

How Your Reptilian Brain Controls You!



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Your Reptilian Brain

You are partially the product of your evolutionary ancestry, and your ancestry includes a part of your brain that still believes you're part lizard. This part of your brain reacts to people as if you are living a hundred million years ago, and its main function is to insure that you stay alive.

It is designed to keep you out of the jaws of predators while, at the same time, helping you to become a more successful predator. However, the chances of you being hunted by a Tyrannosaurus Rex or a sabre toothed tiger in today's day and age are zero. However, your reptilian brain reacts to non-threatening, modern stressors as if they were potentially life-threatening situations.

As a result, you fight, freeze, or flee from deadlines, success, relationships, or the things you really want to do as if they were a pack of stampeding tyrannosaurs coming after you.

The term "lizard brain" is a popular term for your "reptilian complex" or "R-complex" which refers to a specific part of the human brain that includes the main brainstem, the cerebellum, and your limbic brain which records memories of agreeable and disagreeable experiences which give rise to your emotions.

Your reptilian brain, is the oldest part of your brain and it also controls your body's vital functions such as heart rate, breathing, body temperature, and balance.

It is also one of the oldest parts of the brain, from an evolutionary standpoint. Because of this, it is also the source of rigid assumptions, fear, and compulsive behaviors.

So That's Why You Get Triggered!

Your limbic brain is the seat of the value judgments that you make, often unconsciously, that exert such a strong influence on your behavior.

Your **amygdala** is an almond-shaped structure that is part of your limbic system; its name comes from the Greek word for "almond".

As with most other brain structures, you actually have two amygdalae. Each amygdala is located close to the hippocampus, in the frontal portion of the temporal lobe. The two aspects are usually just referred to as your amygdala.

Your amygdala is essential to your ability to feel fear when danger is perceived. For instance, if you see a rattlesnake your heart starts pounding in response to your amygdala activating! It is designed to be a survival mechanism. Events that warn you of danger trigger the fear response from the amygdala, but it is also activates the fight or flight response, freezing-up, and, by the way, also your sex drive.

The amygdala is responsible for emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, and aggression. The amygdala also helps you store memories of events and emotions so that you are able to recognize similar events in the future. For example, if you have ever suffered a dog bite, then the amygdala may help you escape dangerous dogs and "log the memory" to increase your alertness around dogs in the future.

Besides your emotions your brainstem also controls several important functions of your body including:

- Alertness
- Arousal
- Breathing
- Blood pressure control
- Digestion
- Heart rate
- Other autonomic functions
- Relays information between the peripheral nerves and spinal cord to the upper parts of the brain

The amygdala is the part of the brain that controls basic functions and needs like your pulse, respiration, hunger, and sleep.

These lizard brain behaviors range from phobias to snap judgments to procrastination to writer's block to fear of public speaking and more.

They arise because the reptilian brain is designed to work in only one simple mode. When confronted with a challenge, hunger, or a perceived threat, your lizard brain gives you one of three possible choices: fight, freeze, or flee.

Back in the day, say 100 million years ago, these were valid day-to-day options that helped keep your ancestors alive and kicking. If you were hungry, you went out and found something to eat. If something was trying to kill and eat you, you froze and maybe got eaten, or you ran away to live another day. In other words, the amygdala helped you to live.

Knowing when the effects of the lizard brain kick in is the key to controlling these effects. Otherwise it can wreck havoc on your relationships.



Fight, Flee or Freeze: The Negative Effects of the Lizard Brain

Everywhere you look, you see the effects of your ancestry and evolution. This is true of every living thing. When you look in the mirror, you are seeing a product of your ancestors and evolutionary processes at work.

Evolution, as you may know, is driven by the twin engines of mutation and genetic drift. Cells replicate by making copies of themselves. Sometimes, a mistake is made in the process of copying. This is a mutation. Many times the mutations are harmful, but occasionally a mutation is beneficial. These mutations can then get passed on to the next generation.

What does this have to do with the negative effects of the lizard brain? Well, as evolution proceeds through mutation and genetic drift, things that might be slightly obsolete get co-opted into new uses they weren't originally designed for. A perfect example of this is the amygdala in the human brain.

The amygdala is the source of "lizard brain" behaviors precisely because it is the genetic remnant of the brain possessed by a reptile that lived hundreds of millions of years ago. That reptile existed in a world much different than ours. It was a world full of simple needs and simple dangers; in essence, eat something before you are eaten.

