

WhitePaper: Avoidance & Ghosting

When contacts cannot become relationships



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OrgIQ—Organizational Intelligence (Quotient)—is a framework that redefines how we see organizations. At its heart lies a simple but profound shift: to think from the perspective of the individual. Every person experiences their own reality, shaped by their network of relationships. Each perspective is unique. There is no single right or wrong.

An organization is the superposition of all these *Networks*. This is complexity. We can never fully model or control it—but we can give it direction and purpose. Intelligent organizations embrace this complexity rather than ignore or oversimplify it.

When we focus on human complexity, the range of possible solutions expands dramatically. Business practices and structures can be brought into harmony with the natural dynamics of human relationships, psychology, and social interaction.

Our manifesto is rooted in lived experience. We have seen the transformative power of genuine connection, individuality, and purpose-driven leadership. OrgIQ helps create environments where empathy, understanding, and mutual respect thrive—where people feel seen, heard, and valued. This sense of emotional safety is the foundation on which individuals and groups reach their full potential.

We believe in value over control. Control breaks perspective, creates overhead, and breeds mistrust. Relationships and trust, on the other hand, unleash extraordinary productivity and fulfillment. Purpose is not measured by words, but by results.

Join us in redefining organizational excellence. Let's build intelligent systems, embrace complexity, and make space for purpose and joy. **Welcome to OrgIQ—where the true potential of your people becomes the strength of your organization.**

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Avoidance in a Nutshell

Avoidance is the avoidance of real closeness. Everything avoidant people do — withdrawal, ghosting, irony, distance, independence, perfectionism, smooth roles — is an attempt to control vulnerability.

For these people, **vulnerability** means the same thing as being **unprotected**. They have had to protect themselves their entire lives. When someone wants closeness and openness — vulnerability — from them, it calls their whole life, worldview, and coping strategies into question.

The core of encounter is that the other person is meant *to feel how we feel*. That is the synchronization of the **Limbs**. When we make an offer for encounter, the other person can turn toward us or turn away.

Turning toward means: seeing, hearing, understanding, and touching. If one of these is missing, it is turning away. Then we are not there. Then it is not relationship. In relationship, I am with you. You, your existence, your presence have value. It is about mutually seeing, hearing, understanding, and touching. I am here. You are here. No evaluation, no judgment — only full presence.

Turning away means: using, transaction, defense, distance, or ignoring. When I use you, I want something from you. Not really you. Only something you trigger in me. And ignoring is the deepest wound. Ignoring means: “just die.” I no longer want to see you or have you in my life. When we do the worst thing to others, it means that we ourselves are in that worst state. We ourselves believe “better die” about ourselves. When someone ignores you, you have awakened in that person the memory that they see themselves that way.

Ghosting and avoidance are patterns of alienation.

Externally, they mirror the alienation we carry inside.

What lies beneath the defense? Often lies and limitations that were imposed on us, and that we then sell to ourselves as boundaries.

- ▶ “I do not deserve happiness (I am not worth it).”
- ▶ “If I am seen, you will see the shit inside me and throw me away again. I cannot bear that. So I keep you outside, under control. But if I see that you can look beneath my mask, then you have to go.”
- ▶ “If I am happy, something bad will happen. I will be punished for happiness, so I do not allow it, because otherwise others will have to suffer for it.” Here, I was not only told lies about myself; the entire accountability was shifted onto me as a child. A blame game whose victim I was as a child.
- ▶ “I have grown used to being worthless. If you now give me hope that I might be valuable after all, you remind me of my greatest repressed pain. And if you are wrong, I lose everything. I fall into the void.”
- ▶ “There was never room for my feelings. They were always wrong.” Or the ability to feel has withered completely because there was never room for it. Along with the suppressed pain, everything else was suppressed as well.
- ▶ “If I give myself to you, you will soon have too much of me and throw me away. So I lure you in, but never give myself fully, so that I remain interesting.” This is deficit thinking: because I myself run after the carrot, I believe others work the same way.

For relationship people, this is bizarre and boring. They want fullness, not poverty. You achieve the opposite. You still receive love and compassion, but they also see the pain and the incapacity for relationship.

They only see. They never evaluate or judge. That is only in your head. That is the real dilemma. Because you cannot see yourself with loving eyes and remain stuck in pain, you think it is the same for others. Fortunately for your happiness, that assumption is wrong.

In these patterns, we show exactly what we actually want to hide.

Part 1: Avoidance & Ghosting: What Is Happening Here?

Ghosting is not a new trend. Ghosting is a **relationship pattern**. And one that runs deep — biologically, psychologically, and often traumatically.

Before we begin, we need to clarify the most important thing: there are healthy breaks in contact. And there are dysfunctional, avoidant breaks in contact. They look almost the same — but they have completely different roots.

On the surface, ghosting looks like disinterest. But when you look more closely, you see that it is something else: a **form of inner overwhelm** in disguise.

“Someone who ghosts is not fleeing from you — but from what came alive in them near you.”

Like everything we do, it is a self-disclosure of our inner state. And that is what we want to understand. Why do some people have to behave this way, and why does it hurt so much? So let us look more deeply. Part 1 deals with the different patterns: how we experience them and what we can do. In Part 2, we then look even deeper beneath the surface. We see it from the inside and discover ghosting and avoidance even in places where most people overlook them.

What We See

Today, a conversation like best friends or lovers — and tomorrow you are not even seen anymore. Or you are blocked, and the other person has disappeared. Why would someone do something so strange?

And just like that, we are **judging**. We have skipped **understanding** and react from our hurt and confusion. There is a person who does not follow the standard communication protocol, and suddenly we judge. Maybe we even condemn.

So we take three steps back, look closely, and begin with **understanding**. And understanding does not mean excusing. It simply means seeing first and letting it stand.

What Do We See?

From best friends to invisible. Or from heated blanket to refrigerator: when the inner world tips and closeness stops. Also the slow drying out. It is only a few millimeters each day, and suddenly you are far away. Or we see massive changes in behavior: from soft, warm-hearted, and friendly to snappy, demanding, and thoroughly unpleasant.

And then there are all the forms we may not even notice in the individual actions, where closeness, warmth, encounter, joy, laughter, and intimacy are withheld. Each individual situation can be explained and excused. Taken together, however, they are still a drying out, even while the facade of partnership or family is maintained. The relational goal is then only to have someone one can hurt.

What Is Behind It?

All of these are forms of **avoidance**. **Ghosting** is only an extreme form. Even the manipulation that makes the other person break off contact pursues the same goal. I have to get out of a situation in which a closeness is emerging that I do not know. A closeness and appreciation that — from my wounded inner view — I do not deserve. A closeness that must not exist for me.

So either I flee completely, or I make sure that I am present only inside a shell and live in familiar pain.

The Difference Between Protection and Flight

Before we can understand ghosting, we need to realize that there are two kinds of withdrawal: the healthy kind and the wounded kind. Anyone who has experienced traumatic bonds, who has endured violence, manipulation, or emotional coldness for years, sometimes needs a radical cut in order to save themselves. This withdrawal is not ghosting. It is an act of inner dignity. And it goes hand in hand with clear communication — usually with countless chances to change course.

The disappearance pattern we are talking about here looks similar from the outside, but it comes from a completely different source. Here, someone does not disappear because the connection is destructive, but because it was too beautiful, too close, too unprotected. It is withdrawal from a possibility — not from a danger. And the background is neither conscious nor communicated. Precisely this “inexplicability” is what makes it so confusing and painful.

Avoidance — Mechanisms, Inner Life, Worldviews, and Ways Out

Let us make a concise overview of what can happen here and why. And if you have already experienced any of this, no matter on which side, then it is worth reading on.

- ▶ “I want closeness... but not the kind that makes me vulnerable.” (pull → fear → brake)
- ▶ “If I stay, I lose myself. If I leave, I lose you.” (double threat)
- ▶ “I do not know who I am when I am not controlling.” (control = identity)
- ▶ “I want to be seen, but not seen through.” (yes to closeness — but filtered and controlled, please)
- ▶ “I cannot say what I feel because I cannot bear it myself.” (risk of emotional flooding)
- ▶ “I cannot say what I feel because I was never allowed to.” (internally withered)
- ▶ “If I disappear, it hurts less than if I stay and it goes wrong — if you disappear.” (ghosting as preventive self-protection)
- ▶ “I leave you... before you find out that I am not enough.” (core wound: shame + deficit of worth; desperate self-determination)
- ▶ “Before my last spark of hope dies, better you die.” (there is only one anchor left, and we cannot risk it)

We will look at some of these mechanisms more closely in a moment. And I think all of us have already observed and experienced some of them, no matter on which side.

The Brain

Before we dive into the rest, we take a short pause and learn a simple model of the brain: Gecko, Limbi, and neocortex. The neocortex is our conscious, controlled thinking. Limbi is our emotional intelligence — everything that has to do with real relationships. Here and today, we outsource much of this to the neocortex. We learn how real listening works. But we do not truly do it; we only pretend. Our neocortex is busy, but Limbi is dead. We cannot see it, but we can feel it.

And then comes Gecko. Gecko keeps us alive. A quick little creature, but also quite simple. What matters is that all information received by our neocortex has already been processed by Gecko and Limbi first. They are much faster. They filter and interpret. And they bother us only with what they think is important for us. It is like the user interface of your smartphone. You see only a fraction of the data processed inside the phone itself and on the servers. And it is presented the way others think you need it.

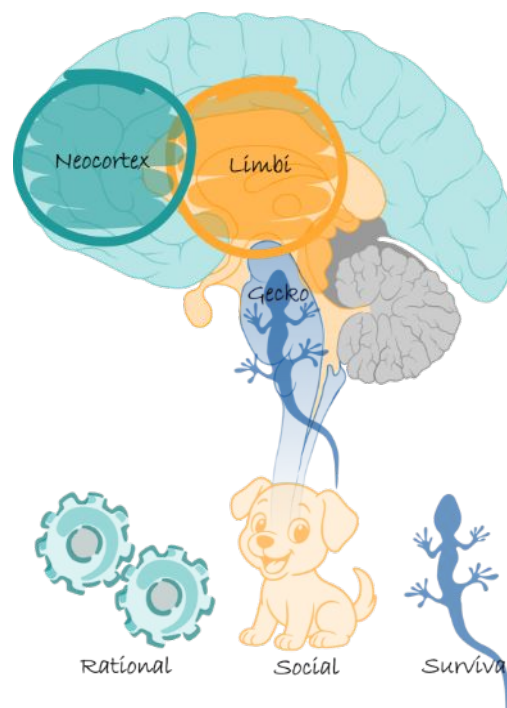


Figure 1: Our Brain in Three Parts.

Trauma

Because understanding is such a powerful tool, let us briefly look at what trauma actually is. We will need this later.

When elephants are brought into captivity as babies and chained up, they learn that they are too weak. They cannot break the chain. They are trapped. That is their reality.

When they are grown and could easily tear the chain apart, they still do not do it. They live in the “knowledge” that it cannot be done. That they are too weak and that the chain determines what is possible. They still see the chain the way they experienced it as babies. The perspective was frozen.

It is the same for us humans. These “chains” are part of our worldview and our beliefs. As children, we learned something about the world, and our brain is fairly simple in that regard. Somewhere between ten and twelve, it says: “We do not know everything about the world yet, but we know enough. We have survived so far, so what we know and recognize works. It keeps us alive. So we will repeat it for the rest of our lives.”

Because the task of our brain — especially **Gecko** and parts of **Limbi** — is to keep us alive. If it succeeds, the job is done. Whether we live in paradise or in a torture cellar is secondary.

But paradise activates different brain areas than the torture cellar. In the torture cellar, we are on autopilot or in survival mode. Gecko is in control. We see this in the freeze, flight, and fight patterns these people show. In paradise, we are in healthy and deep relationships. **Limbi** is at the wheel.

