What we learned from deconstructing the moment of contact in the sales calls between the physicians and the reps supports what I call the *Neuroscience of WE*. During their early interactions, the sales reps were triggering the physicians’ amygdala, a part of the brain that has long been associated with our mental and emotional fear state. By turning their meetings with doctors into a battle, the sales reps were activating the circuitry of fight and flight rather than creating in the doctors a desire to prescribe Boehringer products. Without realizing it, the physicians were reacting instinctively. They were closing down and protecting themselves from potential harm.

**STAR SKILLS™**

**BUILD RAPPORT**

**LISTEN ACTIVELY**

**ASK SMART QUESTIONS**

**NEEDS**

**REINFORCE SUCCESS**

**DRAMATIZE YOUR MESSAGE**

*FIGURE 1-1: Star Skills*
When We Lose Trust, We Lose Our Voice

the chemistry of the brain, they also change how we feel, how we behave, and how others perceive us. In a nanosecond we can move from being seen as a trusted friend and advisor to being seen as a frightening threat, a person deeply distrusted, because fear has tipped the scales that way.

Worse yet, when the amygdala goes into overdrive, it activates the limbic area of the brain, which stores all of our old memories. Once triggered, this part of the brain begins to remember other similar hurts and threats, and lumps them together into that movie I referred to earlier. Without our even realizing it, the moviemaking mind can take old memories and edit them into a new scary movie, giving our current
Resistors and Experimentors

If you are a careful reader you might look at the Conversational Dashboard and think that I’ve misspelled Resistor and Experimentor. These are intentional spellings for my use of the terms. “Resistor” is the spelling used for an electrical component designed to introduce a known value of resistance into a circuit; “Experimentor” is “mentor of the experiment.” These definitions represent how the Conversational Dashboard works. Conversations create electrical currents. Those that cause us to move into protective behavior are strong negative currents that trigger our primitive brain and cause a “flight, fright, freeze, or appease” response. By learning to mentor experimenting in our organizations, we activate a positive power that quells the brain’s anxiety and fear and activates our executive brain's energy and capacity for co-creation.
Moving from Distrust to Trust

Trust Attempts Backfiring

Brenda was unable to talk with her team directly and the team wasn’t able to talk with her about all the issues that were emerging, so the company created an “Onboarding Intervention” to allow people to share what was on their minds. The goal was to open a dialogue and get the issues on the table, yet there was no priming, no preparation, and no framing that would permit trust to emerge (more on this subject in chapter 9, “A Toolkit for Level III Conversations”). As the session evolved, it became clear that team members had made up their minds about Brenda—they had gone up what I call the Ladder of Conclusions™.

![Ladder of Conclusions](image)

**FIGURE 3–2**: Ladder of Conclusions
the message to the brain is to open up. When the heart pattern is incoherent and erratic, we feel unsafe, and the prefrontal cortex closes down.

Understanding these two patterns—heart coherence or lack of coherence—is vital to understanding how to get to Level III and how to get unstuck from Levels I and II. The heart brain is pivotal to understanding the Wisdom of the Five Brain Model, which we’ll talk about more in chapter 5.

When leaders learn to use the TRUST Model effectively, they strengthen their “BrainTrust” and:

• Create Transparency, which signals “safety” to the reptilian brain (amygdala)
Behind the neuroscience of WE is a model for seeing our brains not as one brain but as five brains, each hardwired to help us sort out and sort through our interactions with others.

- **The Reptilian Brain** informs us about threats (physical and psychological) to our safety (amygdala).

- **The Limbic Brain** helps us identify our friends and our foes and lets us know how to fit in; it is concerned with needs, emotions, and relationships.

- **The Neocortex** sorts through data from our senses, memories, and experiences, and helps us make sense of our reality—promotes understanding.

The other two brains work in concert, and influence what it means to be human:

- **The Heart Brain**, our oldest brain, reads the biochemistry of our bodies and enables us to translate the energetic and hormonal messages that arise as we interact.

- **The Prefrontal Cortex**, or **Executive Brain**, engages us with the outer world and the future, helping us grasp inner and outer truths. By translating current information, impulses, and biochemistry, it helps us make judgment calls, have empathy, and anticipate the future, what we call foresight.

