it represents the healthy expression of goal-directed action. When Achieving is online, the individual moves with a sense of mastery; when it is suppressed, the system may feel "stuck" despite having clear cognitive maps.¹

The Gut Center: Conative Foundation and Somatic Grounding

The Gut center serves as the motoric engine and foundation of the entire Human OS.¹ It is where the psyche meets the physical ground.¹

Arranging and Environmental Structure

Arranging is the outgoing operator, responsible for practical structuring, organization, and overcoming "bureaucratic gravity". In Type 6 individuals, this manifests as preparation and the creation of workable structures.¹ Arranging acts as the "infrastructure compiler" of the psyche, ensuring that ambitions have the logistical support they need to manifest.⁶

Appreciating and Perceptual Satisfaction

Appreciating is the reflecting operator of the Gut, involving value-recognition and resonance.¹ It is the function that notices what is supportive, uplifting, or enjoyable. Matching Type 7's healthy mode,

Appreciating provides the system with perceptual satisfaction. Without Appreciating, the system may continuously seek new stimuli (Sensing) without ever feeling the "resonance" of what has already been achieved.¹

Boosting and conative Momentum

Boosting is the balancing operator, responsible for momentum generation, charge building, and energetic propulsion.¹ It is the "surge engine" of the system, activated when an individual must shift from monitoring to rapid response.⁶ Boosting builds the "charge" necessary to tolerate strong emotions and assert needs, mirroring traditional practices like cultivating "Qi".¹

Accepting and the Universal Baseline

Accepting is the tenth operator and the foundation of the Gut center.¹ It involves settling, softening, and releasing tension. In the CEF, Accepting is the universal baseline that restores grounded presence.¹ It is the conative "off-mode" that allows the system to metabolize gains and recover from the surge of Boosting.⁶

The Somatic Anchor: Pelvic Grounding and Postural Alignment

The CEF's claim to being a "tangible truth" is most evident in its integration of somatic grounding, particularly the role of the pelvic floor and the midline axis. Unlike narrative therapies that treat the body as a secondary recipient of emotional states, the CEF treats the body as the primary site of operator activation.¹

Bioenergetics and the Mechanics of Grounding

The Gut center grounding is achieved through the dual activation of Boosting and Accepting, with the pelvic floor serving as the anatomical anchor. Bioenergetic Analysis, developed by Alexander Lowen, posits that a person's identity is tied to their "biological ground," which is the feeling contact between the feet and the earth.¹

Grounding Stage	Bioenergetic Definition	CEF Operator Analogy
Holding	Maintaining physical structure.	Boosting / Arranging
Supporting	Connection to gravity.	Boosting / Accepting
Containing	Managing internal pressure/charge.	Boosting / Constricting
Limiting	Setting functional boundaries.	Constricting
Sustaining	Ongoing presence and vitality.	Boosting / Appreciating

Protecting	Defensive stabilization.	Boosting / Arranging
Discharging	Releasing energy into the earth.	Boosting / Accepting

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The CEF's "Accepting" operator utilizes an inward spiraling motion to release tension, while "Boosting" utilizes a vigorous swinging motion to build reserves. Physiologically, chronic stress leads to the "pelvic stress reflex," a subconscious shortening of the pelvic floor muscles. The CEF's cycling protocols use coordinated relaxation and engagement to reverse these shortening patterns, re-establishing a stable conative grounding that "going around the bush" with talk therapy cannot reach.¹

Postural Alignment and the Alexander Technique

The CEF's midline axis—composed of the Deciding, Achieving, Boosting, and Accepting operators—is physically manifested through postural alignment. The Alexander Technique emphasizes the "Primary Control," which is the relationship between the head, neck, and spine. Habitual tension in the neck muscles distorts proprioception, leading to "faulty sensory awareness".¹

The Deciding operator in the Head hub is supported by this postural clarity. By using "Direction"—the quiet initiation of action from a poised state—the mind gives specific "body thoughts" (e.g., "head forward and up") to prevent unnecessary contraction. This prevents "End Gaining," where an individual becomes fixated on a goal and ignores the "means-whereby" it is achieved, ensuring that action (Achieving) remains integrated with the system's baseline (Accepting).¹