So our brain keeps us in the familiar place. That is all. That is also the core of trauma. We store something as “this is safe because we survived,” even though consciously we do not want to repeat it. That is why trauma does not necessarily arise when we experience something terrible and can process it with other people. Then the deep layers of the brain also learn: “oh, that was an unwanted deviation; we do not want to repeat that.”

Avoidance Patterns

Now that we have learned a little theory, let us return to what sometimes hurts us so much.

1. *Withdrawal after closeness (Ghosting / Silent Cut-Off)*

How it looks from the outside (A):

A good conversation, a warm moment, a sense of connection. And then suddenly: silence. Messages remain unanswered, encounters are avoided, the other person’s gaze passes through you or past you. From best friends and a radiant smile to invisible.

How it looks from the outside (B):

You spend a few hours with someone around whom you feel unusually calm, held, safe, good, alive. Something in the encounter gives you warmth, even if you barely register it consciously. You only notice: “That was a really good time.”

But in reality, much more is happening. A part of you — often unconscious, often untrained — receives something it does not know: a hint of real connectedness.

And that is exactly the key. Because when you part ways again, something happens that most people do not even notice: the warmth disappears. And suddenly it becomes visible how dark it is inside. How empty, how lonely, how still. That darkness is not new. It was always there. But it had always been the same — and therefore bearable. Only the light makes the darkness visible. And that is what becomes unbearable. The pain of this contrast is almost impossible to stand. So something happens that is logical, but deeply tragic: you avoid the source of light so you do not have to fall back into the darkness again.

Ghosting then looks like indifference, but in truth it is pain avoidance.

People do not ghost because something means nothing to them — they ghost because it means too much.

That sounds contradictory, but it is precisely this contradiction that drives ghosting.

“People do not fear the darkness; they fear the contrast that arises after they have briefly stood in the light.”

What happens inside: As soon as you part ways, the nervous system falls back into its own inner landscape. What previously felt normal — the emptiness, the restlessness, the cold — becomes more intense compared with the light that was just experienced. More painful. More merciless. The body registers this fall like an inner crash. And now the psyche has to decide: endure it — or avoid it?

Many choose avoidance. Not out of calculation, but out of reflex.

Closeness activates a feeling that is larger than the capacity to process it. Not because it is impossible in principle, but because it was never trained. It is like a completely underdeveloped muscle. The nervous system tips from openness into alarm.

“If I move into closeness again, I will experience this pain again.
So I would rather not go there at all.”

What happens in the other person: Confusion, self-doubt (“was I too much?”). Often anger and shame, because the behavior feels disrespectful. And at the same time the pain that arises when closeness and warmth are suddenly withdrawn.

Worldview / belief:

- ▷ “I cannot bear closeness.” or “Closeness is not available to me.”
- ▷ “If you see me, you see my weakness.”
- ▷ “If something matters to me, it will hurt in the end.”
- ▷ At the core: “I am not enough” or “I am too much.”

Possible resolution:

The perspective shifts from “closeness is risky” to “closeness can be regulated.” It takes **mini-doses**¹ of contact, accompanied by self-perception:

“I can stay without losing myself. I can be seen and loved,
even if I have never had that before.”

A small note: choose your **field of experimentation** wisely. **Your worldview will make you open up where you will be hurt, and flee where you could heal.**

That is the real drama: *you are now programmed to seek out the people who confirm your experiences of rejection.* Then you can always say, “I knew it.” Your brain considers this state “safe” because, after all, you survived it.

If you want to be happy, you have to reprogram yourself. The people who trigger flight in you are often the ones with whom you are safe and seen. That is where you can experience appreciation.

And where your feeling says, “she/he is right,” you should learn to meet them with unconditional love, because they are wounded just like you, only compensating in a mirrored form. You are perfectly attuned to recreate the familiar pain in each other. That is the concept of “soulmates” — or rather: “painmates.”

2. Fear of the Last Hope (the good man from “Equalizer”)

“I cannot survive one final disappointment.” So I will do everything to make sure that this disappointment can never happen.

Outside: As soon as things become meaningful, withdrawal or sabotage follows. People you actually like are pushed away before they come “too close.”

¹ For those of you who are curious, we'll explore this topic in more depth in the chapter on Plasticity.

Inside: The most dangerous sentence inside an avoidant person is not “I don’t like you,” like you,” but: “What if you really were good for me?” Because that thought opens doors that have been locked for a long time. And precisely this opening feels like the beginning of a disappointment they would not survive. That is why they sabotage moments that matter to them. That is why closeness is destroyed precisely when it becomes real. That is why withdrawal comes after beautiful days, not after bad ones.

This is not about hurting the other person. It is about avoiding one’s own hope. It is not the fear of closeness, but the fear of lost hope. Hope is dangerous when the biography so far has shown that everything good eventually collapses. And now there is only one spark of hope left. One last breath that keeps me alive. I must not lose it. That is why I must not risk it either.

The inner protection program says: *“You almost convinced me that my picture of the world is wrong. You almost reached me. Your love almost reached me. I am becoming soft.*

But if I open to you and then you leave, I will not survive it. So I play it safe and remove you. No matter what it costs. Then my protection remains active. I am unhappy, but it is familiar unhappiness.”

Limbi: *“Before I am hurt again in a new way, I inflict pain on myself — but in a controlled way.”*

Worldview:

- ▷ *“If I believe it will turn out well, I lose myself.”*
- ▷ *“Only those who are hard survive.”*
- ▷ *“I must not hope, because if I lose this hope, I have nothing left.”*

Resolution: Understand hope not as a promise, but as an experience in small portions. To do that, I have to understand that life is unfair and that I was unlucky. My experiences are not complete. Not “everything will be fine,” but:

“I am allowed to experience that there are moments that do not destroy me.”

3. Snappishness, entitlement, “princess treatment,” demands for money or performance

(The manipulative approach: because I do not want to ghost, I would rather be the victim. So I create a setting in which I am pushed away. That confirms my worldview twice.)

Outside: sudden rudeness, provocative behavior, a demanding tone, material demands (“give me money,” “buy me this”). To outsiders, it looks manipulative or disrespectful.

Inside: It is a test with a reversed goal. Not a test of whether someone stays — but of when they finally leave. Because when the other person pushes me away, the old worldview is confirmed:

“I am not lovable. The world is dangerous. It was right not to hope.”

If the other person does not leave, overwhelm arises: “I don’t know how to be now.” Because there is no program for not being judged.

Limbi: *“I want you to feel what I can never say: that I feel worthless.” Or: “If you come one step closer, you will judge me, and I cannot bear that.”*

Worldview:

- ▷ *“I have to prove that I am not good enough.”*
- ▷ *“If someone stays, I have no control.”*

Resolution: Experience that boundaries do not mean loss, but relationship. Contact that is clear, but not punitive.

Money or performance serves here as a tool for disturbing or destroying relationship.

Money or other forms of performance are *compressed time*. But relationships are oriented toward balance. We both invest roughly the same amount in the contact.

Love is unconditional; relationship never is. Relationship is what I give in the here and now. And that has to be coherent and balanced for the system.

Money or gifts are the fastest way to disturb or even destroy this balance, especially when resources are also unevenly distributed. This is not about mathematical precision. Whether the investment is 50:50, 60:40, or 40:60 does not matter. Over time, that usually balances out. But when it suddenly becomes 99:1, we have a severe imbalance. And relationship always dies inside first.

4. Sexualization (closeness through the body, but not through the inner self)

Outside: sex, yes. Touch, yes. Depth, no.

It is self-protection through displacement. In sexualization, people — often parents, usually with loving intentions — have separated body and soul through continuous warning messages. The message is: “Nobody wants your soul; everyone wants your body. So make your body expensive — sell yourself well.” But we cannot sell the soul.

That is why these people always come with a disclaimer, a price tag, conditions, or empty promises. This is not encounter, but negotiation or a deal.

And if you do not play along, they disappear.

For their price they will do everything, but for relationship they do nothing. Because there is no program inside them for that, and no price tag.

For many avoidants, the body is the only zone they can control. The inner world is too vulnerable, too naked, too unsecured. That is why things can become physical while emotionally nothing is possible. This form of control over other people can also shift into power. I replace my basic need for bonding with power, dependency, being desired.

Note: This overemphasis on the body makes the topic difficult, because we constantly look at ourselves with very critical eyes. What is supposedly our only value has to be perfect.

We humans are not made for mirrors (there are no mirrors in nature). We should see ourselves through the eyes of others and would discover that we are never as important as we think. But when we look at ourselves all the time, our ears are too big, our eyes too close together, our nose too crooked, our skin too impure, our hair always wrong anyway, our arms too weak, our feet too flat, our chest too small, and so on. No matter how we look, we will find something we do not like. Sometimes because someone once said something stupid about it. Or simply because we do not look the way we imagine ourselves in our head. Because there we are probably supposed to be a copy of someone else.

The irony: exactly what you do not like about yourself will be loved by someone else. Maybe precisely because of it, someone will think: “Wow, you are beautiful!”

Inside: I understand being used. I was always told that there is a part of me that others want to have and use. That is my value. So I look at supply and demand and keep the price high.

I am in control. And I do not want to lose that control. In the split, sex is controllable, but emotional closeness is not. The body may be touched because the soul remains protected. I simply do not understand anything else. That makes it frightening.

Limbi's wish: “I want connection — but please without risk.”

Worldview:

- ▷ “I can only be lovable through performance.”
- ▷ “If you really knew me, you would leave.”

Resolution: slow, non-sexualized closeness; bringing soul and body back together. Moments in which touch does not mean performance. For avoidants, this is often revolutionary.

Cheating

We will return to this later (see Consent: Really? Really, really? Or really, really, really? and Withholding as a Form of Withdrawal and Avoidance). Cheating is connected to the topic of avoidance. It can create drama — meaning it can itself be a form of escape — or it can be a reaction to avoidance, our “I want you to feel what I feel.” Consent: Really? Really, really? Or really, really, really? Withholding as a form of withdrawing

That is why we do not list it here as a separate point, because it can have different causes.

5. Self-worth as performance: “I have to earn value”

Outside: overcommitment, overcorrect behavior, hyper-responsibility — or the opposite: total rejection of responsibility in order not to feel closeness through “doing.”

Inside: The inner sentence is: “I am loved for what I do — not for who I am.” This creates fear of closeness, because “being” is too dangerous. There was no space for it. So I am always in activism or drama. Anything that feels like movement.

“I can only be valuable if I perform. And if I do not perform, you are not allowed to like me.”

In Limbi language: “I do a lot so you do not see me. (Only what I do. My activism and drama are smoke screens so you can never really see me clearly.)”

Worldview:

- ▷ “Me without performance = worthless.”
- ▷ “If I do nothing, you will leave.”

Resolution: relationships in which performance is irrelevant. Experiences in which mere presence is enough.

6. Indirect communication / emotional absence (family pattern)

Outside: You are functionally there — but never emotionally. You organize, plan, take care of things. But “I am here as a person” never happens. (Very often in families, because you cannot simply put the children up for adoption, so you withdraw only emotional, deep closeness from them, because that is what you cannot do or do not know. I can never be closer to my children than I am to myself.)

Inside: Emotional presence feels like a risk. Function is safe. Feelings are not.

Limbi: “I give you everything except myself.”

Worldview:

- ▷ “Closeness = interference.”
- ▷ “Feelings disturb the process.”

Resolution: emotional micro-doses. Two sentences instead of long conversations. Relationship in small drops, not in buckets.

7. Identity of unworthiness: “I do not deserve happiness”

Outside: People sabotage moments that could become good. They do things they later regret. They choose partners who do not treat them well.

Inside: This is not self-destruction, but consistent identity. “I am someone for whom things do not end well.” Anyone who feels that way cannot bear happiness.

In Limbi language: “There is no happiness for me” or “If I am happy, something terrible will happen; I can prevent that by always being unhappy.”

Part of this program is the avoidance of devotion:

Devotion is an endless loop of happiness. When we give ourselves in order to bring joy to another person (to fulfill their basic needs), it makes that person happy — and us as well.

We then receive something back twice. Because these are real relationships in which both live devotion.

