

# The Definitive Guide to the 7-Step Detangling Protocol: A Structural-Constructivist Resolution for Complex Affective Architectures within the Core Emotion Framework

---

ARCHIVE:

- [https://huggingface.co/datasets/CoreEmotionFramework/CEF\\_Main\\_Archive/tree/main](https://huggingface.co/datasets/CoreEmotionFramework/CEF_Main_Archive/tree/main)
  - <https://www.optimizeyourcapabilities.com/Publications/>
  - <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ORdecUoAAAAJ>
  - <https://philpeople.org/profiles/jamel-bulgaria>
  - <https://zenodo.org/communities/030303/>
  - <https://osf.io/hz53j/>
- Preregistration:
- <https://osf.io/ac4x2/overview>
- Pilot study:
- <https://osf.io/fydsq/wiki?wiki=i7q8g>
- 

## Abstract

This report presents the most comprehensive exposition to date of the 7-Step Detangling Protocol within the Core Emotion Framework (CEF), a structural-constructivist model of human affect developed by Jamel Bulgaria. Rejecting categorical emotion theory, the CEF conceptualizes subjective experience as the output of ten functional operators organized across a 3×3+1 architectural system. The Detangling Protocol serves as the primary method for resolving “fusion”—a pathological coupling of operators that produces distorted activation, cognitive rigidity, and loss of agency. Drawing on the Decalogue of Operators, center-level dynamics, and the 0–10 modulation system, this guide details the full sequence of stabilization, diagnostic isolation, facet differentiation, holarchical rebalancing, transition mastery, and modulation reciprocity required to restore architectural clarity. Special emphasis is

placed on the GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP) as a canonical example of chronic fusion in the Head–Heart–Gut system. The report further situates the protocol within the broader CEF practitioner suite and outlines its implications for computational modeling, neurodiversity, and clinical psychopathology. As both a technical manual and a theoretical contribution, this document establishes the Detangling Protocol as a foundational tool for restoring operator agility and advancing structural-constructivist affective science.

---

## **The Seven Steps Protocol**

The Core Emotion Framework (CEF), as developed by Jamel Bulgaria, represents a transformative departure from traditional categorical models of human affect. At the epicenter of this framework is the 7-Step Detangling Protocol, a rigorous clinical and self-regulatory methodology designed to resolve structural psychopathologies through the systematic disassembly of fused emotional states.<sup>1</sup> While conventional psychological paradigms often treat emotions like anxiety, anger, or sadness as monolithic biological responses, the CEF reframes these experiences as the output of ten discrete functional operators housed within a 3×3+1 hub system.<sup>2</sup> The Detangling Protocol serves as the primary technical manual for restoring internal structural integrity, particularly in cases where these operators have become "fused"—a state of co-activation that results in cognitive rigidity, emotional flooding, and the suppression of individual agency.<sup>2</sup> This report provides the most exhaustive analysis of the 7-step sequence, its theoretical foundations in structural-constructivism, and its critical application in resolving complex configurations such as the GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP).<sup>2</sup>

## **The Epistemological Foundation of Structural-Constructivist Affective Science**

The Core Emotion Framework posits that emotional life is not a collection of fixed biological categories or culturally assembled narratives, but a "Structural-Constructivist" architecture governed by internal transformations.<sup>2</sup> These transformations process information, regulate what is termed "relational aperture," structure somatic action, and recalibrate baseline states.<sup>2</sup> This model aims to unify representational, affective regulatory, and somatic inferential processes within a single functional ontology,

effectively viewing the human emotional system as a highly sophisticated operating system.<sup>2</sup>

Within this ontology, the framework identifies the "Decalogue of Operators"—ten fundamental emotional actions that are the constituent building blocks of all subjective experience.<sup>3</sup> These operators do not exist in isolation; they are organized into three primary centers of intelligence: the Head (Cognitive), the Heart (Relational), and the Gut (Motoric), with the tenth operator, Accepting, serving as a central stabilizing hub.<sup>3</sup> The 7-Step Detangling Protocol (Protocol 3) is the specialized sequence utilized when the natural boundaries between these operators break down.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Decalogue of Operators and the 3×3+1 Hub System**

