

Session 01: Introduction

BOTTOM-UP **EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING**

6 Month Project: Before and After

- Think of a project you would like to see completed in the next 6 months by end of March 2026.
- Initial rating of how hard this project feels to you.
- In March 2026, whether you complete it or not, notice how hard that project feels to you then.

Ratings of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

- Exercise physiology term
- Many studies show music lowers how hard and tiring exercise feels
- Find your metaphorical “music.”
- 6 month project is to see if your “music,” being in tune with yourself, lowers your RPE.

Technology Readiness Level

- When developing an innovative technology from scratch, you can't just think of it and sell it to people.
- There are a lot of steps before the technology is ready for the public.
- I compare TRLs to executive functioning: starts in the imagination up here, ends as a product out there.

TRL (Tech Readiness Levels)

Finished product in the world

Experiment. Gather data.

Exciting inspiration in the mind

Ready to serve

Experiment. Gather data.

Inventing a new recipe



From NASA

User manual

- Even at TRL 9, products are issued with user manuals.
- Based on data they collected during previous TRL steps.
- “This rope is rated for 50 lbs.”
- “Store in a cool, dry place.”
- “Do not overheat.”
- “Do not submerge in water when plugged in and turned on.”

TRL for your brain

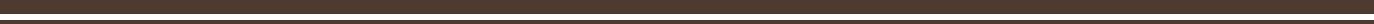
Before and After

- ◉ If your working brain is the product, what TRL rating would it have right now?
- ◉ Collect data for the next 6 months.
- ◉ What would the user manual for your brain say?
- ◉ What would your TRL rating be in 6 months?

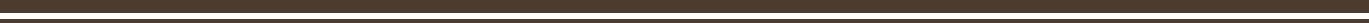
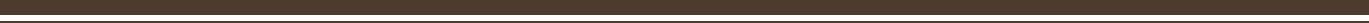
User Manual

- ◉ “My Executive Functioning User Manual”
- ◉ Start writing down observations on how your brain works.
 - “I can’t write on the days when I people.”
 - “My limit for interacting with people is 2 hours max.”
- ◉ Write down examples.
 - “On Monday, when I met friend for lunch, I wasn’t able to write the essay I needed for class.”

What is Executive Functioning?



Brain Commands



BRIEF-2A

- **Behavior Regulation**
 - Inhibit: ability to hold back behaviors
 - Self-Monitor: ability to be aware of own behaviors
- **Emotional Regulation**
 - Shift: ability to change and adapt
 - Emotional Control: ability to reign in emotions
- **Cognitive Regulation**
 - Initiate: ability to start tasks
 - Working Memory: ability to remember & stay focused
 - Plan/Organize: ability to plan ahead and organize things
 - Task Monitor: ability to keep track of tasks
 - Organization of Materials: ability to organize space

Why are video games easy?

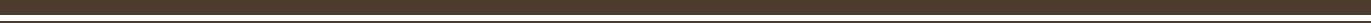
- You don't have enough “execs” to wash dishes, but you can play your favorite game.