Worldview:

- ▷ *“Happiness is dangerous; because if I am happy, something bad will happen and destroy everything.”*
- ▷ *“Contentment makes me vulnerable.”*

Resolution: allow happiness in the smallest doses. Not “become happy,” but “do not immediately push it away.” Understand that your experiences were not about causality. Your happiness is not to blame for something else, even if it may have felt that way to you.

8. Punishment / “I want you to feel what I feel”

Outside: ignoring, coldness, silence, sudden distance. Brutal for the other person.

Inside: a limbic attempt to restore balance: *“I cannot express my injury, so I show it to you.”* It can also be the pattern: *“I was hurt, so now I hurt you.”*

Worldview: *“I am not allowed to say what is inside me.” “I can only express myself through behavior.”*

Resolution: learn to name feelings before they are lived out as behavior.

9. Freeze → Flight → Fight — the three fear forms of avoidance

Outside: Freeze — silence, withdrawal, emptiness. Flight — distance, evasion, loss of contact. Fight — snappishness, provocation, coldness, demands.

Inside: It is always fear. Only in three disguises.

Worldview: *“I am safe when I am alone.” “I only survive if I flee.”*

Resolution: regulation. Small steps. Co-regulation through safe people.

10. The Core of All Patterns: Fear of Being Touched Inside

Outside: Avoidants seem independent, “cool,” untouched, bounded, free.

Inside: The inner world is as sensitive as raw skin. And closeness is not the risk posed by the other person — it is the danger of one’s own disclosure.

Worldview: *“My inner world cannot hold.” “If someone sees me, I lose myself.”*

Resolution: rediscovering one’s own basic needs: bonding → safety → self-worth → self-determination. In this order. Through relationship, not through performance.

The Moment Before: The Two Seconds in Which Avoidants Tip Over

There is one very specific moment that most people overlook, but for avoidants (avoidantly attached people) it is the most important moment of all. It is the moment just before they disappear. The two seconds in which their system decides: closeness or withdrawal. And this moment feels as if the inner world suddenly holds its breath. There is a brief warm impulse — a look, a touch, an honest word — and something in them opens almost imperceptibly. For a fraction of a second, the feeling appears: *“Maybe this time it will be okay.”* And exactly in that moment comes the tipping point.

And between the tipping point, which is the beginning of disappearing, and what we then see as the other person, a lot of time can still pass. Sometimes people tip during the conversation, while everything on the outside looks the same. Yet we will never see them again. Sometimes the decision happens unconsciously, but people still meet for a while. Or the marriage may even continue for years, only inside it is even emptier and all the walls are back up.

Because the opening itself is not the problem. The problem is what comes immediately after: the memory of all the moments when opening felt wrong. It is not conscious thinking. It is a bodily reflex. Something withdraws before the mind even understands what is happening. The two seconds between “This feels beautiful” and “I have to get out of here”² are the space in which the whole pattern emerges. Once you see that, you no longer understand ghosting as indifference, but as a reflex that is faster than any rational intention.

² Or any other tried-and-true protective or defensive mechanism. I'm taking back control.

The Science Behind It

Here too, we have different perspectives on what happens and why. Why do people flee? We will go deeper into this later.

1. Neurobiology (Nervous System)

Ghosting = flight/freeze as relationship protection

- ▷ Amygdala overactivation
- ▷ Vagus collapse (dorsal vagal = freeze)
- ▷ Fight-flight system responds to closeness as if it were a threat
- ▷ Cortical shutdown ("I no longer know how to respond.")

Core dynamic: closeness = activation → overwhelm → shutdown → withdrawal.

2. Attachment Theory

Avoidant-insecure style (dismissive-avoidant):

- ▷ Closeness is experienced as loss of autonomy
- ▷ Emotions are bypassed cognitively
- ▷ Self-image: "I do not need anyone" (protective claim)
- ▷ Relationship ≠ place of safety, but place of danger (loss, shame, evaluation)

Ghosting becomes self-regulation, not disrespect.

3. Trauma Dynamics

Ghosting is often a reenactment.

- ▷ Early neglect → "I am safer alone."
- ▷ Unpredictable caregivers → closeness = chaos
- ▷ Emotionally unavailable parents → feelings = not allowed
- ▷ Sexualized childhood → body as "proof," emotion as "danger"

Result: only distance creates safety.

4. Psychodynamics

Ghosting protects against:

- ▷ shame (felt inadequacy)
- ▷ devaluation (old experience)
- ▷ overwhelm (affect intolerance)
- ▷ fear of loss (preventive withdrawal)

Ghosting creates relief in withdrawal. But afterward, almost always emptiness.

5. Cognitive

Ghosting is rationalized through:

- ▷ "I do not want to hurt anyone."
- ▷ "I am under a lot of stress right now."
- ▷ "I do not owe anyone an explanation."
- ▷ "I need distance."

All of these are protective logics put forward to reduce emotional pressure.

6. Social / Cultural

Our culture glorifies:

- ▷ autonomy
- ▷ non-commitment
- ▷ replaceability
- ▷ hustle / “Don’t catch feelings”

So ghosting is socially legitimized avoidance coping.

Change of Perspective — How Avoidance Can Dissolve

When we experience ghosting or any form of avoidance, we feel rejected (the deepest of all wounds, because it is the deepest of all fears), and then our Gecko becomes active and we become the victim.

This has a lot to do with “I want you to feel what I feel,” but that does not help us any further yet. So, as adults, we move into inner regulation and look more closely. Because we know that understanding is the antidote to evaluation and judgment.

The “I want you to feel what I feel” is the basis of truly every social encounter. It helps us understand what it looks like inside the other person.

Still, as a standalone explanation it is weak, because models that explain everything ultimately explain nothing. So it can serve as a good reminder, but then we have to dive a little deeper.

Understanding Instead of Judging: The Inner Conflict

Yes, we are hurt — or at least irritated — when we experience ghosting. When we have opened ourselves, we are hurt and disappointed. That is okay. Still, we do not want to moralize, evaluate, devalue, and certainly not condemn. That does not help, and nothing changes.

When we begin to see and understand, we can open doors for ourselves and for others:

Ghosting happens when someone wants closeness but has no program for it.

It is a competence problem, not a character problem.

When you listen to people who ghost, you rarely hear cynicism. Most of the time, you hear confusion. A need for closeness that at the same time feels like a threat. A wish for contact that triggers panic the moment it becomes too real. No one disappears without a reason. But many disappear because they cannot find a place inside themselves where closeness is safe.

“I do not disappear from you — I disappear from my own inner world that woke up in your presence.”

A person who ghosts is torn inside. This inner world is often old. A mixture of early loneliness, old injuries, and experiences that were never fully processed. Trauma, in other words. For people who never experienced closeness as safe, it is a foreign place. Also because they cannot come close to themselves. And anyone who cannot bear themselves cannot bear another person’s closeness either. Closeness calls forth something in them that they cannot admit to themselves. They think — consciously or unconsciously:

- ▷ *“I want closeness, but closeness makes me vulnerable.”*
- ▷ *“I long for warmth, but warmth reminds me how cold it is inside me.”*
- ▷ *“I want to be seen, but please not so much that you see my inner world.”*
- ▷ *“I disappear before you recognize how little I am worth.”*
- ▷ *“If I stay, I lose myself. If I go, I lose you.”*

That is the inner tragedy: flight (also through control) feels safer than closeness. Not because closeness is bad, but because closeness is unknown. Closeness activates Limbi, and this part of Limbi has always been suppressed and rejected. Like a language that should have been my mother tongue, but that I never learned.

An avoidant person does not ghost the other human being. They ghost the perception of their own pain. It is about keeping their deficits from becoming visible.

Ghosting protects shame, not the heart.

The Bitter Truth: Ghosting Is Self-Punishment

So far, we usually see the ghosted person as the victim. But once we find a healthy distance, we can see deeper and behind it. We see balance or symmetry. If I hurt someone, then I carry at least the same pain inside me. It is the “I want you to feel how I (always) feel.”

And I always feel not enough or too much. When I experience closeness, it awakens the hope that I might be worth something after all. That creates the conflict: one part hopes (“I am valuable”), the other part knows (“you are worth less dirt”).

Ghosting is the punishment for one’s own hope.

People ghost because they cannot allow what this hope has triggered in them. Sometimes it is also revenge. Sometimes control. Sometimes power. But the core is the same:

I punish myself for having believed that something beautiful might be possible.

And I punish you for reminding me of it.

This dynamic is old, deep, and painful. It does not come from the current encounter, but from an old story that repeats in an endless loop.

And yes, people with whom deep closeness is possible are rare. There are probably people who may have only one or two chances for something like this in their entire life.

For avoidants, after an encounter with such a person, they will probably seek out only people with whom it cannot happen again. Usually Gecko will make sure of that.

So do people ghost only once in their life? No. It is about the feeling. If I believe that I deserve a certain pain that belongs to my worldview and beliefs, then I will reject anything that does not trigger that pain.

Ghosting: Energy Thief

Ghosting often looks convenient. Simply disappear, ignore messages, continue with life. In truth, ghosting is energetically brutally exhausting. You have to do several things at once:

- ▷ push feelings away,
- ▷ suppress images and memories,
- ▷ avoid closeness,
- ▷ construct excuses,
- ▷ convince yourself that it is “better this way,”
- ▷ act as if it does not matter, even though it does.

The more energy ignoring requires, the larger the inner wound.

Many people wandered for a long time in the belief that ghosting was a sign of independence. In truth, it is a sign of how little inner room someone has when things become close. It is an attempt to regain control — over the outer world, because it was lost inside. Nobody ghosts from strength. You ghost because, in the presence of another person, you briefly felt how vulnerable or lost you really are.

We may understand that the pain and cost of isolation are smaller
than the presumed pain and cost of closeness.

Ghosting in Relationships, Friendships, and Families

Whether romantic encounters, friendships, or even parent-child relationships — the pattern is the same everywhere. Closeness is experienced as too much. Sometimes I cannot flee the contact, so I flee the closeness itself.

This is ghosting on a quieter, more subtle level — and often the most damaging form.

You do not ghost the contact; you ghost the closeness.

In romantic constellations, the tragedy is especially easy to observe: physical closeness is possible, emotional closeness is not. Sex works, intimacy does not. Attention works, vulnerability does not. Closeness that demands no depth remains bearable. Closeness that touches something one has banished becomes a threat.

In friendships, ghosting often appears as sudden silence, avoidance, or the end of self-disclosure.

In families, it turns into cold efficiency. People talk about appointments, tasks, logistics — but never about feelings. Contact remains, but relationship dies.

“You do not ghost the person. You ghost the level on which you would truly have to see them.”

Note: The following insight will no longer surprise anyone: this ghosting of closeness — that parents were emotionally absent — is the main reason children repeat the pattern when they become adults.

The Sentence Beneath It

When you bring all the layers together — neurobiology, attachment theory, psychodynamic patterns — one sentence remains in the end:

“I do not believe I can bear closeness — because I do not believe closeness can bear me.”

This sentence sabotages relationships long before they begin. It makes people disappear who actually want to stay. It makes encounters fleeting, not because they are worthless, but because they would be too valuable.

Friendships, families, teams, partnerships break because of it. Every form of social bond.

What Remains When Someone Disappears

When someone withdraws, what remains first is a hole. Not every connection was large enough to leave a vacuum, but where something truly touched us, a silence remains that is hard to explain. We search for reasons, for mistakes, for invisible places where we were “too much” or “not enough.” The brain builds stories because it cannot bear emptiness. The heart sometimes believes them.

Here we again have the theme of emotional transfer: “I want you to feel how I feel.”

Precisely: not enough or too much. And I transfer that. The wish underneath is: I am seen, heard, understood, touched (felt!). So the ghosting itself is the person’s inner state: I have lost myself. Just as I no longer see you (or ignore you), I no longer see myself.

Behind it lies the hope of repair: because I cannot regulate it myself, my childlike (traumatic) hope is that someone will regulate for me. But at the same time I deny that possibility.