The lizard that possessed this brain needed only three basic impulses in order to survive; it needed to fight, freeze, or flee.

Your lizard brain still operates in the same way today. The difference is that there isn't a lot of literal "eat or be eaten" situations in modern society, so fighting, fleeing or freezing are often inappropriate responses. What happens instead of fighting, people exhibit rigid, kneejerk behaviors such as anger. Instead of fleeing, people become anxious and unreasonably frightened. Instead of freezing people procrastinate or unintentionally sabotage themselves.

Realizing where these inappropriate responses come from, and why, is the first step to dealing with “lizard brain” behaviors. Simply because there is the remnant of a lizard brain in each of our heads, does not mean that we have to actualize these ancient, and largely obsolete reactions.



Conquering Fear by Controlling the Lizard Brain

Irrational fear is a crippling and debilitating phenomenon that affects nearly everyone at one time or another. It is irrational because there is no true basis for it; in other words, no imminent danger.

The reptilian brain projects possible threats even when there is little or no evidence of a threat. This fear can prevent the affected person from fully enjoying an experience. It can also inhibit that person to such an extent that they forego particular events altogether. This prevention or inhibition may hold the individual back from achieving goals and overall success.

This type of chronic fear derives from the mind projecting threatening outcomes, but which haven't actually occurred. It thereby robs a person of some of the very things that would enrich their lives.

The emotion of fear is, in and of itself, a very useful evolutionary tool. Quite simply, it helps to keep an organism alive long enough to guarantee procreation and another generation.

When fear has no actual grounds it is illogical, irrational, and makes no sense. Let's take a look at this phenomenon a little more closely.

Fear, both reasonable and unreasonable, originates at the base of the brain known as the reptilian brain. This is one of the oldest parts of the human brain. We share its structure with many other species, including lizards. Hence, it's other common name – the lizard brain.

The problem is that modern stresses usually do not involve life threatening situations. The lizard brain does not understand this and when mundane stress is experienced it can misinterpret this stress as critical. This misinterpretation is the source of unreasonable, groundless fear.

One way to combat this unreasonable fear is by using your rational mind to challenge the underlying belief that generates the fear and reinterpret or reconceptualize the situation. This is done by calmly assessing the circumstances causing the fear.

Once this is accomplished and you've seen that the situation is definitely not life threatening, ask yourself what the worst possible outcome could be given your assessment. This rational examination of your fear calms the lizard brain, thus reducing the severity, as well as the occurrence of that fear.

Aggression and fear can be useful, even necessary, reactions under a number of circumstances. However, the circumstances where they are useful are far outweighed by those where they are inappropriate or actively harmful. The problem is that the old amygdala can only react in the ways it was designed to act.

This fact gives rise to the negative behaviors and socially inappropriate reactions.

- The fight reflex becomes compulsive, rigid thinking which, in turn, gives rise to many of the "isms" that still plague the world.
- The fear reflex becomes unreasonable which, in turn, gives rise to phobias and aversions.
- The freeze reflex becomes injurious, prompting individuals into behaviors that self-sabotage.

Fortunately there are techniques that are useful in battling the negative effects of lizard brain behavior.

The Russian Dolls in Your Head

In a very real sense, we are our brains. Everything we know, everything we have experienced and, to certain extent, everything our ancestors have experienced is contained in this compact organ. Yet, we haven't come to fully understand the very things that allow us to comprehend not only ourselves, but also the world around us.

Exploring the function of our brains is a bit like heading down the rabbit hole. The more we know, the less sure we can be of "reality". For, if reality is a function of our brains, as opposed to an empiric set of values, then what is actually real, and what is a perception projected by the brain?

