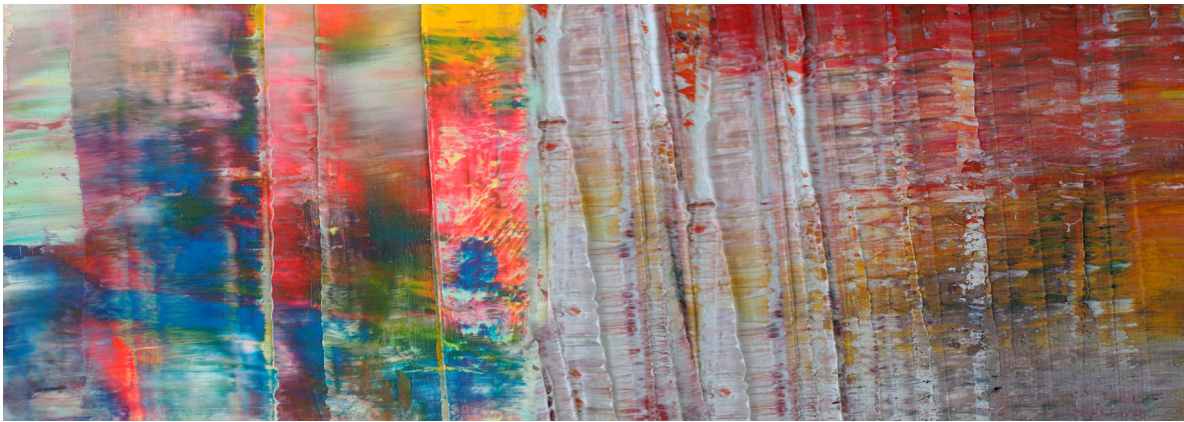


THE 4 ELEMENTS OF IDENTITY STRUCTURE™

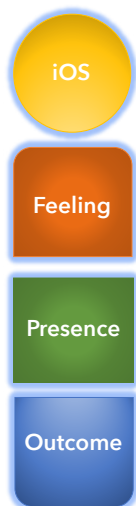
FEELINGS

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SUMMARY: Understanding “The 4 Elements of Identity Structure” requires us to understand each of the individual elements in more detail. Each of the 4 elements consist of various components that create the structure within the element. In this article the focus will be on the second of the 4 elements: Feelings.



In the inaugural article of this series titled “The 4 Elements of Identity Structure,” we embarked on a journey of exploration. In that enlightening piece, we uncovered the essence of identity structure—a multifaceted and intricate construct that serves as a reflection of our individuality and the world around us. Additionally, how it encompasses a splendid array of elements that shape our perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors, ultimately leaving an indelible mark on the outcomes we attain in this life.

Identity structure embraces the interplay of internal and external factors that contribute to our profound sense of self. Like sculptors shaping clay, our experiences, surroundings, relationships, and the very cultural environment that envelops us mold these elements. They become the pillars, the foundation upon which our identity rests, forming an intricate structure that shapes how we are and how we engage the world around us.

In this article we traverse the wondrous realm of feelings, a delicate domain where emotions hold sway. Within this captivating element, we explore the intricate interplay of thoughts, emotions, stories, mental models, and decision making. Gaining an appreciation for both the grace and complexity they bring to our inner game.

FEELINGS



Feelings are an integral part of our identity structure. They encompass the cognitive and emotional processes that shape who we are at our core. In this article, we embark on a journey to unravel the intricate components of feelings, shedding light on their dynamics and associated complexities. By exploring these components, namely thoughts, emotions, stories, mental models, and decision making, we can unlock a deeper understanding of the fascinating world of human emotions.

Let us begin by recognizing the profound interplay between these components. Each component weaves its own thread into the fabric of our emotional landscape, influencing and shaping our innermost being, our internal operating system (iOS). By examining these components, we gain invaluable insights into how they intertwine, ultimately contributing to the structure of our inner game and determines the outer game, or how others experience us.

Through this exploration that we cultivate a heightened awareness of our own identity structure. We can come to appreciate the intricate connections between our thoughts, emotions, and intelligence. We can uncover the power of emotional intelligence in guiding our responses to the world around us. We can recognize the significance of the stories we tell ourselves, the narratives that shape our perceptions and beliefs. We can delve into the depths of our mental models, the frameworks through which we interpret and make sense of the world. And we can uncover the role of our emotions in decision making, and conversely the profound impact of decisions on our emotional landscape.