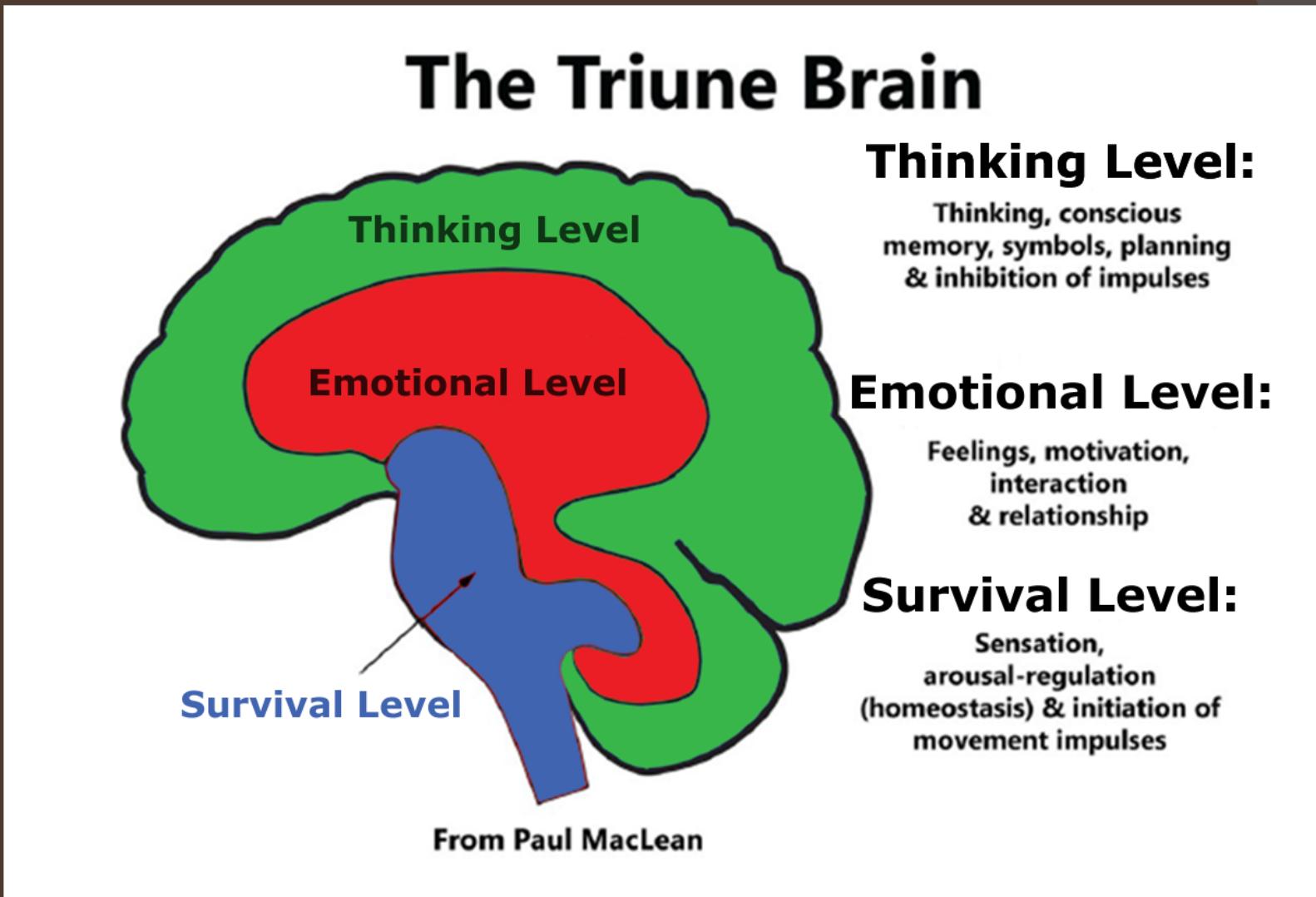




What is Bottom-Up?