But when you look more closely, you notice: there is also a chance in this emptiness. Not to save the other person — that is not your task — but to sort your own perspective. Ghosting feels like a judgment about you, but in truth it is testimony about the other person’s inner state. It shows how much closeness someone can bear. Nothing more.

I do not want to be alone with my lostness and despair.

It is the principle of small children: “Feel me and help me regulate.”

But at the same time, the disappointed adult withdraws every possibility of doing so.

I punish myself and the other person.

That does not mean it is not allowed to hurt. It may burn, it may disappoint, it may touch something in you that is older than the current encounter. But it does not mean you have to fall back into the old lie that you are “not enough” or “too much.” Someone who has to leave because they cannot bear their own activation is not speaking about your value, but about their fear.

For you, this means: you do not have to become cynical, and you do not have to bend yourself out of shape. You do not have to run after someone who is hiding from themselves. You are allowed to have expectations; you are allowed to say: “This is not how I want to live relationship.” And you are still allowed to remain soft, even when others become hard. And to see the pain in the other person. That makes you gracious.

“The way someone leaves is their story. The way you treat yourself afterward is yours.”

When You Realize You Are the One Who Leaves

It becomes more difficult — and more honest — when, at some point while reading, you realize: “Damn. This is me.” Not just once, not just in a bad moment, but as a pattern.

Then the point has been reached where the story of ghosting stops being an observation about “the others” and starts becoming a mirror. And this moment is precious. Because it may be a new beginning.

The fear of closeness rarely comes from the present. It is almost always the nervous system’s memory that closeness was once not safe. That touch was connected with expectations you could not meet. That “being seen” often meant being criticized, shamed, or used. For some, closeness was also physically intrusive, sexualized, confusing. In all these constellations, body and psyche learned the same thing: closeness is not safe.

I remember several people who said in contacts: “Nobody wants all of me.” The irony was that these people themselves could not or did not want to give all of themselves. They simply could not see that part.

Then we live in a world in which we have to earn our value. Through performance. Through sexuality. Through function. A world in which bonding is missing — and therefore safety, self-worth, and self-determination have to be compensated for on the outside. In jobs. In roles. In likes. In power. Or in disappearing (power, control, injury).

If you notice that you tip inwardly when closeness appears — into withdrawal, coldness, arguments, breaking contact — then this is incapacity for relationship. [See [From incapacity for relationship to relationship capacity](#)] It is a state you can change at any time. Relationship capacity is a skill that, unfortunately, nobody taught you. Instead, you became a master at pretending. [See also Part 2: Avoidance: Beneath the Surface of Ghosting]

What has held you back so far is the belief that bonding is a risk you cannot afford. The way out is not self-accusation, but something that sounds banal and yet is radical: acknowledging that you are afraid.

Not “I don’t feel like it,” not “it doesn’t fit,” not “too much drama.” Fear. Fear of being visible. Fear of losing yourself. Fear that you will be dropped if you show yourself. Fear that you will once again experience what you learned at some point: that you stand alone with yourself.

The Spiral Back Into Life

How do we rebuild? Never alone. The funny thing is that other people have long seen us as an oak tree or a grown elephant, and find it completely absurd what we believe about ourselves. They do not share our old perspective or world-view. They see things anew, as they are now.

No amount of self-reflection can correct our worldview. We need other people who look at us lovingly from the outside and then share the current reality with us. Only then can our worldview realign — how we see ourselves and the world.

The way out is not a leap, not a heroic act of “from now on I will do everything differently.” Development does not work that way. Especially not where fear sits in the deepest layers. The way out of avoidance is more like a spiral than a ladder: you meet the same themes again, only at different depths.

At the beginning there is often something very unspectacular: **noticing**. Not just reacting, but registering what happens inside you when someone comes closer. How your body closes down. How your mind builds reasons. How you begin to plan how to pull yourself out. This recognition alone is already a first step toward self-determination, because you are no longer completely trapped in your autopilot.

The next step is small but decisive: **enduring**. You stay one moment longer than your pattern wants. Not until total flooding, but one heartbeat further. Maybe you do not immediately write, “let’s leave it,” but say: “I notice this is becoming a lot for me right now.” This is not kitschy “opening up,” but a first form of **self-bonding**: you stay with yourself while you are in contact.

Over time, you may sense that you need people who can endure this movement with you. People who do not push, but also do not flee with you. People with whom you can try, in small doses, what it is like to meet your basic needs no longer only through control and withdrawal, but through real relationship. That is **trust**. And trust in yourself — self-trust — matters here, because as long as you run away, you keep breaking it inside yourself.

You then no longer experience safety through distance, but through reliability.

Self-worth no longer only through performance, but through being meant — not needed, but wanted.

Self-determination no longer as defiance or defense, but as the feeling that you may help shape your life and your relationships.

“Bonding is not the end of your freedom. It is the beginning of a life with fulfilled basic needs.”

In this way, you slowly spiral out of the horizontal movement between different coping forms into healing. Away from compensation, toward a life in which your basic needs can again be fulfilled at the core. Not perfectly. But enough that you no longer have to disappear every time someone touches your light.

You ghost the closeness you cannot regulate. You ghost the version of yourself that you suddenly sense in relationship and that feels painfully unfamiliar.

And this is encounter: another person continues to like the version of you that you believed you had to hide your whole life.

For Both Sides

This text is made for both sides — for those who suddenly stand in the silence, and for those who flee into the silence. Both sides have more in common than you think: a nervous system trying to protect you; basic needs longing to be fulfilled; and a deep, often buried longing for real connectedness.

If you are the person left behind: notice what it touches in you. Let the pain speak, but do not let it judge your value. You are allowed to have boundaries, you are allowed to have expectations, you are allowed to say: “This is not how I want to live relationship.” And you are still allowed to remain soft, even when others become hard. And to see the pain in the other person. That makes you gracious.

If you are the person who leaves: notice that your leaving once made sense. It protected you when you had no other options. But perhaps today you are no longer that child, no longer that person from back then. Perhaps you may slowly learn that bonding does not automatically mean betrayal, but can be the place where you truly arrive for the first time.

But choose your field of experimentation wisely. Your worldview will make you open up where you will be hurt, and flee where you could heal.

In the end, everything comes down to a simple, uncomfortable, and beautiful truth: we get out of fear patterns only by learning to feel again. Ourselves. The other person. Step by step, a little closer. Not as a leap into the unknown, but as a spiral that — if we follow it — does not lead into catastrophe, but into something many people no longer know: a life in which closeness is not threat, but nourishment.

Part 2: Avoidance: Beneath the Surface of Ghosting

As I write this, I have many different people in mind. Moments of closeness and encounter that then dissolved. Sometimes individual conversations, first encounters where you could sense that everything might fit. And then the break. No second contact.

Sometimes there are close contacts over months or years. And the moment people admit to themselves, 'Yes, real closeness could arise here ... a first time someone sees me and does not reject me ... I want to take one step further,' the ending comes very suddenly. With the most interesting explanations and justifications. Sometimes also through self-injury and the shame that follows: 'Look at what I do — what happens to me — you deserve better.'

And sometimes nothing changes on the outside, and yet everything is different. We will look at that now, because what matters most is often invisible to the eye. So what exactly are this outside and inside? At least as concrete as possible when we speak about inner models.

Framework

For this we need tools. So we will learn a few very simple models. How are we built internally — what is inside and outside, and how does communication work? Because there are layers here too.

Layers

We already had the elephant above — the baby elephant. When the baby comes into the world, everything is usually still okay. I am in my identity: "I am an elephant" — or, in our case, "I am human."

Our identity also contains our uniqueness. And normally, while we grow up, the task of the environment should be to help this identity, this uniqueness, unfold and grow — in such a way that we become the greatest gift to the community.

The **self-actualization** of everyone leads to **community-actualization**.

That means: when we realize our personal potential, it helps our community — our pack — realize its potential too. When everyone becomes the best natural version of themselves, the pack, the system, also becomes its best natural version.

That is the plan. But it often goes wrong. That is the issue with trauma, or with the chains of the baby elephant. These are things we experience that, when unresolved, form an endless loop in our lives. That is the gray layer in the image: our doubts, our inner critic, our pain, our "I am not enough" or "I am too much."

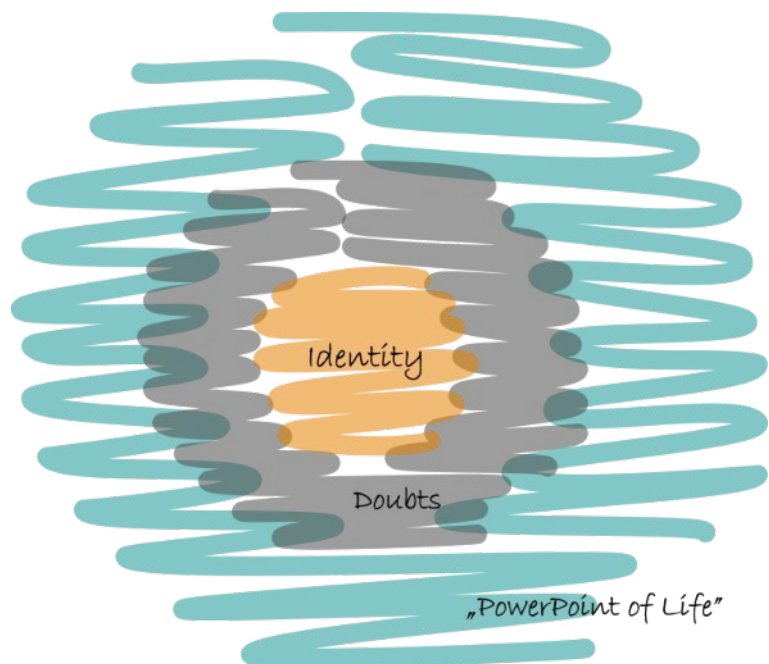


Figure 2: This is what a simple layer model looks like. The PowerPoint is what we show the world: how we want to be seen. We hide pain and doubt, and we ourselves have long forgotten our identity.

That then becomes fear: our Gecko is hyperactive our whole life and keeps us on "autopilot," or in survival mode. These are the people who function, but do not really live. Depending on how you count, that is 76–98% of society. More on this in OrgIQ_GeckoCheatSheet_Release_DE.pdf and OrgIQ_DSS-CheatSheet_Release_DE.pdf.

And when we realize this, we do everything we can to hide our inadequacy from the world. For the rest of our lives, we slip into roles and perform theater. The main thing is that we — the human being behind the role — are no longer seen and judged. In the worst case, it becomes drama.

The image of theater and role fits well, because we want to be seen at the same time (on stage), but we hide our identity.

Relationship Channels

Once we have the layers, communication (connectedness or rejection) can happen on each of these layers. Communication is the check of whether we are in a safe environment: “Do we still belong to the pack?”

Our **Limbi** does this continuously. That is the purpose of every micro-contact. Every sigh, smile, yawn, every bit of eye contact serves the purpose: do I see turning toward or turning away? There is no neutral element here.

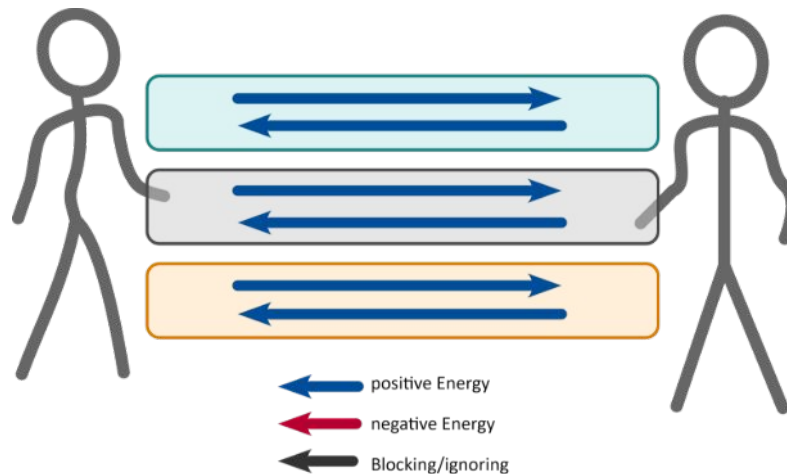


Figure 3: Communication on the three levels. Each arrow can be positive or negative (turning toward or turning away). The worst form is blockage/ignoring. That is the darkest form of negative energy.