To understand the necessity of detangling, one must first master the architectural map of the CEF. Each operator possesses a unique functional signature and a presumed somatic location. When the system is healthy, activation moves smoothly between these operators in lawful sequences.<sup>3</sup>

Center	Operator	Functional Identity	Somatic Anchor
Head	Sensing	Pure perception and signal detection	Forehead / Eyes
Head	Calculating	Analysis, evaluation, and categorization	Forehead / Temples
Head	Deciding	Commitment to a path or conclusion	Forehead / Crown
Heart	Expanding	Opening emotional space and vulnerability	Chest / Sternum

Heart	Constricting	Closing aperture and establishing protection	Chest / Ribcage
Heart	Achieving	Fulfillment and coordination of demands	Chest / Shoulders
Gut	Arranging	Organizing internal and external order	Hips / Lower Belly
Gut	Appreciating	Valuing presence and qualitative depth	Hips / Pelvis
Gut	Boosting	Amplifying energy and momentum	Hips / Sacrum
Hub	Accepting	Integration and baseline recalibration	Whole Body / Ground

2

The system utilizes a 0–10 modulation scale, where  $A(O)$  represents the activation level of a specific operator  $O$ .<sup>3</sup> In an ideal state, an individual can modulate an operator from 0 (dormant) to 10 (maximum intensity) and return to 0 without triggering unintended co-activations in other operators.<sup>3</sup> "Fusion" occurs when  $A(O_1)$  and  $A(O_2)$  become coupled such that one cannot be modulated without the other, leading to "architectural knots" that the 7-Step Protocol is designed to untie.<sup>3</sup>

---

## Structural Psychopathology and the Genesis of Fusion

In the CEF model, psychopathology is not defined by the content of a thought or the

intensity of a feeling, but by the loss of "Operator Agility".<sup>2</sup> When operators fuse, they lose their distinct functional identities, resulting in "distorted activation".<sup>2</sup> The most prominent example of this is the GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP), a technical over-activation of the "Calculating" operator in the Head center that fails to transition into the "Deciding" operator.<sup>2</sup>

The GoodPerson Anxiety Pattern (GPAP) reflects a fusion of compliance-related primers, where the individual's relational Expanding processes become over-coupled with external standards of correctness and approval. This fusion is accompanied by suppression of agency-related primers, particularly the Gut-center operators responsible for assertiveness and autonomous action (e.g., Boosting and Arranging). The combined fusion/suppression dynamic produces the characteristic conscientious anxiety profile, marked by heightened self-monitoring, inhibition of agency, and persistent internal protest signals.<sup>2</sup> The 7-Step Detangling Protocol provides the mechanistic intervention to deconstruct this monolithic "anxiety" into its constituent architectural failures.<sup>2</sup>

---

## Detailed Analysis of the 7-Step Detangling Protocol

The Detangling Protocol (Protocol 3) is a canonical sequence designed to restore "center clarity" and dissolve fusion-driven overflow.<sup>3</sup> Each step must be followed with technical precision to ensure that the structural disassembly does not lead to further system instability.<sup>3</sup>

### Step 1: Systematic Stabilization and Temporal Deceleration

The primary objective of Step 1 is the prevention of emotional flooding or system collapse during the disassembly process.<sup>3</sup> When a client is in a state of high-intensity fusion, attempting to isolate operators can trigger "overflow," where activation breaches the capacity of a center and propagates uncontrollably throughout the architecture.<sup>3</sup>

- **Mechanism of Stabilization:** The practitioner initiates a specialized stabilization sequence that prioritizes somatic grounding.<sup>3</sup> This involves guided meditation and a "slow exhale" breathing pattern designed to lower the internal temporal rate—the speed at which the client perceives and reacts to internal signals.<sup>3</sup>