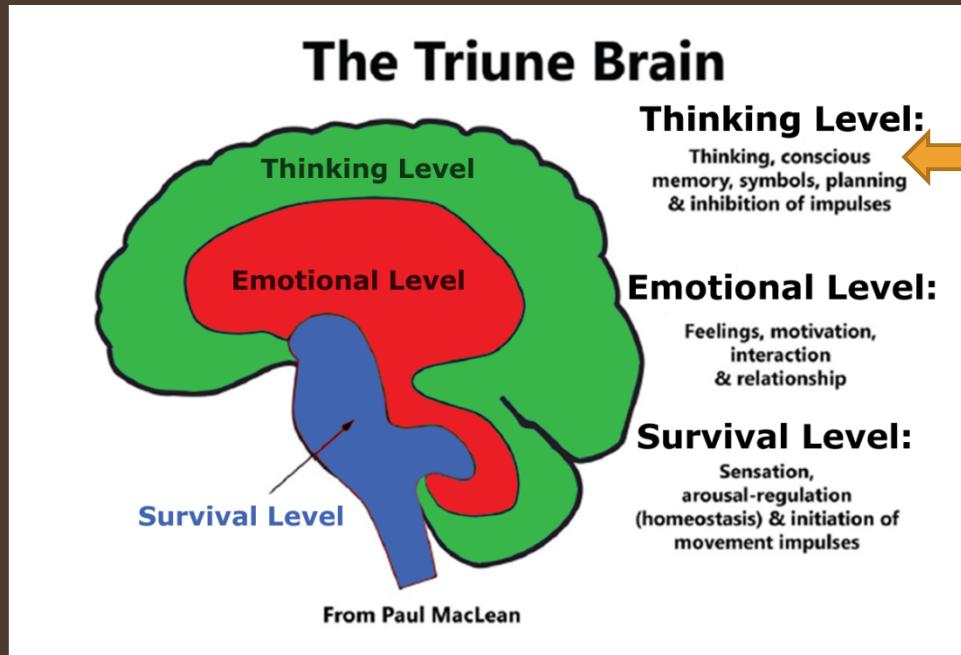


The Triune Brain



Adapted from Peter Levine, PhD: Somatic Experiencing Workshop 9/21