Together, these components form the building blocks of our emotional experiences and contribute to the mosaic of our identity. By immersing ourselves in their exploration, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. We navigate the intricacies of human emotions with newfound wisdom and empathy. And in this journey of self-discovery, we not only unravel the complexity of feelings but also unlock a greater understanding of our own identity structure.

THOUGHTS:

The power of our thoughts cannot be overstated when it comes to understanding the intricate workings of our emotions and how they shape our sense of self. You see, it's the thoughts that bubble up within us, stemming from the underlying beliefs we hold, and the cognitive processes we engage in that have a profound impact on our feelings, and in turn, influence our behaviors and thus how we interpret the outcomes we experience in life.

Thoughts are like little mental machines running in the background, always analyzing, reasoning, and evaluating. They intertwine themselves tightly with our feelings, exerting a mighty influence over them. You might be surprised to learn that thoughts can be both conscious and unconscious, and they dance to the tunes of our beliefs, values, experiences, and even our cultural backgrounds.

But here's the really fascinating part: thoughts are the architects of our perception. They hold the power to mold how we see events and situations, and more importantly, they shape our emotional responses to them. Just imagine that! Countless studies have been conducted, unveiling the undeniable impact thoughts have on the human experience in its multifaceted glory.

For example, A study carried out by Lazarus and Folkman back in 1984¹. These researchers discovered that the way we appraise a situation, meaning the thoughts and interpretations we attach to it, actually determine the emotions we experience in response. Meaning the thoughts we harbor about an event or circumstance can dictate the emotional whirlwind we find ourselves in, guiding our subsequent behaviors like a silent puppeteer pulling the strings.

Our thoughts and beliefs about ourselves play a significant role in our feelings and behaviors. When our self-concept is filled with optimism and confidence, when we hold a positive image of ourselves, what is the natural outcome? Our self-esteem skyrockets, our self-confidence soars, and we find ourselves basking in the warm glow of overall well-being. We become unstoppable, setting goals, and achieving them with gusto, as confirmed by Harter's research in 2012².

But wait, there's another side to this intricate dance of thoughts and feelings. When the self-concept takes a darker turn, when self-doubt creeps in, and negative self-talk becomes the unwelcome narrator of our lives, a whole different story unfolds. We find ourselves swirling in a sea of negativity, where low self-esteem and despondency prevail. And unfortunately, these negative emotions often lead to flawed and unpredictable behaviors and a general decline in our psychological well-being. Leary and Baumeister's work in 2000³ delved deep into this shadowy realm, unmasking the detrimental effects of a negative self-concept.

With this knowledge, we can unravel the mystery of how thoughts shape the very fabric of our identity. We hold the key to understanding how our cognitive processes work in tandem with our emotional experiences and thus lead to our behaviors. Armed with this understanding, we can embark on a journey towards nurturing a healthier, more adaptive emotional well-being that allows us to thrive and flourish in this life.

Developing self-awareness can be challenging, but there are several techniques that individuals can use to enhance their self-awareness. These include journaling, practicing mindfulness, seeking feedback from others, and reflecting on past experiences.³ Through increased self-awareness, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which can lead to improved communication, leadership, and overall better outcomes. By utilizing techniques to enhance self-awareness, individuals can strengthen their identity structure.

EMOTIONS:

Emotions lies at the very heart of our feelings and of our identity. Emotional intelligence encompasses a set of skills that allow us to recognize, understand, and navigate our own emotions, as well as the emotions of those around us. These skills include emotional awareness, empathy, self-regulation, and social skills, and they have a remarkable impact on our behaviors and outcomes in various aspects of life. Our beliefs, values, purpose, and vision all come together to shape our emotional intelligence abilities.

In a groundbreaking study conducted by Salovey and Mayer in 1990⁴, it was discovered that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to experience richer interpersonal relationships, greater job satisfaction, enhanced leadership skills, and an overall sense of well-being. This reveals the profound influence of emotional intelligence on our behaviors and outcomes, both in personal and professional realms.

Emotional intelligence is not just something we're born with or without. It's a skill that can be nurtured and honed over time. Research has shown that interventions like training programs and coaching can significantly boost emotional intelligence.⁵ Take the study by Bar-On in 2006⁶, for instance. Participants who took part in an emotional intelligence training program demonstrated remarkable improvements in their emotional intelligence skills, leading to positive outcomes in various areas of their lives.

What's truly noteworthy is how our beliefs, values, purpose, and vision intertwine with our emotional intelligence. Our beliefs and values surrounding emotions shape our abilities in this realm. For instance, if we hold the belief that emotions are valid and worthy of attention, we're more likely to engage in emotional awareness and regulation skills.

