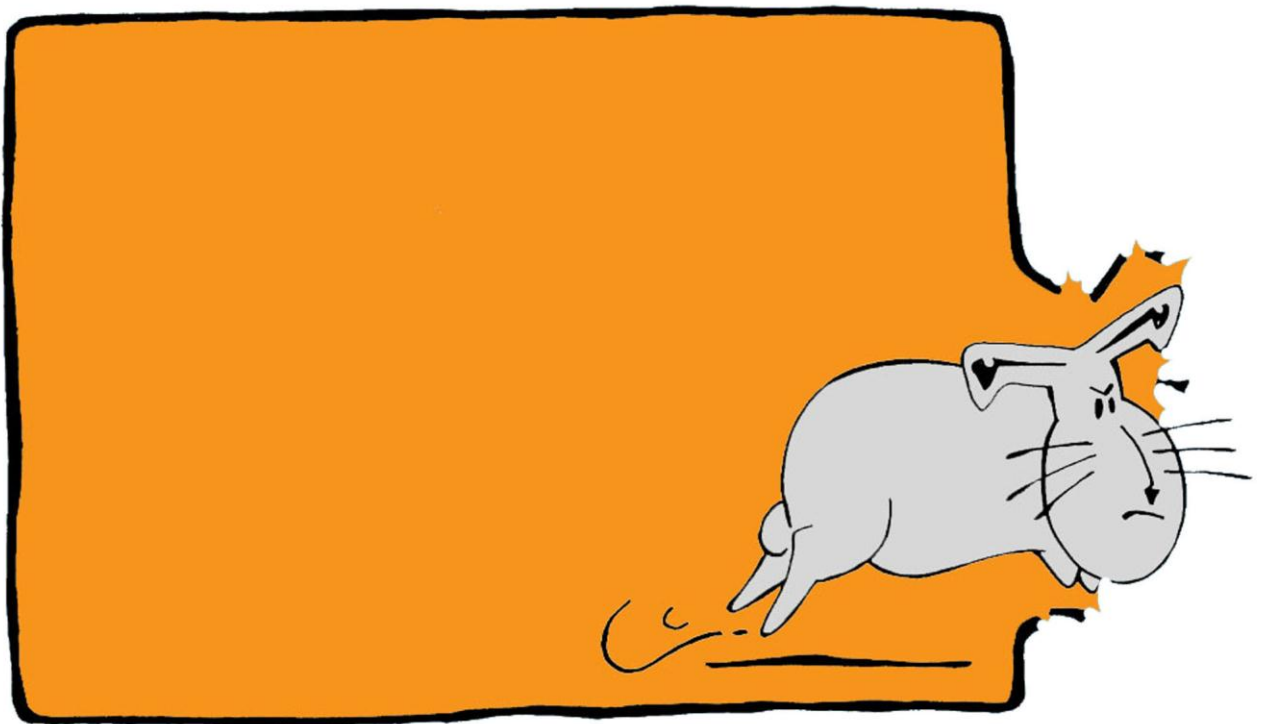
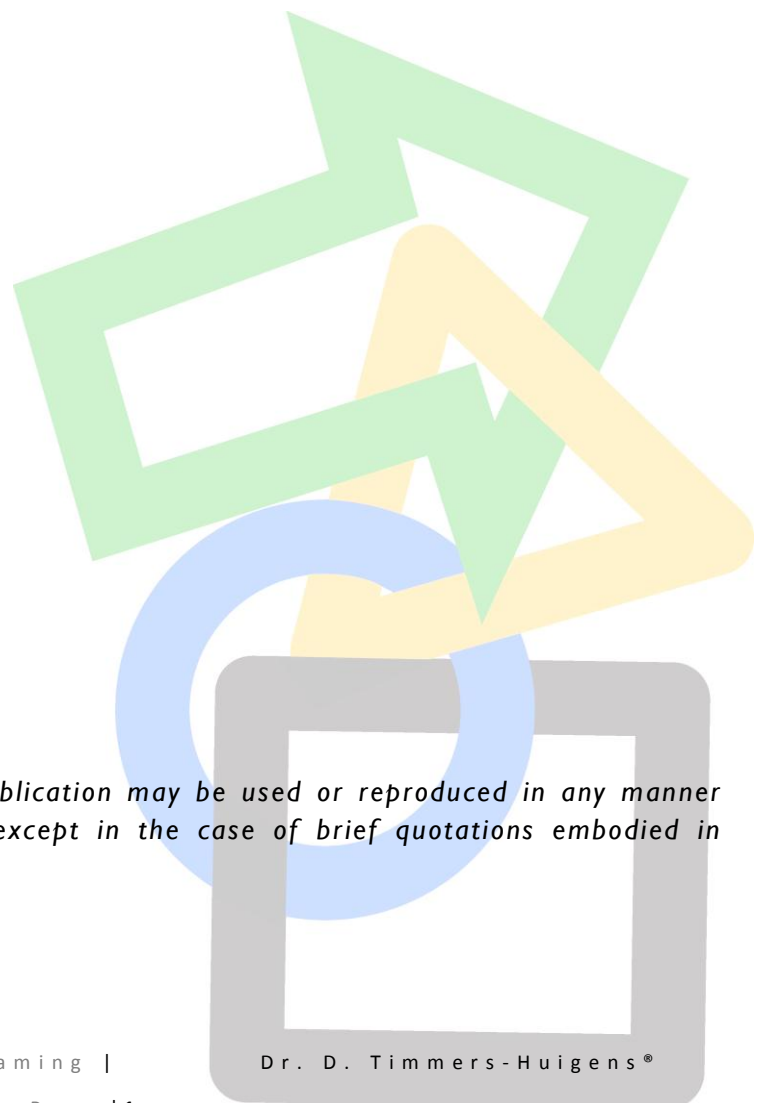