Top-Down Strategies:



Executive functioning difficulties

I can't:

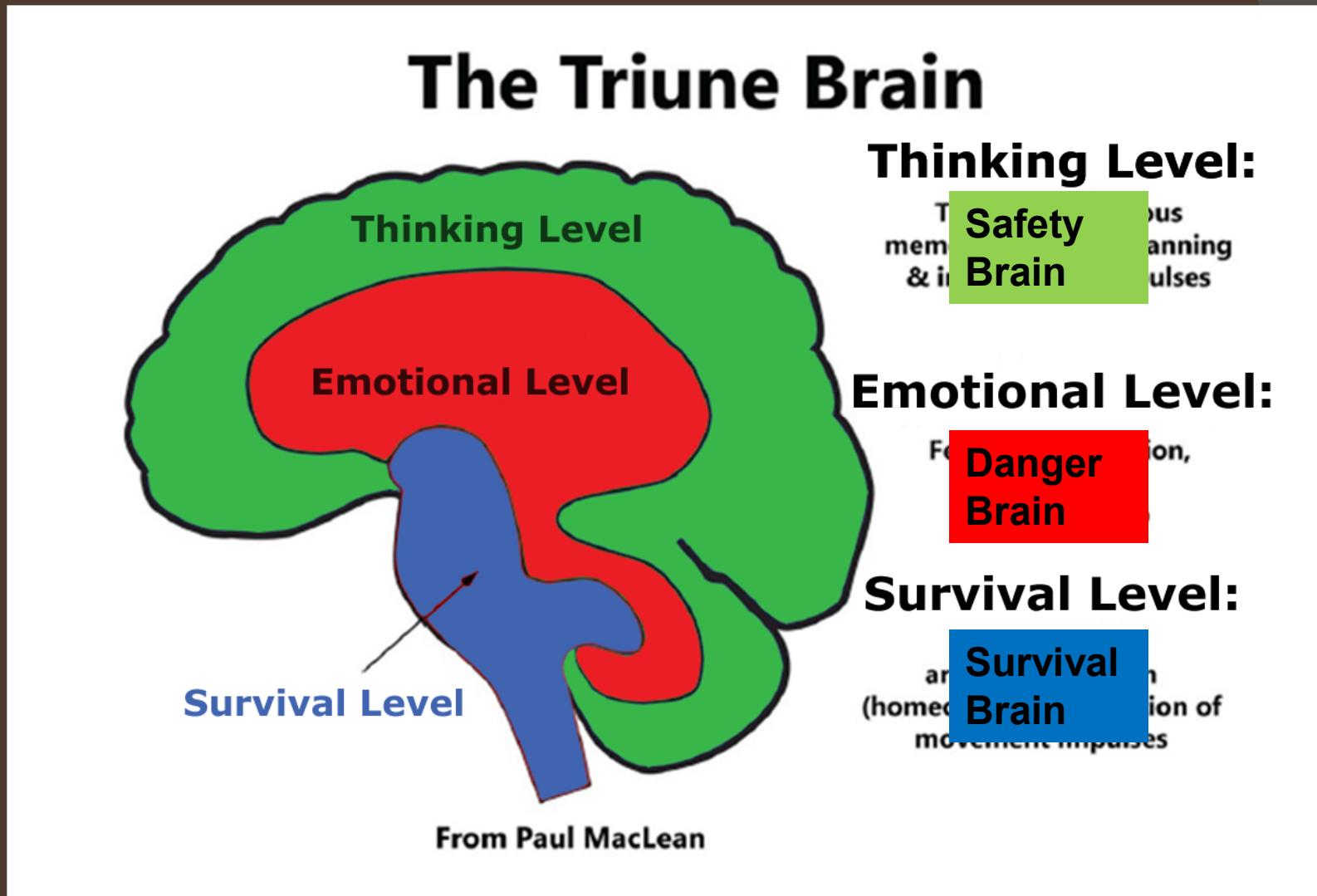
- Think
- Remember
- _____
- _____
- _____