Moreover, our sense of purpose and vision in life also play a significant role in our emotional intelligence. When we have a clear understanding of our purpose and vision, we become more attuned to our own emotions and the emotions of others in relation to our goals and aspirations. This heightened awareness allows us to cultivate higher levels of emotional intelligence, including greater emotional awareness, self-regulation, and empathy.

And why is this important, because understanding and regulating our emotions contribute to a positive sense of self and enable us to forge deeper, more meaningful connections with those around us. By actively developing our emotional intelligence and aligning it with our beliefs, values, purpose, and vision, we can enhance our emotional well-being and experience substantial improvements in our behaviors and outcomes. It's a journey of self-discovery and growth, one that holds the potential to unlock the very best within us.

STORIES:

Stories, hold a special place in human communication and culture. They have the power to weave intricate narratives that shape our feelings and leave an indelible mark on our sense of self. It is in our nature as human beings to be storytellers, and these stories, both the ones we tell ourselves and the ones we hear from others, play a profound role in how we perceive and navigate the world.

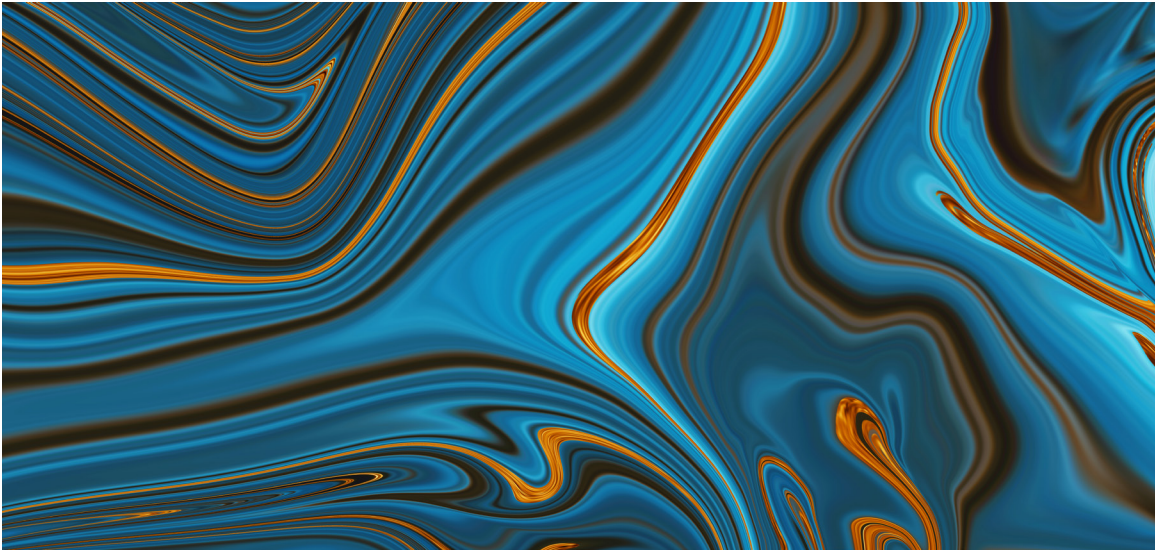
Think about it. Stories provide us with meaning, infusing our lives with purpose and significance. They shape our beliefs and values, serving as guideposts along the journey of our existence. But that's not all. Stories have the ability to sway our emotional responses to events, both past and future. They influence our affective forecasting, our innate ability to anticipate and predict our emotional reactions to what lies ahead.⁷

Now, let's turn our attention to the stories we construct about ourselves, the personal narratives that define our self-identity. These narratives are deeply intertwined with our beliefs, values, and lived experiences. They become the canvas upon which we paint our self-image, reflecting the aspects we wish to highlight and sometimes downplaying the ones we'd rather forget.⁸

Allow me to illustrate with an example. Picture someone receiving critical feedback at work. How they interpret and tell themselves the story of that feedback can greatly influence their emotional response. Negative thoughts like "I'm a failure" or "I'm not good enough" are likely to trigger feelings of sadness, frustration, or anger. On the other hand, more positive thoughts like "I can learn from this feedback and improve" can evoke feelings of motivation and determination. It is through these narratives that our self-identity takes shape, influencing our beliefs, behaviors, and the course of our lives.⁹

But it doesn't stop there. The stories we encounter from our cultural, societal, and interpersonal contexts also hold sway over our feelings. Think of the stories passed down within our families, shared among friends, or ingrained in our community. They shape our understanding of what feelings are deemed acceptable or unacceptable, influencing how we express or suppress our emotions. And let us not forget the stories we absorb from the media, literature, and our cultural sources. They seep into our consciousness, molding our emotional responses and shaping our beliefs and values surrounding feelings.