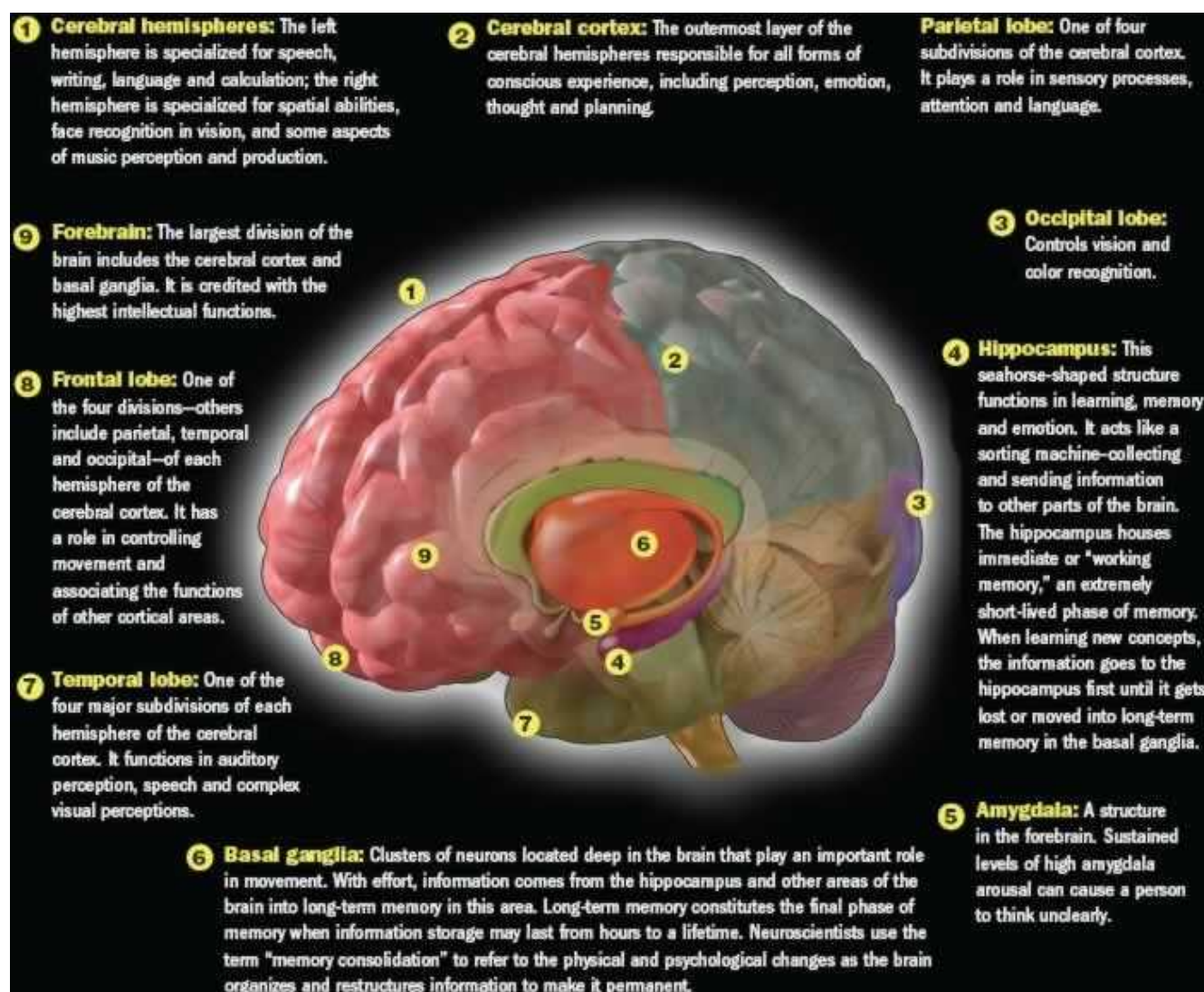
The brain works through compartmentalization. It can be thought of as a set of matryoshka dolls. Each compartment, or functional area, of the brain nestles inside the next. Each one is separate, but is also a portion of the entire set. It is only by unpacking each area from the others, that an understanding of the whole system can be achieved.



The first doll that we will unpack is also the newest. This is the area of the brain called the neocortex. The neocortex is the area of the brain that allows you to read and understand this article. It is also the area of the brain that is responsible for all the artifacts of human civilization.

The next doll is known as the limbic system. More primitive, as well as older, than the neocortex, the limbic system is where experience is processed and remembered. It's why you don't stick your hand in a fire. It's also the source of many emotional responses to outside stimuli.

The last doll is the oldest. The amygdala, also known as the reptilian complex, is deep within the structure of the brain. It controls the most basic needs and functions. Hunger, thirst, sex drive and sleep all reside here, as do pulse and respiration.



The Enigma of the Amygdala

Deep inside your head, the past still exists. What this means is that deep inside your head judgments and primitive motivations still exist.