- **The 10→0 Modulation:** The practitioner utilizes the 10→0 modulation system to quiet over-activated operators.<sup>3</sup> If the total system activation is  $A_{total}$ , the goal is to reduce the intensity of all active operators until they fall within a manageable range (typically  $A(O) <$ ), which allows for the cognitive and somatic "space" required for isolation.<sup>3</sup>
- **Expected Scenario:** Most individuals present with three to four operators that are chronically active, while the remaining operators sit behind or remain under-activated. This baseline imbalance is one of the earliest indicators of structural rigidity.
- **Client Resistance:** This pattern can be detected intuitively during initial observation and is later confirmed when the practitioner attempts to guide the client to a full 10-level activation; the under-activated operators fail to rise cleanly.
- **Common Errors:** Pushing for narrative intensity or attempting to detangle while the client is "flooded" are categorized as critical practitioner errors.<sup>3</sup> Stabilization must be maintained as the foundational layer throughout the protocol.

## Step 2: Diagnostic Isolation and Semantic Disambiguation

Once the system is stabilized, the practitioner moves to identify the specific "architectural knots" or fused pairs.<sup>3</sup> This step relies on "semantic disambiguation" — helping the client distinguish between different functional movements that have been mislabeled as a single "emotion".<sup>2</sup>

- **Structural Questioning:** Instead of asking about the history of a feeling, the practitioner asks structural questions such as, "In this moment, is the movement narrowing your internal space or widening it?" or "Is this a movement of analysis or a movement of organization?"<sup>3</sup> These questions map the activation to specific operators like Constricting vs. Expanding or Calculating vs. Arranging.<sup>3</sup>
- **Naming and Anchoring:** The fused operators are identified and named. The practitioner then guides the client to "anchor" each operator in its canonical home center.<sup>3</sup> For example, if "Calculating" and "Expanding" are fused, the client is directed to feel the "Calculating" activation in the forehead and the "Expanding" activation in the chest.<sup>3</sup> This spatial separation is the first step in breaking the functional bond between them.
- **Fusion Detection:** Fusion can also be detected intuitively in many cases, as fused operators often share a common affective tone, somatic signature, or narrative

style before any formal testing is performed.

- **Empirical Detection:** Fusion is empirically confirmed when the client cannot activate a single operator without involuntarily activating another, or when instructed to activate one operator, they automatically drift into the language, somatic posture, or cognitive style of the fused partner.

Regardless of the specific fusion configuration, any fused pattern will resolve when each operator is activated and deactivated independently. Because fusion is a structural coupling rather than a content-based diagnosis, the particular diagnostic label is secondary; what matters is restoring clean, separate modulation of each operator.

We therefore treat these observations as empirically grounded practitioner findings within the CEF system, pending further independent replication and formal testing by other researchers.

### **Step 3: Granular Differentiation and Facet Clarity**

In the CEF, each operator is not a simple state but is composed of various "facets" or sub-components.<sup>3</sup> In chronic fusions, these facets often blend together or activate in an order that violates the system's structural rules.<sup>3</sup>

- **Facet Identification:** The practitioner helps the client identify all active facets within a single operator.<sup>3</sup> For the "Boosting" operator, this might include facets like "Momentum," "Drive," and "Amplification".<sup>3</sup>
- **Canonical Ordering:** The protocol re-establishes the "canonical ordering" of these facets.<sup>3</sup> Many fusions are maintained because the client is attempting to activate a late-stage facet before an early-stage facet has stabilized the operator's identity.<sup>3</sup>
- **Boundary Reinforcement:** By clarifying the internal facets, the "edges" of the operator become more distinct, which somatic evidence suggests reduces the likelihood of "instant re-fusion" once the practitioner stops the active intervention.<sup>3</sup>