The image above is absolutely ideal in a wounded world. It shows that both still play roles and have doubts and pain, but they see each other in all layers. They are permeable and encounter each other on all layers. That is a fantastic first step.

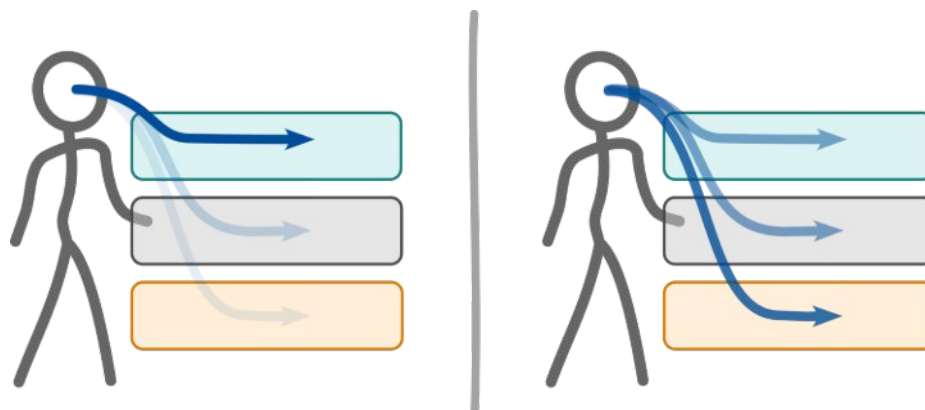


Figure 4: This is the core of change and encounter: we can begin to see ourselves. But for that, we always need others who look at us through loving eyes.

The prerequisite is that we can see ourselves honestly. That is what “love” means at its core. I can truly see you: the roles you play, the pain that paralyzes you, and the identity that you are and may become. And in this way, I can also see myself. (In the image above, from left to right.)

The quality and depth of the relationship I have with myself
defines the maximum quality of every other contact.

Note: Here we deliberately use an inner model that does not map directly onto the brain parts (neocortex, Limbi, Gecko). Ultimately, the roles are more part of the neocortex, because we consciously train them. In other words, we strongly steer (control) the outside perception of ourselves.

The other two levels are then more in Limbi and depend on whether Limbi is wounded or alive and active.

The ideal state is actually that all relationships run through an active Limbi and that we consciously intervene very little. For that, Limbi has to be on our side, the worldview has to be functional, and the Deep Soft Skills have to be trained.

The training is often the biggest problem, because it should have happened in childhood and then has to be caught up later. This is unnecessarily associated with shame. Since it affects so many people, it is more likely to stand out positively when someone works on it. The transition is fluid anyway. Our brain is not a switch that simply flips from A to B.

Plasticity

Let us briefly return to the brain: our brain is never static by itself. It wants to save energy, so it circles on familiar paths. That is what worldview and beliefs mean neurologically.

We have an image of the world that works because we are alive. The basic assumption of the brain is that there are many external dangers trying to kill us, but social cohesion is what is safe and protects us.

In today's world, it is exactly the other way around. We no longer have external dangers, but our social systems no longer work properly — because they are far too large — and therefore we are in social stress all the time. And we are not particularly well equipped for this scenario.

This is where the neocortex comes into play: we can steer this consciously. We can consciously learn and rebuild our brain for our current situation. In other words, overwrite the assumptions.

This requires energy, which is why our brain initially resists it — unless we give it a good reason. That reason can be pain (suffering pressure) or reward (curiosity).

The funny thing is that the quality of the reason does not really matter. We simply need a reason.

The next thing is repetition. Synapses do not form after a single use — again, the brain's economy. Synapses form after roughly 400 repetitions. That is why worldview and beliefs are so strong: we repeat "I cannot" or "I am not enough" a hundred times every day. Mostly unconsciously, but it still digs itself in and becomes the widest highway running through our brain.

When we then consciously say once in a while, "but that is not true," or perhaps even something a little braver like "you can do this," it is like walking once through a meadow. For the next two hours you can see that someone walked there — and then it is gone.

Very often we formulate these sentences in a way that goes against the beliefs or the worldview. That means the networks for the beliefs and worldview are activated at the same time every time. So we achieve the opposite effect.

That is why we need something positive that is detached from the pain. Simply an alternative that can establish itself next to the old highway without activating it every time.

When our brain is in joy mode, even 20 repetitions can be enough for a synapse. We should absolutely use that. And of course all forms of neurohacking are allowed: tricks that help us accelerate and simplify the building of synapses.

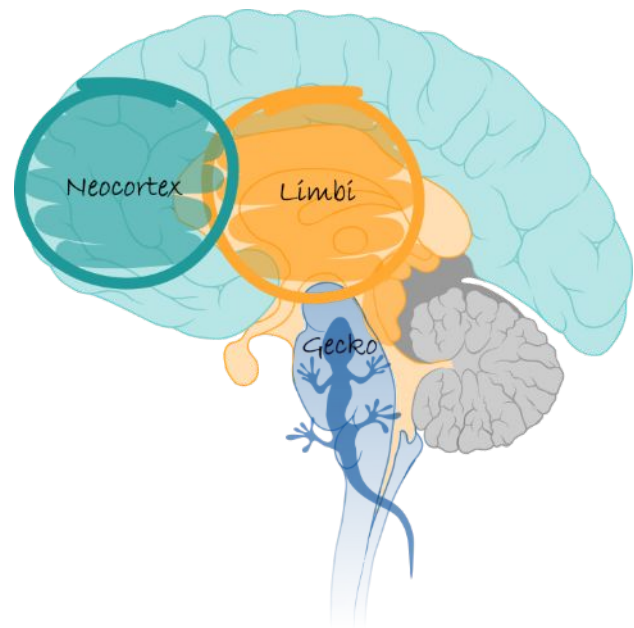


Figure 5: Our simplified model of the brain. Not perfect, but useful.

“Neurons that fire together, wire together.”

This works in both directions: we do not want the new and old neurons to fire together (therefore no “away from” technique), but that is why all the hacks with scents, breathing, cold water can help. We are allowed to use what works for us and connect it with the new goals and paths.

Then the new path quickly becomes a trail, a dirt road, a country road, and eventually a highway. And then our brain's love of saving energy becomes helpful again, because it dismantles the old highways when there is something new and economical.

Application

Back to our relationship with ourselves. In reality, most people stand on the left side (in the image above): they have no access to themselves. They spend 90 to 95% of their time, energy, and resources maintaining their “PowerPoint.” The pain is familiar and remains untouched, and the identity, the actual self, has long been forgotten.

And encounter happens only on the outside.

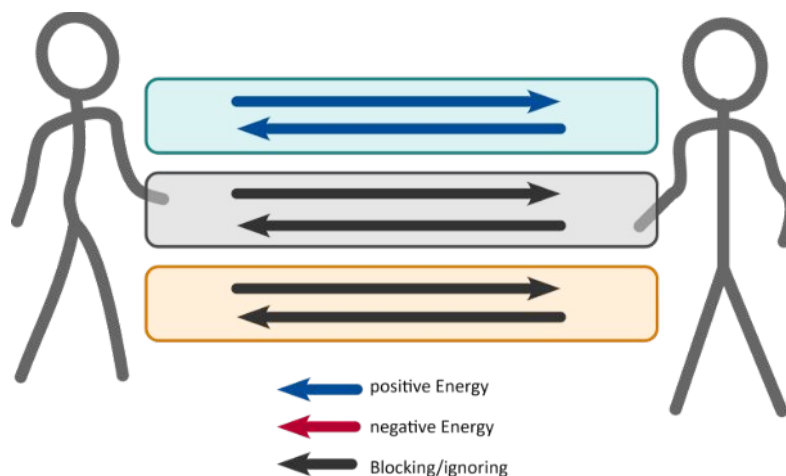


Figure 6: This is what looks “normal.” We have encounter on the outside, while inside everything is blocked — even ignored, which is the greatest pain.

This has several problems. In an encounter, we feel that something is missing. We are seen on one level, but ignored on two levels. That is familiar, but also empty.

The other problem is: real relationships are based on having a strong bond on the identity level. We see each other as valuable human beings. This basic value that we have holds us together. And on that foundation, we can also have a conflict on the outside (turquoise). We can have a different opinion. That is completely unproblematic, because the lower level is much stronger and counts much more. It always holds us together.

But if the foundation is missing, then we have to agree on the outside. That is also the principle behind all the bubbles we have. We have only a thin thread holding us together.

Social media — and even more so AI — amplifies this effect. We remain conflict-free on the surface. In doing so, we become increasingly incapable of relationship.

When we are stuck only in the role, it is about protection through control:

I want to control what and how much of me you are allowed to see.

That turns our whole life into a lie. Precisely because we believe a lie about ourselves. Here again we see the symmetry. And what we can now easily see is this: ghosting and avoidance can happen on every level. On every channel and in many different forms.

This is the absolute core now: that is why they are self-disclosures. What I show outwardly is how I see myself — or what I cannot see. Ghosting and avoidance are patterns of alienation.

And outwardly they mirror exactly the alienation we carry inside.

What we usually see is only the break on the outside. No more contact. Silence. Invisible. Once we understand the mechanism, we can see that the people who ghost outwardly are actually the most congruent. At least 76% of people do this on some level and in some form anyway — most of them invisibly on the inside. The mask is friendly; underneath, I am blocked.

Substitute for the lost identity

When we 'lose' our identity — it is not actually gone, but we no longer see it, believe it is bad or inferior, and hide it from ourselves — we need a substitute. We emulate an identity, almost always on the outside, as part of our roles. Everything we do with fashion, make-up, and body modification, especially tattoos, is meant to create identity — uniqueness — on the outside. Either as uniqueness or as compatibility, depending on our worldview and pain.

Some people want to compensate for the lost identity — outside instead of inside. Others want to make sure they do not stand out negatively and still belong. So through the compensation, we can recognize the basic need and the solution strategy.

Consent: Really? Really, really? Or really, really, really?

This brings us to a difficult and current topic: consent. Consent means agreement. But because we cannot look inside another person, the practical issue becomes seeking consent — spoken agreement — and this is usually discussed in the context of sexualization³. Consent is meant to create safety. And I understand that there are situations where this is well-intended. The problem is this: where we can trust what people say, we are dealing with people for whom the mechanism is not needed. *When people are internally congruent, they are also externally congruent and seek people who truly fit.*

Consent is needed where two people come from pain, know only using, and cannot trust each other. It is about preventing the worst excesses. Both are stuck in their roles, and everything else runs below my radar.

Let us look at what the idea is and how it works across the layers:

When I say what I **really** want, that is the role I am stuck in. Each role will have a different answer. That is difficult, and it can shift constantly. It is based on thinking and feeling. On that level, consent is extremely fleeting and can change all the time — before, during, and after the interaction. Not a good foundation to build on.

What I **really, really** want is what my trauma patterns do and choose. This is worldview and belief system. On this level, I may say things — but above all do things — that completely bypass the role. Because this level determines what reaches my consciousness in the first place.

So through my actions I can create a reality that completely bypasses my conscious awareness. It is not even self-deception; it is simply filtered by my brain. I create my own drama because it is my program — my worldview.

What I **really, really, really** want is my identity. That is the core I have lost contact with. And when someone sees it and awakens it, my heart feels warm — but because I have no access to it myself, I will forbid everyone else access to it as well.

The problem with consent and consent-seeking is this: if I do not know which layer the other person is communicating from — how many 'reallys' are we talking about? — then I cannot trust the answer. If it is only the role or the pain, layer 1 or 2, then using or self-injury can happen.