You are also equally capable of acting against your best interests. This ability has been called the power of good and evil. It has also been called self-interest, self-sacrifice, and self-sabotage. This is largely the result of evolution and the way the brains have developed as a result.

At the base of the brain, is the part of the brain that controls many of the functions we share with many other life forms such as bodily functions like respiration, hunger, and sexuality but also anger, fear and anxiety. All thanks to your amygdala. A good way to describe the amygdala is to say that it controls primal instincts.

There are two other portions of the brain that control memories and emotions (limbic system), and the neocortex which controls higher thought and what we call reason. Our capability for good and evil arises out of the way these three systems work together.

The amygdala is compulsive and instinctual. It is primarily concerned with basic needs and desires and getting those needs and desires fulfilled. If you're hungry, you eat. If you're frightened, you fight or flee.

These self-centered actions and motivations worked extremely well in the primitive world where they developed. However, many of the actions prompted from the amygdala often conflict with the higher principles that emanate from the neocortex.



How Your Own Mind Sabotages You

Have you noticed that sometimes your feelings just seem to come out of nowhere? Why is that?

There is a program running through your Reptilian Brain in your unconscious that tricks you into thinking it is you and enslaves you with anger, fear, worry, depression, helplessness, guilt, resentment, sabotage, loneliness, unworthiness, self-doubt, feeling stuck, and more.

Since it is there your whole life, you barely notice it or think about it. It is like the wall paper that you don't pay attention to and assume that's just your personality.

The problem with this is failing to realize just how extensively it runs your life. It is what keeps your mind active, triggers your emotions, and causes you to make terrible choices. As a result the very things you don't want keep repeating in your life.

The program that runs through your reptilian brain is called the Ego and here are 4 ways it sabotages you...

1. Anger Makes Me Feel Strong so I Can Get What I Want.

Sometimes getting angry causes people to do what you want them to.

Parents yell at their kids and pets to control their behavior. People in relationships often do the same thing.

The reality is that anger doesn't really get you the results you want. People may temporarily do what you want, but they'll resent you, hate you, or fear you.

Anger also breeds more anger. Here's what happens when you are angry...

Getting angry actually feeds more lifeforce into the anger program controlling you...So you unwittingly energize the very anger pattern want to get rid of.

The way to counter the anger program is to center in your heart, take a deep breath, and energize the opposite: peace, love, patience, and kindness. That may seem difficult in the moment of anger, but with practice you cut off the energy source of the anger and it will diminish.

If you want to completely eliminate it I suggest the methods in my **Subtle-Energy Neutralizer** program.

<https://www.jonathanparker.org/product/mp3-programs/spirituality-enlightenment/subtle-energy-neutralizer/>



2. Fear is a Good Thing Because it keeps me from Danger.

That probably makes some sense doesn't it?

Well, if you are actually in a threatening situation it could conceivably help by amping up your adrenaline so you can fight or run away.

Yet, you probably have a form of fear on a regular basis when you are not under a direct threat. For instance, worry, low self-esteem, self-doubt, anxiety, insecurity, and dozens of other variations are all common forms of fear.

99% of the time what is feared never happens. Yet this ego program can squelch your best efforts at succeeding and even prevent you from doing things that would be good for you or fun.

Chapters 56, 7 & 8 of my book, ***The Soul Solution***, goes into some detail on clearing fear and the ego.

3. If I Had More Talent, More Money, and a Better Relationship I'd be Happy.

One word that is almost a synonym with the ego is "**More.**"

The ego insatiably pursues more of as many things as possible because it thinks that is the solution to keeping you safe, healthy, and happy.

That is what drives you to have more things, different relationships, more education, more money, more experiences, more possessions, etc.

Of course, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with any of those things, it is just that incessantly searching for more does not bring sustained happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction, or security.

Here are some other examples:

- If I have more things I'll be more happy
- If I have more money I'll be more safe and secure
- If I have more love from others I'll feel more worthwhile and whole
- If I were more successful I'd feel more complete and fulfilled
- If I were more likable and charismatic I'd be more accepted

As long as you are busy acquiring more you'll feel like you are making progress, but once you attain what you set your sights on, you'll find your ego drives you to find other things you "have to have."

The solution is merging and integrating the soul into those feelings and you'll find the drive for more dissolves while the fun of infinite possibilities opens up.