### **Step 4: Mechanics of De-Fusion and Driver Modulation**

Step 4 is the functional core of the protocol, where the co-activation pattern is actively dissolved.<sup>3</sup> This process requires identifying the "driver" operator—the operator that is exerting the most influence or holding the highest activation in the fused pair.<sup>3</sup>

- **Driver Identification:** In a fusion of "Calculating" and "Constricting," the

"Calculating" operator often serves as the driver, with the "Constricting" response being a secondary protective reaction.<sup>2</sup>

- **Targeted Modulation:** The client is guided to reduce the modulation of the driver operator specifically (e.g., "Bring the Calculating from an 8 down to a 2") while maintaining the passenger operator at its current level.<sup>3</sup>
- **Independence Verification:** The goal is to reach a state where the client can activate the "passenger" operator without the "driver" operator automatically firing.<sup>3</sup> This is the mathematical definition of de-fusion: the decoupling of activation values  $A(O_1)$  and  $A(O_2)$ .<sup>3</sup>

### Step 5: Holarchical Rebalancing and Center Equilibrium

After the individual operators have been detangled, the practitioner must address imbalances at the center level (Head, Heart, and Gut).<sup>3</sup> Chronic fusions often lead to "Center Dominance," where one center is over-weighted and another is collapsed or suppressed.<sup>3</sup>

- **Weighting and Compensation:** The practitioner identifies "compensatory patterns".<sup>3</sup> For instance, in the GPAP, the Head center is typically over-weighted as it tries to compensate for a suppressed Gut center that is no longer providing grounded "Arranging" or "Boosting" movements.<sup>2</sup>
- **Activation Redistribution:** The protocol involves reducing activation in the over-weighted center and supporting the activation of the under-weighted center.<sup>3</sup> This is not about "thinking less," but about restoring the functional capacity of the Heart and Gut centers so the Head center no longer has to over-perform.<sup>2</sup>
- **Pathway Restoration:** The practitioner restores the modulation pathways between the centers, ensuring that information and activation can move freely across the 3×3+1 architecture.<sup>3</sup>

### Step 6: Restoring Canonical Directionality and Transition Mastery

A key insight of the CEF is that emotional health is defined by movement, not stability in a single state.<sup>2</sup> Step 6 focuses on "Transition Mastery"—the ability to move from one operator to its canonical successor without distortion.<sup>3</sup>

- **Canonical Successors:** Each center has a lawful direction of movement.<sup>3</sup> In the Head center, the sequence is Sensing → Calculating → Deciding.<sup>3</sup> In the GPAP, the transition from Calculating to Deciding is typically blocked.<sup>2</sup>

- **Movement Drills:** The practitioner guides the client through transitions: activating Operator A, quieting it, and then activating Operator B.<sup>3</sup> This trains the "Emotional Agility" required to exit a previously fused state and move toward a functional outcome.<sup>2</sup>
- **Correcting Distortions:** The manual identifies six types of transition distortions that are addressed here: blocked, forced, skipped, reversed, cross-center drift, and oscillation.<sup>3</sup> Restoring clean transitions ensures the fusion does not immediately reform.<sup>3</sup>

### Step 7: Completion and Modulation Reciprocity

The final step stabilizes the new architectural configuration and ensures that the system is ready to function independently.<sup>3</sup>

- **Completion Signals:** The practitioner looks for a "Completion Signal"—a clear somatic indicator that the emotional process has stabilized, such as a shift in breathing, a release of muscular tension in the hips, or a change in visual focus.<sup>3</sup>
- **Modulation Reciprocity:** The client verifies that they can now modulate the previously fused operators reciprocally.<sup>3</sup> If they intensify "Expanding," does "Calculating" stay quiet? If they "Decide," does the "Constricting" activation remain at 0?<sup>3</sup>
- **Identity Preservation:** The protocol concludes by confirming that the client's sense of identity is preserved and that they now feel a greater sense of "Agency"—the ability to utilize their emotional operators as tools rather than being overwhelmed by them as reflexive forces.<sup>2</sup>