So the desired effect of consent cannot actually occur, because people are incongruent and can do the wrong things for the wrong reasons. Communication on the outside remains unsafe. I cannot trust that the person is truly saying 'yes' for the right reason. That is why their opinion and evaluation can change at any time: before, during, and afterward.

³ It would make sense to apply this to all areas of life, because anything can be intrusive and trigger the same internal effect. The fact that it is mostly framed around sexual contact creates and intensifies sexualization. Sexualization is the separation of the sexual function from the rest of the person. In other words: an inner split.

Effect

Consent is the airbag. A safety net meant to protect us from being overruled by others. We all want the airbag, but we never want to experience it deploying. So the focus should be on connectedness, not on the minimum.

And of course consent is embedded in devotion. Obviously. A clear, joyful yes to each other. We are then so far beyond the consent question that it is no longer the topic. In the image, it means: we drive so well that the airbag never deploys. I also do not need to ask every three minutes whether you are still breathing.

That is what we are looking for: the safety that we can do relationship, that devotion is a joy, and that we also know we choose people who approach it the same way we do. Because yes, if the airbag keeps deploying, then your driving style is the issue. And that can be worked on. A 'driving course.'

Side effects

The consent-seeking approach has side effects. The core critique is that we focus on the airbag and the safety net — on the absolute minimum. In doing so, we lose the image of what we truly want and what is actually good for us. The focus becomes: 'I drive in a way that just barely avoids triggering the airbag.' Not a good driving style.

And this minimum is exactly incapacity for relationship, situationship, transactional using. We stay with the painkiller instead of taking the medicine. And if we take painkillers permanently, the situation gets worse.

The focus on this minimum, on the lowest form of contact, also reinforces sexualization. We create the split between body and soul; we implicitly say that closeness, intimacy, and encounter are dangerous and unwanted. That is the opposite of how we function. In sexualization, we need a good reason for touch. It becomes something to overcome. It reinforces the view that every touch is sexually charged, which also means that I use 'touch' only as a transaction and instrument of control, not out of genuine joy.

It cements the victim role of women. That is surely well-intended, but it turns them into objects again. To leave the object role behind, we must also see women as active agents. That includes making female forms of violence visible. Which means we need perspectives for all of us.

A ghosting story involving self-injury and consent

So let us look at a story that happens with surprising regularity.

We move from the sincerely meant 'I would do anything for you' to radical self-injury the following week, then to shame — 'I am so unworthy' — and finally into speechlessness from shame: ghosting.

A and B meet. And there is contact on the identity level. A is already there, and B feels something and says, 'Wow, I would never have dared to dream of this.' That leads to 'I would do anything for you' and 'I will stay forever.' Completely convinced, and sincerely meant. Because A knows B's story, A clearly says that it is surely meant sincerely, but that the patterns — the roles and the pain — will work against it. The feeling right now is honest, but it is not self-running. Feelings last 90 seconds. The attempt was to bring the unconscious into consciousness and prepare for it.

And then it happens as, sadly, it almost has to happen. While the upper layer — and actually also the deepest one, because we now know the split: I want closeness, but I do not know it and cannot do it — says 'I want this,' the pain layer goes and stages the break. One week later, B meets C and D in order to be hurt. The self-injury was staged and outsourced. B creates an environment in which B is abused. C and D do what B says, but afterward B can say, 'Yes, but it was supposed to feel different,' withdraw consent, and present as the victim.

In doing so, B — or B's pain layer — created exactly the feeling B *really, really* wanted.

Really, really, really — on the identity level — B wanted A. But that was foreign and unfamiliar. Shame — 'I am a mistake' — is a familiar feeling. So B, with involuntary help from C and D, creates the familiar shame in order to say to A: 'Look what worthless dirt I am. You deserve better.'

In this story we see how complex all these themes are — and yet how clear and simple the basic patterns are.

From incapacity for relationship to relationship capacity

When incapacity for relationship is diagnosed, many people believe it is a final verdict, another ‘that is just how I am.’ Another area in which I am a mistake.

But that is wrong and not helpful.

It only comes from the habit that we are inadequate somewhere and then learn a role so no one will criticize us any more.

Incapacity for relationship only means: I have not learned it yet. It is not a malfunction; it is a missing skill — a learnable capacity that can be learned like anything else.

Whether you compare it to a language or to an exercise for building muscle does not matter. What matters is that you see it as something shapeable. Relationship capacity as ‘skill development.’ Like all Deep Soft Skills, it was neglected in all of us. On the outside, we always had to act as if we could already do everything. But starting with internal emotional regulation, we never had models or guidance. We were given pacifiers and food to distract us. Later we were given pressure so we would function. Instead of internal emotional regulation, we all flee into countless forms of external emotional regulation.

Comparison: imagine you are born with two healthy legs. But your parents know that walking is dangerous. A lot can happen. So from the very beginning, they put you in a wheelchair. Well-intended. Safer. You cannot fall.

But when you later realize that the wheelchair limits you quite a lot, and you want to learn to walk with your legs, it will not work right away. Not because the legs are broken, but because the muscles were never developed. And that can be changed. It will take a little while, but then it will work beautifully.

Inner clarity: much of what we sell as boundaries is control. I want power over the other person, but above all I do not want to show vulnerability. No crack in my armor, my mask, my facade.

Alongside protection, there is also the idea that comes from one’s own value system: as long as I do not give myself to you, you will keep chasing me. So avoidance can also be a hook. We have to see these things in ourselves and let them go.

Withholding as a form of withdrawing

Avoidance, or emotionally withdrawing, can also have subtle forms. One of them is withholding things.

As we learned above, every encounter offers only two possible responses: turning toward or turning away.

We feel these forms directly. As the person sighing, I notice whether you turn away or ignore me. Very few people draw the right conclusions from it, but we feel it. At least our **Limbi** feels it. And if it is still alive or active, we will be hurt.

If our **Limbi** has long since arrived in destruction, then it becomes only an incentive for the next setback. That is why friendly reactions on the outside can be so dysfunctional. I withdraw, let the other person starve emotionally, and on the rational level I can always say: ‘But what is wrong with you? I did not do anything.’

And we cannot grasp it, because **Limbi** has no language and we are not trained on that level — neither in perception nor in communication.

That is the core of ‘work to rule.’

But we can make it even more subtle by not doing things we could do — things we would do if we were turning toward the other person. So withholding joy is already turning away.

Of course, this is so subtle that it cannot be proven. It cannot really be debated. And yet we know it, and both people feel it.

This is again the link to continuous consent-seeking: we make withholding and non-commitment the new normal. We withhold safety, devotion, and interest in ourselves and our basic needs.

Our **Limbi** sees the refusal of connection as betrayal, because that is what it is. It is turning away. And turning away in a relationship means: I am not building trust. And the opposite of trust is betrayal. Full stop. From either side.

Even though it is a sensitive topic, this is the best point to talk about it: whether in sex, conversation, or intimacy, refusal is like cheating.

Before we enter this, a disclaimer: by refusal, I mean rejecting the need, not rejecting a specific wish. So it is absolutely okay to say, 'Hey, I would like to talk with you, but give me ten more minutes. You matter to me, but I need a moment right now.' We are not remote-controlled robots. Of course we can find countless examples of control or manipulation through emotional coercion. In a dysfunctional environment, anything can be abused.

So back to the thesis: refusing is like cheating. You may now say, 'Excuse me? Are you serious? Those two things have nothing to do with each other.'

And of course you are right, because technically they are two completely different things. What interests us, though, is this: what happens on the inside?

And exactly there, there is no difference. Abuse has two faces: take food as an example again. I can overfeed you — force you — or I can let you starve. Both create the same inner pain, but from the outside they look completely different.

One is active violence; the other I can sell to myself and others as harmless: 'I am not doing anything.'

This is where our language tricks us. For many forms of violence, we have clear words. But for withholding, for not-turning-to-ward, for refusing connection, we often have no language at all. And because we cannot name it, we can easily talk it away.

We see this, too, in the countless microaggressions where I withhold affection, attention, and closeness to punish the other person—or to vent my frustration—or to exert power. In these dysfunctional patterns, we use the other person as an external means of emotional regulation. This is, once again, the "I want you to feel the way I feel." I dump my emotional pain onto the other person.

Back to rejection/cheating. We (our limbic system) evaluate relationships based on the worst moment—the breach of trust. And in a relationship, we can only turn toward or turn away. Turning away takes the form of negative action (such as cheating) or simply ignoring (rejection). What hurts us in both cases is that we previously lived under the assumption that we matter. And that sense of importance is taken away from us—even if it's only a temporary shift in priorities. Nevertheless, from that point on, we know that at any time, someone or something else can be more important than us. That is the core of the pain. We're not secure. We're not in a relationship I can trust.

That's okay in a casual relationship. If both parties are keeping things casual, then I know I can't expect anything. When we build a relationship, we take on responsibility. Love is unconditional. A relationship never is. A relationship comes with responsibility for one another. That's why: I can only expect exclusivity to the extent that I show commitment. 3% commitment = 3% exclusivity.

If we have a relationship based on ongoing consensus-building, then the focus is on me and my feelings. I look inward at myself and my pain. I don't take responsibility for others; I'm not in a relationship, but rather have a loose, non-committal connection. The point is for the other person to serve my feelings.

Of course, everyone is free to choose that, but it's a shame because we're robbing ourselves. It stems from pain and keeps us stuck there, because our basic need for connection is constantly being violated. Hurt begets hurt. So from one instance of hurt, only more hurt can come. And hurt always stems from hurt. That's why it's so important to understand this cycle and then break it—or reverse it.

Relationships are based on the promise and the assumption that I will always turn to you. Commitment means that your needs are just as important to me as my own. And vice versa.

If I come from a world of disappointed intimacy, then even the thought of commitment—of a connection in which I give up control, my walls, my armor, and my protection—sends me into a panic.

I've had to protect myself my whole life, and now I'm supposed to put myself out there completely defenseless?

Behind this lies the story of the baby elephant or the seedling. There was a time when I depended on protection. But in my mind, I'm still stuck there. I'm frozen in that time. My reality is still the same as it was back then.

But now I am the oak tree or the great elephant. I no longer need that protection. Because I am strong. Because vulnerability simply means that I am so strong—so secure in my identity—that I can reveal myself.

Part 2: Avoidance: Beneath the Surface of Ghosting

Behind the wall, I cannot imagine closeness and openness. I always want to have that wall between myself and others. But with the wall as protection, I've also built myself a prison within my own vulnerability. And the only way out of alienation is connection.

As long as we see only our vulnerability, we haven't yet understood our prison. That's the first shift in perspective. The second is that you can come to understand your true strength.

Visualization

Now we're experts on avoidance. And that's why we're taking another look at it. Let's get a sense of how it works on the inside. And in a little more detail than we did with the rat race.

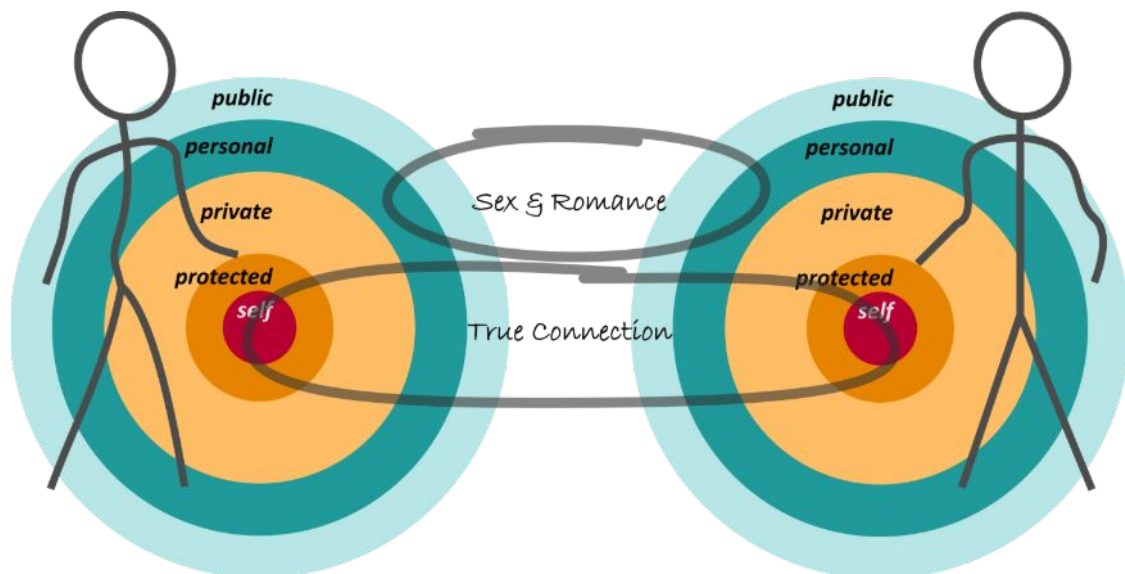


Figure 7: This is what harmonious (symmetrical) contacts look like. Either the same surface level or the same depth on both sides.