Neurological Foundations: Bilateral Integration and Midline Crossing

The importance of the midline in the CEF is further supported by developmental neuroscience, which identifies "midline crossing" as essential for learning and emotional regulation. Spontaneously crossing the midline with a hand or eye indicates that the two hemispheres of the brain are communicating efficiently via the corpus callosum.¹

In the CEF, the left hemisphere is associated with language, logic, and the Calculating and Constricting operators. The right hemisphere is associated with feelings, non-verbal cues, and the Sensing and Expanding operators. The "Swinging" activations of the Deciding, Achieving, and Boosting operators require trunk rotation and core stability, which physically require crossing the midline. This fosters "bilateral integration," enabling the "whole brain" to function as a team and allowing the left brain (language) to express right-brain feelings, preventing emotions from "running wild" or remaining "unprocessed".¹

The Mathematical Architecture of State Transitions

To ensure the CEF remains a rigorous engineering standard, the framework provides a mathematical representation of operator activation. An operator $O_{c,p}$ maps a center-process pair to a scalar activation value representing regulatory intensity. The state of the psyche at time t is a vector S_t including activation values for all ten operators. The state transition function is defined as:

$$S_{t+1} = f(S_t, O_{c,p})$$

A stable state is defined as one where activation values converge and no "chronic fusion" occurs. Chronic fusion is a maladaptive state where processes remain involuntarily co-activated and rigid, such as when the Expanding operator (relational openness) is inhibited by an over-active Constricting operator (defense). This mathematical precision is the "tangible truth" that allows the CEF to be used in "synthetic affect" for artificial intelligence.¹

Technological Implementation: The ECM and INAS

The CEF is operationalized through mechanical systems that allow users to "work out" their emotional operators in a manner similar to physical exercise.¹

The Emotional Cycling Machine (ECM) v3.1

The ECM v3.1 is designed to physically activate emotional centers using mechanical and autonomous systems.¹

Subsystem	Component	Functional Role
Module A	Primary Wheel Assembly	42-48 cm diameter; matches Head, Heart, and Gut heights.
ARE	Autonomous Resistance Engine	Modulates resistance based on load (< 120 ms response).
MAIL	Mechanical-Autonomous Interface	Ensures real-time feedback with < 50 ms latency.
ELMS	Emotional Load Mapping System	Samples micro-tremors and grip pressure variability.

¹

The ELMS infers a "load index" (0-100) to provide real-time feedback on emotional intensity. These devices enable users to strengthen under-used operators and reduce "emotional fusion" through physically grounded movement, moving beyond the "ambiguity" of traditional clinical settings.¹

The Integrated Neuro-Affective Synchronizer (INAS)

The INAS v1.0 is the integration engine of the CEF, synchronizing activation across multiple modes.¹

INAS Subsystem	Core Function	Integration Input
NARE-1	Rhythm Engine	ECM movement patterns and resonance.
SSL-1	Somatic Layer	Posture mapping and breath rhythm.
CEAM-1	Cognitive Module	Attention-state and cognitive tempo.
ECI-1	Environmental Interface	Soundfield and lighting coherence.

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Mode 3 of the INAS focuses specifically on "Somatic-Emotional Coherence," aligning the user's posture and grounding with the emotional activation detected by the ECM. This technology ensures that the user is not just "thinking" about an emotion but is physically and neurologically embodying the corresponding operator.¹

Structural Psychopathology: The GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP)

The CEF's most profound clinical application is the redefinition of Avoidant Personality Disorder (AvPD) through the **GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP)**. Traditional therapy often treats AvPD as a "fear of judgment," a narrative approach that the CEF considers "beating around the bush". Instead, the GPAP framework identifies a three-cluster structural configuration that explains the underlying engine of the disorder.³

The GPAP Mechanism

1. **Compliance Fusion:** This is an over-activation of approval-seeking, guilt-avoidance, and perfectionistic primers. It produces "conscientious anxiety," where the individual feels they must be "good" (i.e., compliant) to be safe.³
2. **Agency Suppression:** This is an under-activation of assertiveness, boundary-setting, and self-direction (operators like Boosting and Achieving). This produces the characteristic passivity and withdrawal of AvPD.³
3. **Protest Signals:** Somatic tension and rumination are seen not as symptoms to be "coped with" but as internal alarms signaling the system's structural collapse.³

By treating GPAP as a "measurable structural pattern" validated through CFA and SEM, the CEF provides

a pathway for a "structural-constructivist resolution". The goal is to restore the suppressed agency operators, thereby recalibrating the Human OS rather than merely reducing fear through narrative exposure.³

