

SCARF

The SCARF model describes five social needs that influence how we respond to others. When these needs are threatened, we tend to resist or shut down. When they're met, we're more open, engaged, and motivated.

Status

Need for reassurance and respect

- How is my importance or position within a social group perceived?
- Example: someone feels embarrassed, or their competence is questioned → threat to status

You feel put down or disrespected

Certainty

Need for predictability

- What will happen next?
- Example: constantly shifting plans during a reorganization → uncertainty grows

When things are unclear, you feel tense and avoidant

Autonomy

Need for ownership of your own actions

- To what extent do I have ownership over my decisions?
- Example: micromanagement → you're losing control

You feel stressed and frustrated

Relatedness

Need to connect and interact socially

- Do I belong?
- Example: being excluded from the team → you feel isolated

You feel lonely and may withdraw

Fairness

Need for justice in social situations

- Am I being treated fairly?
- Example: Being passed over or lied to → you feel distrust

You feel angry and resentful