Stories are persuasive forces. They shape our self-identity, guide our emotions, and even influence our decision-making. As we continue to unravel the intricate elements of identity structure, recognizing the profound impact of stories becomes paramount in understanding human behavior and psychology. So let us be more cognizant of the power of stories, both the ones we tell ourselves and the ones that envelop us.



MENTAL MODELS:

Mental models, these cognitive frameworks are like the lenses through which we perceive and make sense of the world. They serve as our trusted companions, helping us navigate the complexities of life and guiding our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Mental models, are the cognitive shortcuts that enable us to unravel the intricacies of information and make meaning of it all.

How do these mental models come to be? Well, they are shaped by our experiences, beliefs, and the cultural influences that surround us. They are the product of our unique journey through life and greatly impact our emotional landscape.

As we encounter events or situations, our mental models filter our perceptions and interpretations, influencing how we regulate our emotions. Take, for instance, the view we hold about challenges. If our mental model portrays challenges as threatening, we may find ourselves feeling anxious or fearful when faced with difficult circumstances. On the other hand, if our mental model sees challenges as opportunities for growth, we may experience a surge of motivation and excitement.

Mental models also wield a powerful influence on our performance. Through the lens of these models, we form expectations, beliefs, and perceptions about our own abilities. And it is these very expectations that impact our motivation, self-efficacy, our performance and ultimately, our outcomes. If our mental model presents us as capable and competent, we approach tasks with confidence and tend to excel. Conversely, if our mental model portrays us as incapable or inferior, we may find ourselves plagued by self-doubt and performing below our true potential.¹⁰

Let us not forget the role mental models play in our decision-making and problem-solving. They shape our cognitive processes, biases, and heuristics, guiding us as we navigate complex tasks and make choices. They are the silent architects behind our approach to the world. Understanding the profound influence of mental models grants us a unique insight into their impact on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This awareness allows us to embark on the journey of shaping and modifying our mental models, empowering ourselves to enhance our emotional well-being and improve our performance across various domains of life. We can take charge of our mental models, harnessing their potential to elevate our emotional well-being and achieve greatness in all aspects of our lives.

DECISION MAKING:

There is an intricate dance between decision making and feelings. You see, decision making is not just a straightforward, rational process. It's a nuanced interplay of thoughts and emotions that shape the choices we make. And within this intricate dance, mental models and feelings take their rightful place.

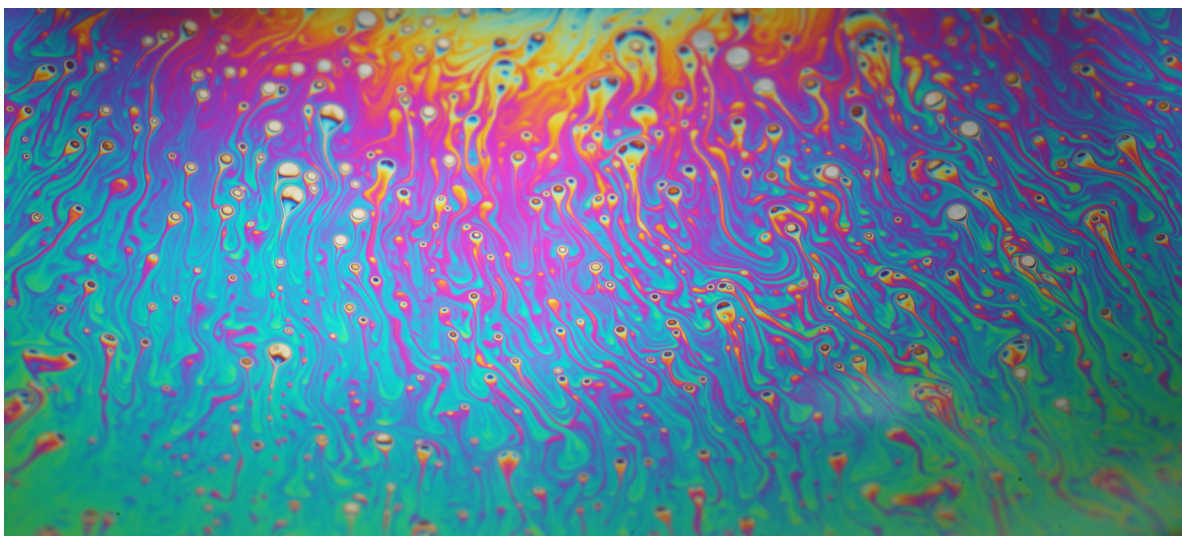
We often think of it as a logical and rational process, but research has shown that our feelings hold significant sway over our decisions. Deep within our brains lies the limbic system, the realm of emotions. This emotional powerhouse plays a pivotal role in our decision-making processes. It intertwines with our mental models, shaping the choices we ultimately make.

