

TAMING YOUR AMYGDALA

Have you ever wondered what sets people off and why? Perhaps you know someone who lost their cool after being cut off at the lights? Perhaps you know someone who took it out on loved ones after missing out on an important job. Perhaps you've seen investors aggressively protecting their hard-earned wealth. In each case, it may feel as if they are fighting off a hungry lion.

Even though there are no real lions to fight in modern life, it may come as no surprise to learn that our brains are still wired to defend ourselves against them.

Because of our evolutionary history, our amygdala activates whenever we face something stressful. Our amygdala lives in our mid-brain and is responsible for detecting danger. When detected, it triggers fear or anxiety, mobilises our resources and prepares us for action. This all takes place in a matter of seconds and does so before we consciously know what's happened.

For those of us that have stressful lives, we may find that we seem to 'live' in this cycle, constantly being mobilised for action. We may even find that there is little we can do about the stresses in our lives. Yet the more we 'live' in this cycle, the bigger our amygdala gets and the more responsive it becomes to the slightest stress.

So, what can we do? We can set aside five to ten minutes thrice daily for quiet deep breathing. You may find it useful to do so first thing in the morning to start your day, last thing at night for a good night's sleep as well as sometime in the middle of the day. You will find that doing so will help calm your amygdala, and in turn, keeps you calm and centred, no matter what comes your way.

You may also find it useful to do some quiet deep breathing before, during and after a stressful or uncomfortable meeting so that you can keep yourself calm and centred throughout that meeting.

And, for the rest, you too can look forward to a happier, healthier, more calm and contented you. So, what are you doing to have a more tranquil life in your day?