## The 7-Step Protocol in the Context of Global Practitioners

The 7-Step Detangling Protocol is categorized as a "Phase 2" intervention within the CEF Practitioner Manuals (specifically PM-3 and PM-5).<sup>3</sup> It is not a standalone technique but part of a broader suite of protocols designed for "Structural Disassembly".<sup>3</sup>

Protocol	Purpose	Protocol #

Centering Protocol	Establishes architectural clarity at the start of a session	Protocol 1
Operator Activation	Trains the client to activate an operator cleanly (0→10→0)	Protocol 2
Detangling Protocol	Separates fused or blended emotional states	Protocol 3
Emotional Agility	Trains flexible transitions between different operators	Protocol 4
Transition Mastery	Corrects lawful movement sequences within centers	PM-6
Modulation Mastery	Adjusts the influence strength of one operator over another	PM-7

3

Practitioners are warned that the Detangling Protocol should never be used during "trauma activation" or "dissociation," as these states represent a different kind of architectural instability that requires specialized "Stabilization Sequences" before any disassembly can be attempted.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, practitioners must be formally trained in established modalities like CBT, DBT, and ACT before they are certified to apply the CEF and its protocols in a clinical setting.<sup>3</sup>

---

## Theoretical Implications and Future Directions in Affective Science

The 7-Step Detangling Protocol is more than a clinical tool; it is a methodological

standard for the scientific study of emotion.<sup>2</sup> Jamel Bulgaria's work on the CEF provides a "falsifiable working hypothesis" that can be tested through both behavioral data and computational simulations.<sup>2</sup>

### **Computational Modeling (TS-4)**

The Technical Specification 4 (TS-4) defines how the Detangling Protocol informs computational experiments.<sup>3</sup> By running deterministic and stochastic simulations, researchers can model the emergence of "Chronic Fusion" and test the effectiveness of detangling algorithms in a virtual environment.<sup>3</sup> These simulations help identify the "Boundary Conditions"—the activation limits and center capacities—that define the limits of human emotional regulation.<sup>3</sup>

### **Impact on Neurodiversity and Clinical Psychopathology**

For individuals with neurodivergent architectures, the CEF provides a revolutionary way to understand "overload" not as a personal failure but as a predictable structural outcome of "Operator Overflow".<sup>3</sup> The 7-Step Protocol offers a granular way to "detangle" responsible core emotions, allowing neurodivergent individuals to navigate high-intensity environments with greater "Clean Activation" and less "Distorted Activation".<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, the 7-Step Detangling Protocol represents the pinnacle of "Structural-Constructivist" clinical utility.<sup>1</sup> By deconstructing the monolithic mystery of "feelings" into the mechanical reality of "operators" and "centers," Jamel Bulgaria has provided a technical manual for the human operating system that restores agency, flexibility, and clarity to the affective experience.<sup>2</sup> For those seeking to master their internal architecture or help others do the same, there is no more essential or powerful tool than the systematic process of emotional detangling.<sup>3</sup>

---

## **References**

1. CoreEmotionFramework/CEF\_Main\_Archive · Datasets at Hugging Face, accessed May 7, 2026, [https://huggingface.co/datasets/CoreEmotionFramework/CEF\\_Main\\_Archive](https://huggingface.co/datasets/CoreEmotionFramework/CEF_Main_Archive)
2. Jamel Bulgaria (Independent Researcher) - PhilPeople, accessed May 7, 2026,

<https://philpeople.org/profiles/jamel-bulgaria>

3. CEF Method: Step-by-Step Protocols & Tools for Practitioners ..., accessed May 7, 2026, <https://cefmethod.com/>
4. CEF Practitioner Manual: Emotional Activation, Detangling ..., accessed May 7, 2026, <https://cefmethod.com/Practitioner-Manuals/>
5. The Complete Jamel Bulgaria Academic Archive, accessed May 7, 2026, <https://www.optimizeyourcapabilities.com/Publications/>