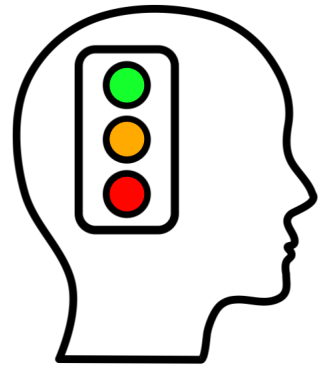


Better Conversations

“Inverted Traffic Lights” Three State Model

This is a simplified model of the interactions of your neurology, physiology, biology and your mental and emotional processes for understanding how you think, feel and act can impact how you communicate



GREEN state - good to go

You're feeling good and connected with yourself and others, and engaged with the world. All your emotional, physical, psychological, social and physiological needs are being met. In this state you can access the best learning and problem solving parts of your brain. Ways to know you are in a green state include being:

- Being curious and creative
- Thinking logically and rationally
- Communicating clearly and calmly
- Feeling connected and collaborative

This is the best time to be having all kinds of conversations from the most loving and appreciative, through to the most difficult and challenging ones.

AMBER state - proceed with caution

Here you might be feeling a bit disrupted, unsure and a sense of “not ok-ness” in your system. Amber state is mainly about your relationship with others, your social status and how you connect and empathise with others. It's where some of your different needs are not being met and is very much about your psychological and emotional safety. Here you can still think and ask questions, though your questions may be more self oriented. Common indications of an amber state include:

- Asking yourself questions
 - What are the rules here?
 - Is it ok if....?
 - Where do I fit in...do I fit in?
- Feelings of discomfort in a group or setting
- Not saying anything or talking too much
- Caring about the social order

Conversations happening from this state can go either way depending on if they go more towards having your needs met (green state) or not, in which case you might find yourself more in the red state.

Better Conversations

RED state - stop and break (and sometimes an instinctual go)

In the red state you're really not ok and feeling unsafe, be it emotionally, psychologically, physiologically or physically. Emotions like anger, fear and distrust can be overwhelming and you might experience fight/flight/freeze in response to these feelings. Also your body's internal monitoring system for energy, hydration, energy and pain might be signalling it's time to rest, eat, drink, move or take a bio break which can be an additional load to your state. Some ways to know you're in a red state are:

- A strong desire to run away or actually leave a room
- Raising your voice, clenching your fists or gesticulating with a pointed finger
- Feeling stuck or frozen - like a rabbit in the headlights
- An increased heart rate, clenched jaw, agitation in your stomach
- Change in breathing (deeper, shallower or holding)
- Feeling suddenly hot or cold
- Having an adrenaline rush

Conversationally it is the time to stop or not start a conversation.

A note about an "instinctual go" - when you are really under threat this red part takes over and makes some rapid decisions and actions in a bid to get you to safety quickly. Sometimes this is down to a genuine life threatening event such as a fire, or a falling tree and can be very effective in getting you to safety. Other times we can find ourselves acting without thinking and later realise that it wasn't actually a life threatening experience and feel our actions were a bit over the top, which is a quirk of being a complex human being.

Extra note: The traffic lights are inverted to indicate the different levels of our thinking and hence how we communicate and we can move between the different states throughout the day or even within the course of a conversation. Green is a higher level of thinking, red lower and amber thinking is ok and could go either way.