Our feelings—be it fear, pleasure, excitement, etc., can have a profound impact on our decision making. They have the power to override cold, rational analysis. Let's take a hypothetical situation. Imagine someone who values financial security and stability, and this is deeply ingrained in their mental model. Now, picture them faced with a decision—to leave a stable job and pursue a passion that carries financial risks. Their feelings of fear and anxiety may grip them, influencing their decision even when logical reasoning suggests it may be a worthwhile opportunity. In this scenario, their mental model and feelings converge, intricately shaping their decision-making process.

But it doesn't stop there. Our feelings also have a hand in how we make decisions under pressure—those high-stakes moments in sports, business, or any performance-driven context. They influence our cognitive processes, our focus, and the strategies we employ to make decisions. These factors, in turn, impact our ability to make optimal choices and perform at our best.¹¹

Now, let's contemplate the ripple effect of effective decision making. It extends far beyond the realm of choice itself. Our decisions, influenced by our feelings, seep into various aspects of our lives—our performance, relationships, communication style, and overall well-being.

Understanding the intricate relationship between feelings and decision-making grants us valuable insights. It helps us comprehend how our emotions impact our choices and performance. Knowing this, we can embark on the path of effective emotional management. We learn to navigate our feelings, making informed decisions and performing at our best in diverse situations. We unlock the power to shape our identity structure, making choices that align with our true selves and propelling us towards a fulfilling and successful life.



THE HEART OF THE INNER GAME:

We have briefly delved into the intricate realm of feelings—the second element of identity structure. What a complex and multi-faceted aspect of our human experience it is! Within this captivating domain, we encounter an ensemble of components: thoughts, emotions, stories, mental models, and decision making. Each of these elements holds a special place in shaping our feelings and our very sense of self.

First, thoughts and their profound impact on our emotions, molding our perceptions of events and situations. They lay the foundation for how we experience and interpret the world around us. Then, emotions take center stage. Emotional intelligence offers us a key to understanding and managing our feelings. It equips us with the skills necessary to navigate the intricacies of our emotions with grace and wisdom.

Stories, they are the enchanting threads that interlace our feelings with meaning and purpose. Through stories, we shape our beliefs about feelings and find solace in the narratives we tell ourselves and hear from others. These tales, rooted in our cultural history, leave an indelible mark on our emotions.

Mental models, those remarkable cognitive frameworks, step onto the stage as well. They mold our interpretations of feelings, providing us with cognitive shortcuts to make sense of the complex world within and around us. These models, shaped by our experiences and beliefs, guide our emotional landscapes.

And finally, we encounter the art of decision making. It is here that our feelings reveal their influence once more. Our choices, influenced by our mental models and entwined with our emotions, hold the power to shape our paths. Within the realm of decision making, the intricate interplay of feelings and cognition dances before us.

Together, these components form a captivating web of feelings, intricately woven into our identity structure. Their interconnections, their delicate balance, they shape who we are and how we perceive ourselves. To truly grasp the essence of our feelings and their role in our identity structure, we must embark upon a journey of understanding and exploration. Through our pursuit of knowledge, we gain a comprehensive understanding of how our feelings come about, how they find expression, and how they can be managed. We come to appreciate that feelings are not solitary experiences but are deeply entangled with other cognitive processes.

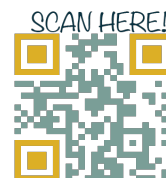
So, let us immerse ourselves in the understanding of these captivating components. Let us seek to comprehend the intricate mechanisms by which our feelings shape our very being. As we do, we embark upon a path of self-discovery, unveiling the mysteries of our identity structure and the profound role that feelings play in shaping our human experience.



Darren Walker is the principal and owner of SoundMind Leadership. He is an ICF certified executive coach, team coach and master facilitator. Darren is certified in solutions that include The Leadership Circle Profile, WHY Discovery, Crucial Learning, DiSC, The Five Behaviors, John Maxwell, and other dynamic leadership solutions.

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You may also visit me at www.soundmindleadership.com or click on the QR code.



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