Our brains are made to be social, so when we aren’t paying attention to our own tasks and to-dos, we are connecting with others—that is what our brains need. Next time you are in a conversation, let the power of your five brains give you insight into how to respond.

**FIGURE 5–1:** Wisdom of the Five Brains
What Does Level I Really Look Like?

Before we began our work on Conversational Intelligence at Clairol, the executive vice president in charge of Sales would stand up in front of the sales team and tell them what he wanted them to do: “We need to increase sales by 4 percent this quarter.” Then he would tell them exactly how to do it: “I am handing out our new marketing scripts and I expect you to follow them to the letter.” He was stuck on the far left of the dashboard in Level I dynamics, telling his team what to do. Sometimes he would venture into Level II, becoming strongly opinionated and advocating his position when resistance emerged. To move into Level III he needed to engage with the sales staff in “sharing and discovering” dynamics, which opened the space for his team to be included in the conversation, not just recipients of a dictum.

After he was coached toward a Level III conversational dynamic, this
On a large flipchart I drew an arc. At the far left of the arc I wrote “Resistor,” then “Skeptic,” followed by “Wait-and-see” in the middle; to the right I wrote “Experimentor,” and to the far right “Co-creator.” After giving my graphic a name—The ARC of Engagement (The Gauge)—I turned to the gathered executives and said, “I’d like you each to identify where you are on this gauge.” As the silence stretched on, I found myself tensing up. What if they didn’t take up my challenge? Then I heard a voice in the back say, “I’m sitting in ‘skeptical’; I don’t believe that we’re going to make any headway over the next few days.”

My butterflies disappeared as people began to speak about how they were feeling, with a level of openness I had not seen from the group before. After two days, the leadership team had generated numerous powerful insights into the company’s troubles as well as ideas about how to transform their culture. Over the next few years, this moderately successful entertainment company became the darling of Hollywood studios. Its business took a quantum leap forward, and within a few years the company’s revenues increased more than twentyfold. More
Leading with Trust: Laying the Foundation for Level III Interactions

safety and security. Many organizations operate in a perpetual state of distrust and fear. A fearful state of mind alters the way we see and experience reality, the way we interact with others, and how much we are willing to engage, innovate, and speak our minds. When trust is absent, we see REALITY with threatened eyes, and we:

- Reveal less than what we know or what is helpful to move forward
- Expect more than what is possible
- Assume the worst of others
- Look at situations with caution
- Interpret communications with fear
- Tell secrets we promised not to tell
- Yes people to avoid confronting truth

When we are in a state of distrust, the world feels threatening. Threats make us retreat. They make us feel we need to protect ourselves. We are more sensitive to feeling wrong or embarrassed, and we behave differently. High levels of threat send us into Amygdala Hijack.

**TRUST CHANGES REALITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMYGDALA HIJACK</th>
<th>PREFRONTAL CORTEX</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISTRUST:</td>
<td>Cortisol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we see reality</td>
<td>Oxytocin</td>
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<td>through threats</td>
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<td>and fear and</td>
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<td>close down</td>
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<td>Reveal less</td>
<td>TRUST:</td>
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<td>Expect more</td>
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<td>Assume the worst</td>
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<td>Look with caution</td>
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<td>Interpret with fear</td>
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<td>Tell secrets</td>
<td>Reveal more</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes people</td>
<td>Expect less &amp; over deliver</td>
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</tbody>
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**FIGURE 10–1: Views of REALITY**
sive routines that are always in people's minds as they come together to do work of any kind, yet they play in the background as the team process unfolds.

This is a superficially comfortable stage because on one level people are “doing work together,” but through their avoidance of conflict, real work is not getting done, and they worry about both the work and the relationships that are forming, hence the evolution of the team into the second stage, called storming.

The Storming Stage

In the storming stage, people have low levels of trust; they are often competing with one another. Fear of loss abounds, together with fears about who has power and how to fit in; just below the surface lies fear of how to engage and make a contribution, adding more anxiety to the way people process their experience. In Tuckman’s model, every group has a storming stage in which people compete for power and status, for the best ideas, and for position in the in-group.

At the moment of contact, our defensive routines move center stage, influencing the dynamics of the team and focusing the brain toward