Fix with executive functioning solutions:

- Think of what you need to do
- Remember to write it on a list
- _____
- _____

Do the executive functioning you can't do, but in smaller steps.

Safety: Prerequisite for Thinking



Examples of Survival Brain



The “death grip” of a drowning person

Thinking brain: “Let go of your rescuer! You’re can’t be saved if you drag them down!”

Survival brain: Nope.



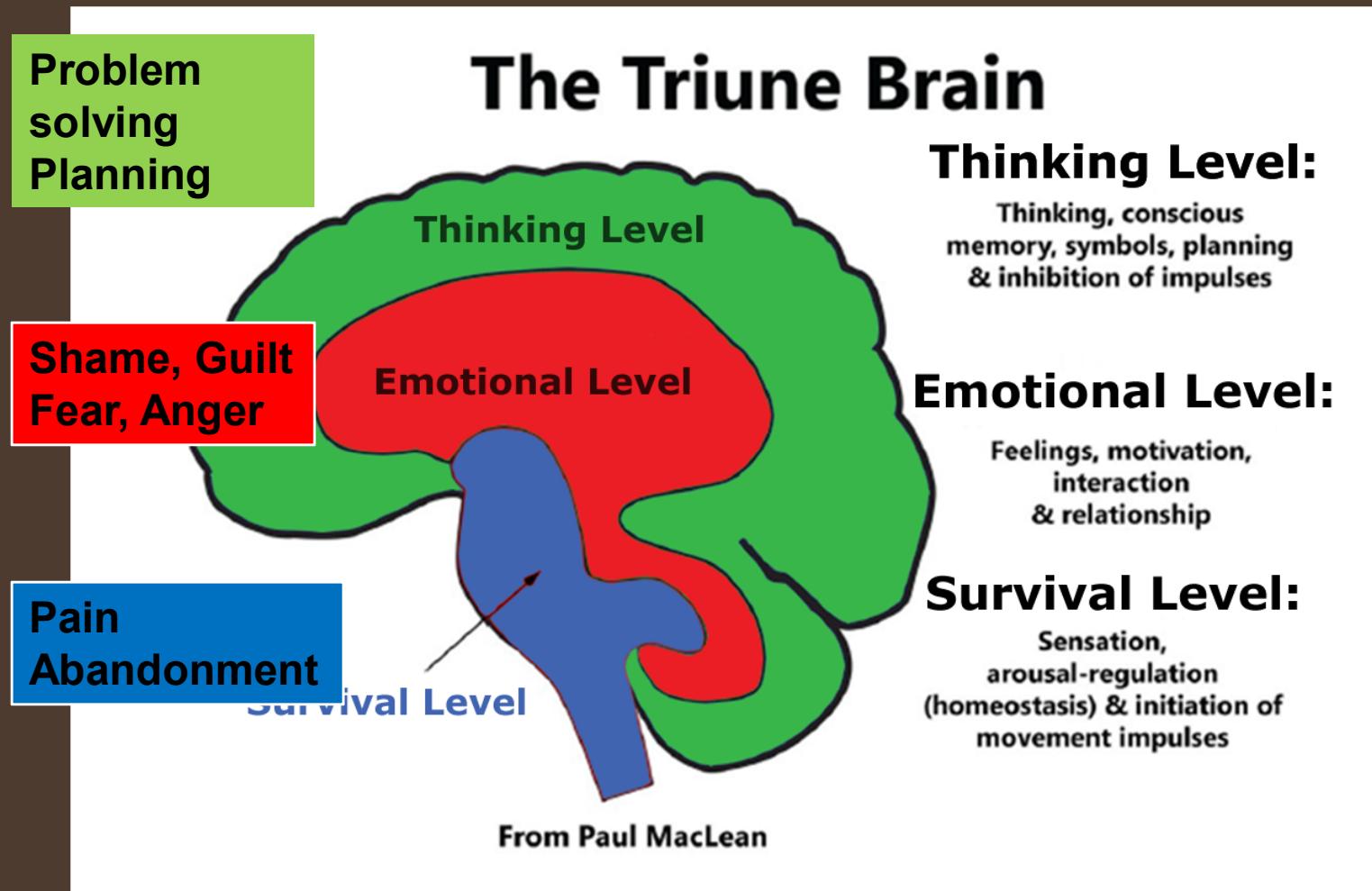
The soldier frozen on the battlefield

Thinking brain: “Run or fight! Don’t just sit there!”

Survival brain: Nope.

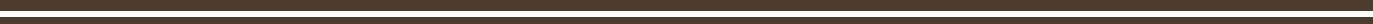
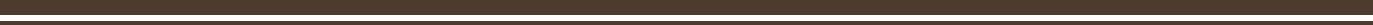
When your survival brain is engaged, you don’t have access to your thinking brain, your executive functioning.

Emotions that interfere with executive functioning



If your dog died this morning, you would not be able to work the rest of the day. And everyone would understand.

What's the Solution?



The Defective Mouse



Have you ever had a mouse that won't move where you move, won't click when you click, and clicks when you don't click?

That is how a lot of people feel about their “broken” executive functioning. They just want it to be fixed.

The Living Mouse



What if your thinking brain is not an object to be fixed, but it is alive?

Control vs Relationship



Objects:

They are supposed to do what you tell them to do.



Living entities:

They do things for each other because of a relationship.

ADHD + Autistic Neurotype Brains

- They are not objects made to work and obey.
- They are ALIVE!
- Flourishing grows from a relationship between you and your brain.
- Love is the ultimate motivator.

General and Soldiers Analogy

- Thinking Brain = General
- Body = Soldiers
- What kind of relationship between the officers and the enlisted personnel makes the team the best it can be?

○ _____

○ _____

○ _____

Horse and Rider Analogy

- Thinking Brain = Rider
- Body = Horse
- What kind of relationship between the rider and the horse makes the team the best it can be?