(Soul Merge: Transformational Enlightenment)

<https://www.jonathanparker.org/product/mp3-programs/spirituality-enlightenment/soul-merge-transformational-enlightenment/>



4. Attaining High-Levels of Spiritually [Enlightenment] Will Solve All My Problems.

The ego loves it when you are on a spiritual quest. It will even help you discover the books, retreats, teachers, videos, and endless resources that can impart new understanding, realizations, and raise your consciousness. It loves it when you travel to sacred spots and go to workshops and sit with enlightened teachers.

That's not a bad thing at all, but it is another reflection of #3 above: Wanting more spiritual information and insights on a seemingly endless journey of discovery.

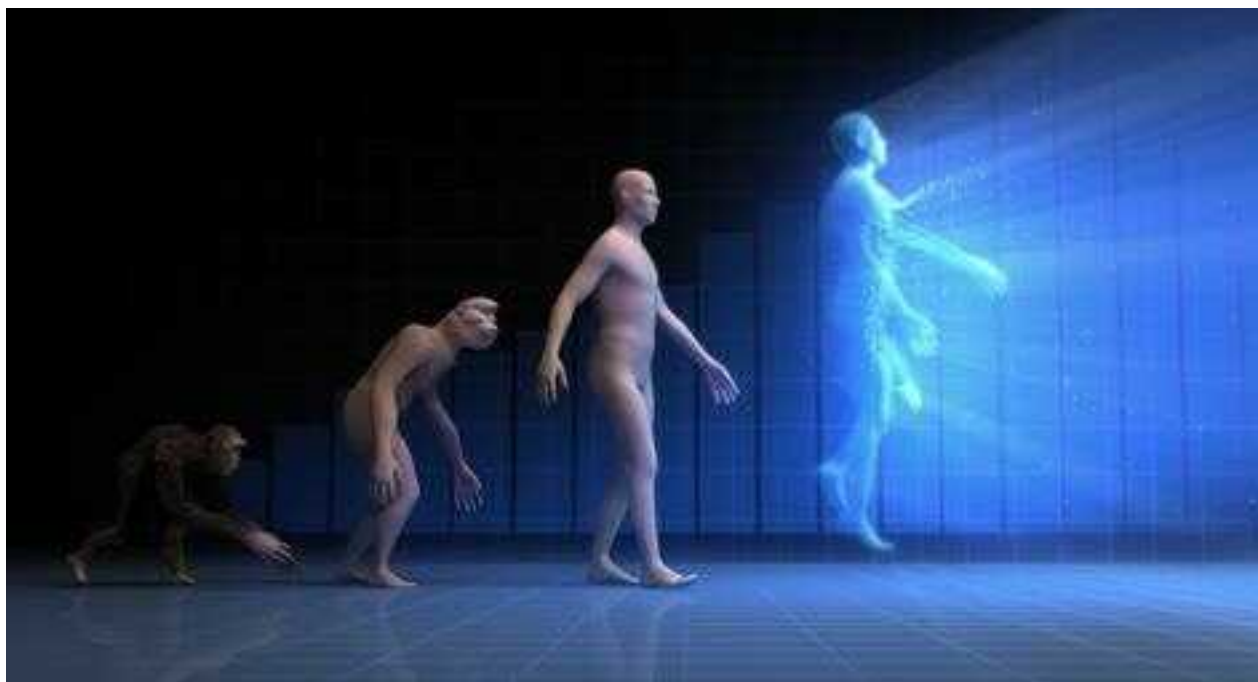
There is always more you can learn and the "carrot at the end of the stick" is the goal of enlightenment which just seems out of reach. Yet, the ego mind doesn't even know what enlightenment is. It just knows it is something it doesn't have and it wants it.

The questions to ask yourself are, "What exactly are you searching for? What is the end you hope to attain? What will that give you?"

You might feel you are on a threshold of a major breakthrough to "something" like spiritual mastery and enlightenment, but you usually find you are just on a never-ending journey seeking one more thing. There are many discoveries that lie beyond what the ego thinks and believes.

I can tell you for sure, the answers and solutions the ego seeks do not lie in anything external or in the realm of knowledge or information, but the ego loves to keep driving you to acquire more.

When you are constantly searching and attempting to transform into something other than what your soul is, you sustain dissatisfaction, unfulfillment, and a longing for more. The reality is that nothing outside of yourself can genuinely give you what your soul connection can.