Our model is now a simple onion model. An onion. And it's all about simple layers: how I present myself in public, what's personal, my private side, genuine trust, and then my core—my identity.

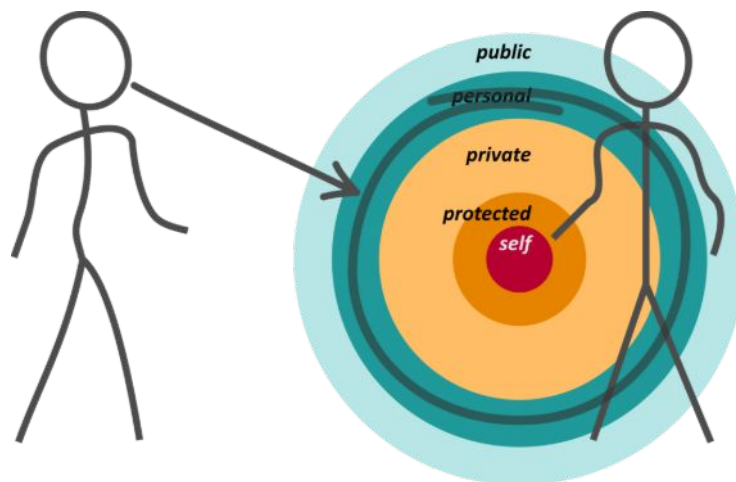


Figure 8: Here we see the personal perception boundary as the gray circle. Up to that point, everything is okay.

In every contact, perception is at stake. I want to be seen, heard, understood, and touched. And that also includes: 'I want you to feel how I feel.' That is part of understanding. I can only understand you if I can also feel you. When I am authentic and congruent, I show myself congruently across all layers. I am visible to you, but also to myself.

But as we have learned, this is true for only 2% of people. The others have a certain point below which they do not look themselves, and below which no one else is supposed to look either.

And now we reach the point that triggers our avoidance. We meet someone who looks deeper into us. Not to annoy us, not to scare or hurt us. Quite the opposite. These are people who can simply see well.

In the image, we see this boundary as the gray circle, but in real life it is not like that. The boundary we draw for ourselves and others is invisible. Even we do not see it as a boundary. For us, it is simply the end of the worldview. Nothing beyond it exists. The rest is repressed. It is supposed to be ignored.

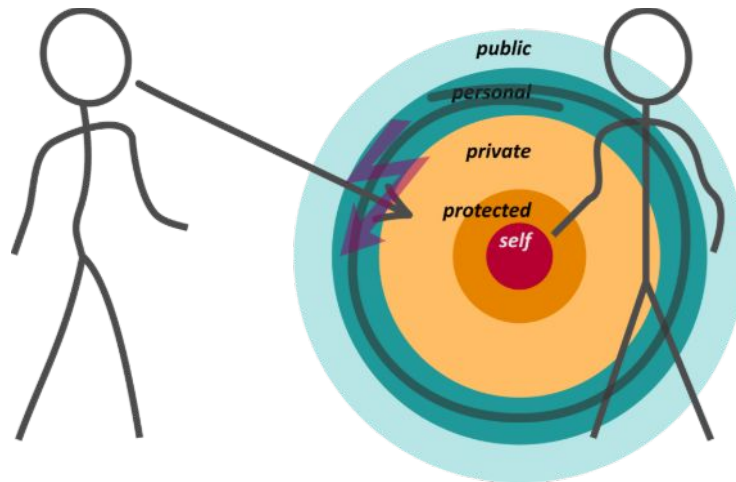


Figure 9: When someone looks deeper into me, conflict arises. My wall, my protection, was ineffective — so I have to flee.

And when someone then, quite naturally, goes deeper, we feel as if we have been overrun. We have all these walls, masks, facades, and roles as protection, distraction, and camouflage so that no one comes too close. So that no one goes too deep.

And that worked beautifully. Until now. Suddenly someone is standing behind the wall. In the place where we ourselves do not go.

And somehow we find it beautiful, because it is a form of being seen, heard, understood, and touched that we otherwise do not know and have always longed for. But it is also so unfamiliar and close that it triggers panic and all our protection and flight reflexes.

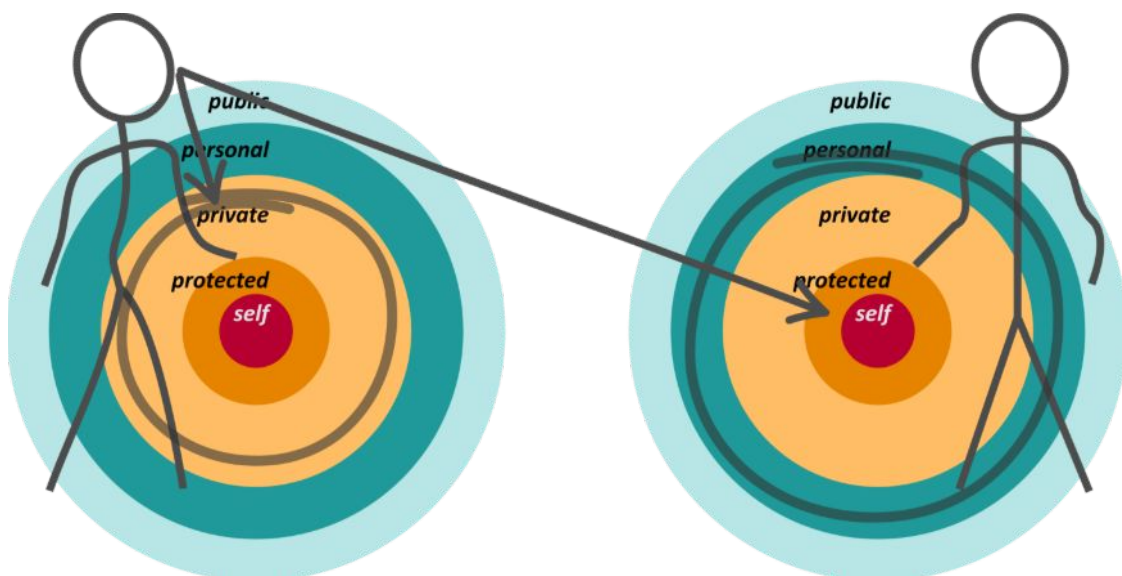


Figure 10: Often we see others better, while we are still blind to ourselves.

Now we come to another important point. Many people can look into others more easily than into themselves. If we keep triggering flight in others, then we probably still carry flight within ourselves. Ultimately, we can trust the symmetry. It is at least more likely that the symmetry in our life is accurate — and that other people are our mirror — than that we know our own inner blindness.

Because once I am no longer avoidant myself, I will see the other person's pain and protective layers more clearly. Before that, my diamond makes the other diamond shine — which is beautiful for both — but I do it more from my longing for connectedness than for the other person.

Alienation in Limbi

There is a state many people know well, even if they would never call it that. A state in which life somehow works, but does not really flow. In which you have relationships, but no closeness. Conversations, but say very little. Laugh, but hardly feel anything. A state that is not malicious, but cautious. And sometimes so deeply anchored that it feels like nature, even though in truth it is only protection: alienation.

This form of alienation does not arise from coldness, but from longed-for warmth that burned us. Someone who was once hurt in closeness begins to treat closeness like a hot stove. You see it, recognize it, need it — but the hand stays away. And for that, our **Limbi** has a perfect logic. **Limbi** is old, wise, and mercilessly honest: what hurt me, I must avoid. Not out of malice. Out of survival.

When we look at the seven systems of **Limbi** through this lens, a clear picture suddenly appears. It is not 'I am strange,' 'I am wrong,' 'I am difficult.' It is the body that learned that closeness is unpredictable and that protection matters more than joy. **Limbi** is not doing the wrong thing — it is doing the only thing possible. Only at the cost of connectedness.

Take **SEEKING**, the system of curiosity and aliveness. In a healthy state, it pulls us forward: Who are you? What is inside you? How could our contact grow? In alienation, **SEEKING** becomes something else. It still functions, but only in safe places: work, knowledge, performance, self-optimization. **SEEKING** remains active, but it avoids other people. And when it does search in people, it searches for the disappointment that is familiar. Otherwise it seeks structure instead of encounter, facts instead of feelings. And it has good reasons for that — because people are harder to control than concepts.

The **CARE** system, which longs for care and warmth, transforms in alienation into a strange, asymmetric capacity. Many avoidant people are extremely caring — but only in one direction. They give, but accept nothing. Because receiving means becoming dependent, and becoming dependent means becoming vulnerable. In the distorted version of **CARE**, you carry others but allow no one to hold you. Not because you do not want it, but because the body says: 'If I lean on someone, I will fall.'

PLAY — lightness, laughter, the impulse to be spontaneous — is often the first system to die when we have been hurt. Anyone who has once been laughed at eventually stops playing. **PLAY** is vulnerable because play needs openness. In alienation, **PLAY** is replaced by irony, coolness, or the art of always placing something between yourself and the moment. You are present, but never fully in it. Closeness feels like a risk, and play is closeness without armor — so it is avoided.

The **LUST** system transforms especially strongly. Living desire becomes sexualization, control, performance. Desire without connectedness is the safe version: the body remains involved, but the heart stays outside. For some, sexuality becomes a place of power; for others, a place of numbness; for others, a place they avoid completely. But the common denominator is always the same: desire is separated from closeness because closeness is too dangerous.

PANIC/GRIEF, the loss system, becomes chronic in alienation. It is like an alarm that never fully switches off. People who have been deeply hurt constantly expect — consciously or unconsciously — the next loss. They keep distance not because they feel nothing, but because they feel too much. They withdraw before it hurts. They end contacts that matter to them because closeness triggers the alarm faster than distance. **PANIC/GRIEF** says: 'If I leave before you leave, it will hurt less.' And short term, that is even true.

The **RAGE** system often quietly takes the lead in alienation. Not as roaring anger, but as hardness. As sharpness in tone, thin patience, a 'I do not need this.' **RAGE** appears as control, as firmness, as strength — but without warmth. It is the boundary that arrived too early and never left. Many people do not avoid closeness out of indifference, but because **RAGE** is ready to fend off anything that comes too close.

And then there is **FEAR**. In a healthy state, it protects us. In alienation, it steers us. **FEAR** decides who we are allowed to be, how deeply we are allowed to feel, how far we let someone come close. **FEAR** is the guard at the chest wall, and it means well, but it lets no one in. Not even those who would be good for us. **FEAR** confuses closeness with danger because the nervous system can no longer distinguish between then and now.

When you put all this together, a pattern appears: alienation is not the opposite of love. It is the backside of love. The protection we built because love was once not safe. And it is astonishing how logical our system is in this. Everything, truly everything avoidant people do — withdrawal, ghosting, irony, distance, independence, perfectionism, smooth roles — is an attempt to control vulnerability.