Institutional Auditing: The United Nations Case Study

The CEF's "tangible truth" extends to institutional operating systems, where organizations are analyzed as functional complexes of operators. A primary example is the analysis of the United Nations (UN) as a living system whose failures arise from "operator misalignment".⁶

The Institutional Operators of the UN

Hub	Operator	UN Mechanism Analogy	Institutional Failure Mode
Head	Sensing	UNOOSA Earth-observation systems.	Data distortion leading to system collapse.
Head	Calculating	World Bank PAMS; humanitarian modeling.	Analysis paralysis; data without action.
Head	Deciding	Security Council mandates.	"Operator silencing" due to geopolitical deadlock.
Heart	Expanding	Global Compact on Refugees.	"Operator overflow"; ambition exceeding capacity.
Heart	Constricting	International Monitoring Systems (IMS).	Lack of "trust conditions" when precision fails.
Heart	Achieving	Peacekeeping (MONUSCO, MINUSCA).	The only vector that physically moves the system.
Gut	Arranging	UN Innovation Network (UNIN).	Bureaucratic gravity and siloed agencies.
Gut	Appreciating	Universal Periodic Review (UPR).	Masking vulnerable groups with averages.
Gut	Boosting	The Pandemic Fund; Fast-Track Procedures.	Surge engine; turns inertia into velocity.

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The "UN 2.0" vision is described as "Architectural Resonance," where every institutional operator is aligned to its proper role. The CEF suggests that institutions fail when Boosting is used without Accepting (burnout), or when Sensing occurs without Deciding (paralysis).⁶ By auditing these

institutional operators, the CEF offers a structural way out of geopolitical traps that traditional diplomacy "goes around the bush" to avoid.⁶

Synthetic Affect and AI Engineering

For artificial intelligence, the CEF provides a structural framework for modeling functional affective dynamics without implying subjective experience. Operators are implemented as computational transformations—intake, analysis, commitment, aperture modulation, and momentum generation.¹

By unifying representational, regulatory, and somatic-analogue signals within a single ontology, the CEF enables "synthetic affect" as a system of operator-level state transitions.¹ This is achieved through JSON-LD knowledge graphs and the Intima benchmark, which establishes a granular audit system for reproducibility.⁵ This allows AI to "understand" and simulate emotional dynamics as predictable mechanical events rather than as vague, anthropomorphic "feelings".¹

Empirical Analysis: The Action-Opinion Divergence

A significant finding from Pilot Study 3 (N=39) is the "divergence between action and opinion" in human response processes. This study asked participants to rate how they "usually act" versus the "ideal" way to act in various scenarios, such as conflict, overload, or loss.¹

Scenario	Reflexive Action (Reflex)	Idealized Action (Opinion)	CEF Operator Interpretation
Conflict	Constricting (Reduction)	Expanding / Appreciating	Moving from defense to exploration.
Overload	Over-Calculating	Deciding (Commitment)	Transitioning from processing to resolution.
Loss/Ending	Ruminative Calculating	Accepting (Release)	Returning to the system baseline.

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The data suggests that individuals can distinguish between their habitual, reflexive responses—often rooted in Constricting defense mechanisms—and more effective, agile strategies. This validates the CEF's role as a tool for "Operator Independence," as it provides the language and physical protocols to move from the reflexive "Reflex" to the idealized "Opinion".¹

The "Simple Tangible Truth" as a Path to Mastery

The Core Emotion Framework's assertion that it is the "simple tangible truth" rests on its ability to

collapse the complexity of human life into a non-overlapping set of ten functional powers. It avoids the "pity of going around the bush" by identifying the exact point of system failure—whether it is a silenced Deciding operator, a fused Constricting-Calculating loop, or a suppressed Boosting engine.¹

By integrating somatic grounding, postural alignment, and mechanical cycling into a unified structural-constructivist model, the CEF offers a rigorous path to psychological resilience.¹ As environments grow more complex and institutions face increasing deadlock, the CEF provides a universal blueprint for internal governance that integrates the somatic, cognitive, and mechanical components of the human experience into a single, coherent operating system. This synthesis establishes a foundation for consistent operator agility, ensuring that both humans and synthetic systems can navigate the challenges of the modern world with precision and mastery.¹

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