How Do You Solve a Problem Like the Ego

It is a common approach to a spiritual path that the ego must be killed or destroyed, but before we go that far let's explore what the ego is.

What is the Ego?

The ego is often equated with your personality or who and what you think you are. The ego is actually a collection of many sub-personalities or identities made up of beliefs and stories. They can make you feel like you are carrying an elephant on your back.



These identities very strongly convince you they are you; and therein lies the problem; they are all false.

No matter how strongly you believe in them, they are distortions, illusions, distractions, and lay false claim to being you.

They are not all negative or bad but they do embody judgments about you and what you project onto others.

Underneath all the stories and identities lies your soul or true self which is composed of love and kindness and is quite different from the ego.

The ego is driven by fear and the soul is made of love.

The ego projects such strong perceptions that it convinces you that the ego traits are you, and then you proceed to live your life as if they are true.

The **underlying core fear that drives the ego is its fear of being destroyed** or dying. That being the case you can imagine then that any thoughts or approaches to killing it are met with every defense mechanism it can muster to survive.

This fear-based program operates through your reptilian brain and is what makes the spiritual journey a rocky road.

Your spiritual evolution is based on letting go and surrender.

The ego perceives that process as threatening to its survival and therefore uses all its energy to hold on to what it can do to survive.

This is why people resist change and prefer the status quo, and it is ultimately self-defeating since it perpetuates lack, limitation, and struggling.

The ego labels people with judgments such as bad, sinners, guilty, wrong, and "less than;" but it also labels people as good, holy, right, and valuable.

All the labeling and judgments are designed by the ego to protect its beliefs and identities.

The ego wants to be right. In fact, the ego has a *need* to be right!

That leads to being defensive which can cause you to strike out against others who disagree with you, or blame them for conditions, or criticize them.

All the **reactions that trigger the ego seem to happen automatically** without pre-thought. That is because the trigger operate through the reptilian brain like an automatic reflex reaction.

You can even have spent the previous hour in a beautiful meditation and then come out of it and get angry at someone who triggers you.

That's because **the ego has high-jacked your subconscious and reptilian brain** where your beliefs are rooted. So hatred, resentment, depression, greed, control, anxiety, paranoia, loneliness, and other "negative" qualities which are all part of the negative ego, make up identities that overlay your true self or soul.

Since the ego has its home below the surface of your conscious thinking it is often referred to as your shadow self.

Is the Ego Your Enemy?

All these realizations can lead you to think the ego is horrible and needs to be destroyed.

But realize the ego is just **a survival mechanism seeking safety and security for you!**

It really has your best interests at heart, but it just has ineffective means of achieving its goals.

In addition, it knows it is in pain and suffering and it really wants to be healed and loved.

I have found from doing many thousands of individual sessions with people that when you approach the ego's pain and suffering with patience, kindness, love, and a healing presence it relaxes its resistance and allows that resistance to dissolve and merge with the soul or true self.

In that process it realizes it isn't losing anything, and in fact, it is expanding its realization of a greater sense of what it is than it previously thought.

As that merging process continues the ego dissolves more of its identity until the realization emerges of being one in consciousness with all there is. This is called Self-Realization.

Below the experience of all forms of thinking, feeling, and believing there is consciousness itself. Everything in manifestation is energy vibrating at different frequencies but it all emanates from the same Source of love and light.

Everything You Perceive is a Projection

All forms and energy projections are often considered to be illusions. They are said to be illusions because there is a more fundamental truth that lies under the visible forms. Saying something is an illusion is not implying it is wrong or bad.

Existence itself is composed of many forms of manifestation and many are very beautiful and love-filled.

When you pull back the curtain from the ego projections you realize that there is a beautiful, loving, and peaceful state of consciousness that enables you to more fully participate in life and the fun of exploring beauty, kindness, caring, gentleness, and most of all unconditional love.

That is what your soul is made out of and what you are, and you discover and experience that as you surrender the fear-driven perceptions of the ego, and embrace the truth of love and light that underlies all existence.

What you are seeking, you already are. It just takes some digging to get through the ego layers covering that truth.

I have many spiritual audio programs that will help you clear away the effects of the ego and the reptilian brain. Check them out here: **<https://www.jonathanparker.org/products/mp3-programs/spirituality-enlightenment/>**