The only tragic part is that the systems meant to protect us are also the systems that separate us. Our natural state would be connectedness. Not dependency, not merging, not drama — but this calm, warm form in which the body says, 'I may.' But this can only return when FEAR no longer guards the door and RAGE no longer fends off everything that could be good.

The beautiful part is that these seven systems are not destroyed. They have only been redirected. None of it is broken. Nature simply works with what it has. And just as **Limbi** comes alive in connectedness, **Limbi** can also reorient itself out of alienation. Not through fighting, not through analysis, not through tests of courage — but through what every system understands best: small, safe experiences that land in the body.

Because in the end, **Limbi** wants what it has always wanted: closeness, play, warmth, meaning, excitement, touch, belonging. And behind every avoidant movement, behind every withdrawal, behind every cool facade, there is ultimately not rejection. Only fear. And fear is not final. Fear is a place where someone got stuck.

And every human being can move on from there. Toward devotion.

Balance Theory

We use Balance Theory here regularly. The idea behind it is that our relationships, as a system, must be congruent — or balanced.

Basic idea: A likes B. If both like C, everything is fine. If both do not like C, that is also fine. Conflict arises when A likes C, but B has a real aversion to C. It does not matter whether C is a person or Brussels sprouts.

And then the decisive question is: which relationship is stronger, deeper? If the relationship between A and B is strong and C is a side issue, then it does not matter. But if C is a core belief, then the relationship between A and B can break because of it. Or it may never arise.

And this is exactly what lies behind ghosting and avoidance.

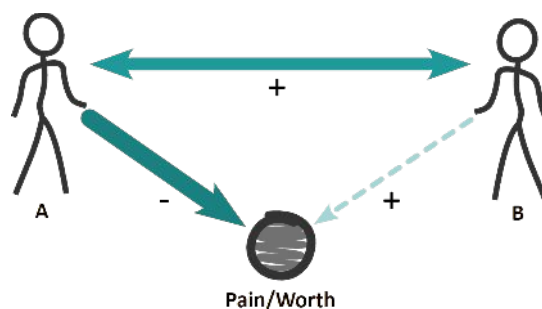
Avoidance appears when there is a very strong relationship between A and B. We like this person very much. It goes deep. This person really does something to me. Touches me inside. It is something special.

But this inner touch is problematic because it activates my pain and fear. I have to look at the place I avoid. The place I do everything to never look at or feel. Seeing ourselves inside is the greatest aversion, even disgust.

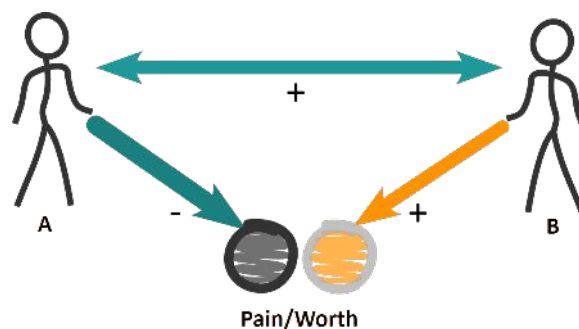
But the encounter with this person activates something that means we can no longer stay only on the outside — role, masks, facade. It gets under the skin.

That is why avoidance is so exhausting. It is a real fight, because we want two things at the same time. We want closeness and to be seen. We want it intensely.

At the same time, the pain grows. We have to go to the place we fear most. That is why we try to push away and suppress anything that could remind us of this pain, of our truth — the 'truth of worthlessness.'



11:



12:

So avoidance — ghosting, ignoring — is an inner fight. It is being torn apart. And it means: you matter to me enormously. But the pain is still a little stronger. I want closeness, but my certainty that I do not deserve closeness — that there is only crap inside me, no good core — is stronger than my hope.

The absurd part is that this is only my perspective. In my perception, I have enlarged the pain so much that it covers everything else. And so I have become blind to reality. Because at that point, B can see A much more clearly than A can see themselves.

All of this because we have a distorted perception. Because we believe a lie. I am running away from my life because of a lie. We can do better than that.

Devotion in Limbi

When I talk about what we are actually seeking, it is not safety in the sense of ‘just do not lose anything.’ It is not control either, and certainly not the protective layers we call trauma, even though they are really only the echo of an old wound. What we are truly seeking is something much simpler and, at the same time, much braver: we are seeking our nature. Our real nature. Not the trained one, not the socially acceptable one, not the role in our head. The nature we were born with before we learned to hide.

When you look at the limbic system, this old, warm control center of our feeling, you see seven systems that all want only one thing: life. Not functioning, not proving, not enduring — life. And once you understand these seven systems, you immediately understand what connectedness really is. Connectedness is not romance, not philosophy, not ‘relationship.’ Connectedness is the moment when our original emotional motivations are allowed to breathe freely again.

The first system is **SEEKING** — the search and discovery system. It is our inner compass, drawing us toward everything that is alive. It is the desire to explore, to be curious, to understand. SEEKING does not want merely to survive. It wants to shape. When two people feel connected, SEEKING becomes active — not as ‘What are you for me?’ but as genuine interest: ‘Who are you really?’ Connectedness begins where curiosity overtakes fear.

Then there is **CARE**, the caregiving system. The system that instinctively makes us hold someone who is crying, stroke an animal, soothe a child, look at a friend and say, ‘I am here.’ CARE is warming, soft, unspectacular, and at the same time the foundation of every real contact. When CARE is active, closeness is no longer a threat, but a natural reflex: I want you to be well, and that is good for me too.

PLAY is its own system, and anyone who has ever laughed with a child or a dog knows this feeling. PLAY is pure joy — and the opposite of heaviness. PLAY is the moment when our nervous system notices: ‘I do not need protection; I am allowed to be light.’ In connectedness, PLAY is always there. Not as silliness, but as the subtle basic joy that arises when being near a person simply switches you on.

The **LUST** system is not what porn culture has made of it. It is not drive, not possession, not performance. LUST is the physical, living joy of touch and closeness — not of sex, but of connection. LUST is the feeling that the body opens toward someone because safety is present. It is this ‘I am allowed to feel’ without fear, without evaluation, without hurry. In its healthy form, LUST is devotion in the language of the body.

Then comes CARE’s counterpart, though in truth it is a guardian angel: **PANIC/GRIEF** — the pain of loss. In connectedness, this system is not active as suffering, but as value. We hold one another because we feel that it does not leave us indifferent. Healthy PANIC/GRIEF means: you matter to me. I feel you. I do not simply let go.

RAGE is the system that sets boundaries. Not violence, not aggression, but the inner ‘Stop. This is not good for me.’ In real relationships, RAGE is not destructive, but clear. It is the force that says: ‘I am here, but not at any price.’ Without healthy RAGE, there is no real closeness, because closeness can only arise when both know they are allowed to say no.

And then there is **FEAR**, the system that protects us from danger. But when connectedness arises, FEAR relaxes. It steps back. It looks briefly, checks the situation, and then says: ‘Okay. We can breathe here.’ And precisely this moment — when FEAR is no longer at the wheel — is the moment in which devotion becomes possible. Not because we have become braver, but because the body realizes that courage is not even necessary.

When you take all these systems together, an almost ridiculously clear picture emerges: connectedness is not a mystery. It is our biological normal state. The exception is the state we live in today — cut off, functional, cautious, controlled. Trauma is not what we are. It is what happened when no one was there who could hold our nature.

And that is why real connectedness feels so familiar, even though many people have hardly ever experienced it. Because it is not new. It is a memory. A memory of who we were before we started the protection program. A memory that our system actually wants joy, not strategy. Closeness, not control. Play, not evaluation.

When devotion arises, it is not dangerous. It is the return.

The moment when the body says: 'Finally. Finally I am allowed to be myself again.'

Once you see it this way, you realize that connectedness is not a luxury. It is the only environment in which we truly function — not as a role, not as a PowerPoint, not in survival mode, but as a human being. And it is hard not to want that. Even if we are afraid of it. Even if we run from it. Somewhere deep inside, something says: 'Yes. Exactly this. This is who I actually am.'

Devotion: losing control or gaining orientation?

Many people think devotion means losing control. But in truth, devotion is the opposite: it is the moment when we are allowed to put control down because, for the first time, we have real orientation. Control is never a sign of safety. Control is a substitute for safety. When we feel safe, we do not need it.

Devotion is not falling; it is landing safely. It is the moment when inner tension is no longer needed because our system realizes: I am not in danger; I am held. Once someone has experienced devotion this way, they do not want to return to the world in which closeness is something that has to be managed. Devotion is not a leap. Devotion is the decision to stop fighting oneself.

How devotion feels in the body

The body knows first, before the head even understands that something is happening. Devotion does not show up in grand feelings, but in small shifts: the shoulders drop slightly. Breathing becomes deeper. The belly relaxes. The eyes soften. The voice loses that slight tension at the end of every sentence. The chest widens without needing to be controlled.

It is as if the body says: 'Finally, no more holding on.'

And when the body lets go, closeness no longer becomes a threat, but an orientation. You suddenly sense where you stand, and with whom. It is not an explosive moment. It is more this quiet, warm feeling that says: 'I do not have to protect myself.'

Many people know this feeling only from rare moments — just before falling asleep in safe arms, when the nervous system relaxes for the first time in years. Devotion is the same warmth, only while awake.

The difference between devotion and overwhelm

Many people confuse devotion with overwhelm. Overwhelm is when you have to lose yourself. Devotion is when you want to open yourself.

Overwhelm is a state in which the nervous system is overrun. Where you flood, collapse, adapt, even though you do not want to. It is an echo of old helplessness. And that is why it feels instinctively dangerous.

Devotion, by contrast, is a state in which you keep your own center. You do not lose yourself — you show yourself. You do not become defenseless — you become true. It is the kind of opening in which you trust that your boundary does not simply disappear, but becomes softer. Devotion is not loss of control; it is the freedom of no longer needing control.

Overwhelm arises without safety. Devotion arises only with it. That is the whole difference. And that is exactly why devotion is not dangerous. It is the return to how closeness was always meant to feel.

Peace between the layers

Avoidance is an inner conflict. Different parts within me want different things. I want this closeness, but at the same time there is this 'I cannot,' 'I must not,' and 'I am not.'

Above that sit all the defense mechanisms we have now gotten to know: false loyalty and morality, self-punishment, doubt and inferiority, and the fears of things getting worse or of the final disappointment.

At the core, it is the fear of healing. Why are we so afraid of healing? Because we believe that healing does not exist for us — and only for us. And then even the last people will turn away from us. So we stay in coping and pretend that everything is getting better.

We are afraid of coming too close to our core, our identity, or the diamond. Healing means uncovering the diamond beneath all the doubt and pain.

It is a simple and beautiful image — but only if I know my diamond. As long as I see only the layers of pain and doubt, there is an obstacle: the fear of the diamond, or of the final realization that perhaps there is no diamond after all — only in my case.

That is the common core of all these stories.

We see the beliefs in action in avoidant behavior. Beneath that lies the worldview: 'I am the one human being who is absolutely nothing. I am the human being without a diamond. My diamond was never there; in me there is only pain, dirt, and failure. And that is why I do not dig in, because I know there is nothing underneath.'

This is the inner view of everyone who shows this behavior. This is what these people want to hide from themselves and from the whole world.

And now here it comes — and I know this will not be enough to convince you: in the moment when you felt the closeness and warmth, that one fleeting moment that triggered all of this inside you, that was the resonance of your diamond.

The fact that you feel it, that you are afraid, that you want to run away — these are precisely the indicators that you have a wonderful diamond that wants to come into the light.

You really are okay. You are complete. You are right. And you have seen it. You are allowed to believe it. You are allowed to dig — through the pain — and you are allowed to discover and celebrate yourself. Then grow and shape. Then you become congruent through all layers. Because you will also notice that the pain is not as big or as much as it seemed. It is your memory that inflated it. The layers of pain will be much thinner than you ever thought once you begin to wash them away. Then the rough diamond becomes visible and your life begins. The polishing process starts.

The rough diamond will become a unique brilliant-cut diamond. That is your gift to yourself and to the world.