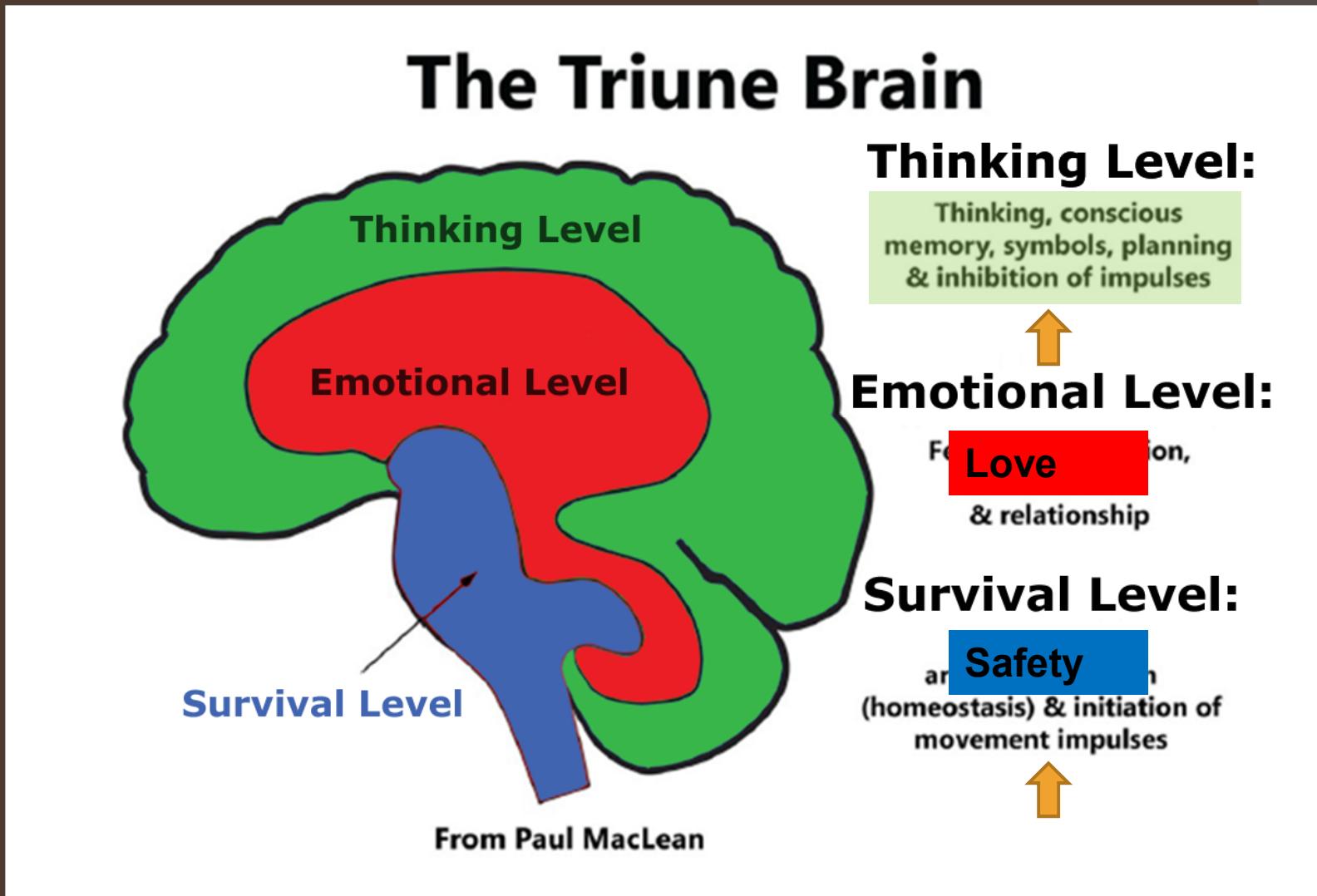
- _____
- _____
- _____

Solution

- ◎ I'm a one-trick pony.
- ◎ The one trick I know:

Love yourself.

Bottom-Up Solutions



Attunement

- ◉ Attunement is the word I will be using on the relationship you have with yourself.
- ◉ There will be a whole session dedicated to this concept.

Safety, Love, and Attunement

- This class is about how to love yourself, how to grow a relationship with yourself.
- In the long run:
 - if you feel safe
 - if your body / brain feels loved
 - if your body / brain feels listened to and respected
 - your brain will flourish and thrive the way it was born to do.

True Story:

- I needed to write an essay.
- Stare blankly at the screen.

- Conversation:

Me: What do you need?
Body: I can't think with all this mess. I need a clean house.
Me: But that'll take 3 days!
Me: [Goes back to staring at the screen]

- 3 days later:

Me: [Still staring]
Body: I still need the house to be clean.
Me: If you were my best friend and I loved you,
I would clean the house for you.

- Me: [Using love as a motivator, I cleaned half the house.
It took 2 hours.]

- Body: [interrupts cleaning]
I feel good enough to write now.

- 1 hour later: [Essay is finished.]

Summary

- 6 Month Project and RPE: before and after
- TRL for your brain: before and after
- Notebook for User Manual
- What is executive functioning?
- What is bottom up?
- The triune brain
- How survival brain and emotional brain interferes with access to thinking brain
- Relationship with your body/brain (attunement)
- Love yourself