# the theory of experience based. framing

by Timmers-Huigens, PhD



*A successful Dutch approach to interpret behavior and evoke  
a new sense of wellbeing in clients and caretakers.  
An inspiring frame for thinking outside the box!*



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### THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Experiencebased Framing is an explanatory theory that deals with the way each person signifies past, present and future experiences. It provides a working model for professionals and significant others in every situation. The theory is considered one of the fundamental approaches for dealing with intellectual disability in the Netherlands and Belgium. But it also applies to interaction between parents and children, leadership and theological discussion. The theory is based on perceptions and experience of its founder, Dr. D. Timmers-Huigens, and has developed since it was first described in 1969. Nowadays, Experiencebased Framing is an important part of several methodologies for understanding and supporting people with intellectual disability. This is largely due to the fact that Experiencebased Framing provides insight in and guidance for human equality in dealing with (severe) intellectual disability.

The core concept of Experiencebased Framing is the notion that every person experiences reality in his or her own unique way, but based on a universal inner system. This system is specified in the four senses; the physical sense, the associative sense, the structuring sense and the constituting sense. Working together, these four senses provide us with the necessary information and strategies to experience, survive and possibly alter current reality. Past experiences provide information that is used to determine our current experience of reality and the way we can handle it. The four senses cooperate in a dynamic process and with such high speed that it is almost impossible to divide them with the untrained eye. But when properly trained, one can identify the function of all four in every momentary situation. And one can see whether the conditions for optimal functioning are met. These conditions differ between individuals and situations, based on relational frames, i.a. If the conditions are met, we can alter the situation, based on a balance between desires and beliefs (we either want to change or not, but feel secure to do so). If not, the whole system is focused on restoring the imbalance (something 's got to give). This determines our behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, positive or problematic. It's all in the eye of the beholder.

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

When speaking of the theory of Experiencebased Framing it is important to emphasize the following key assumptions:

- Everything that is born out of human beings is human, and therefore has human potential, this also includes intellectual handicapped people. They are not people with "other" abilities than "normal" people, just people.
- The most pervasive characteristic of man is that being human means being plural. Each person is unique, but also part of the same humanity. Plurality is indispensable.
- Remarks on Experiencebased Framing apply in full to each person, old or young, client or caretaker. That's why Experiencebased Framing is recognizable, it also affects you and your own performance.
- Experiencebased Framing is a theory that is not based on levels and irreversible stages of development, but of development and support as a dynamic and co-regulative process. The meaning of this co-regulation is explained further on in this summary.

## A MEANINGFUL LIFE: AN UNDENIABLE HUMAN CONDITION

Each person, whether a newborn baby or a grownup, is living amidst a reality that is constantly changing. Miscellaneous impressions are implied on people, and through our senses and our nervous system, all these stimuli is translated into reality so that we can prevent perishing in the chaos. In one way or another, we set out to create order. Much of what we receive through our senses, we disregard. We ignore all kinds of sounds, or what we smell, feel or see. We only proceed with the impressions that we consider meaningful. To attribute meaning we use the four senses of Experiencebased Framing. They provide us with fantasy, curiosity, necessity, in order to feel good about our present life and state of being. The attributed meaning can be very small and to others insignificant (I feel something) or complex and unduly to others (I have to be managing director at the age of 37, because my dad was at 38), but they are equally important to the person at that moment. If he has to throw up, even the most ambitious person will push his boss aside. The importance of reaching a safe place exceeds the wish to be friendly with his boss. Attributing meaning thus determines to what we perceive. I did not notice the oncoming car, because I was looking at a beautiful girl, walking across the other side. I did not think about the girl anymore, though, when I felt the car hitting me. I felt pain! My reality became a lot smaller and less complex in an instant.

When dealing with other people in a relationship that is based on an uneven balance of power, it is all the more important to consider the meaning that is given by the dependent other. Shared understanding of meaning cannot be coerced, but relies on the indispensable quality of every human being, to be a fellow human. This invokes the necessity to share experience (coherent information about reality). This shared experience comes about based on each individual perception. To enlighten this delicate process and share information about the components that shape individual perception, the theory of Experiencebased Framing is developed. Four different senses provide each and every one with an ongoing flow of relevant information and concepts to grasp this information.

## EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING: A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

### PHENOMENOLOGY, CHANGING THE PARADIGM

Science can be divided in several schools, perspectives and paradigms. This often determines the looking glass or the searchlight with which one looks at reality. It affects the way methods and approaches are shaped and assessed, but also what is concurred with.

Empirical thinking is the current leading paradigm in social studies. This means that opinions, theories and practices must be substantiated by measurable and observable goals and descriptions. It standardizes the perception of reality. Therefore, different people are able to share understanding concerning reality, and you can agree on what you are doing and why you are doing it.

A large part of understanding Experiencebased Framing is perceiving from a phenomenological (contextual) point of view, giving a hermeneutic (contextual narrative) explanation and then offering a heuristic framework used to proceed to act in a professional way. Thus, the Experiencebased Framing as an approach complements empirical knowledge to do more justice to reality. It is designed to describe and explain

the way someone faces reality. This gives an insight in the point of view from the client in addition to data from empirical methods and tests that provide information about the physical or cognitive capabilities and limitations. Experiencebased Framing provides tools to understand the context and the grounds of behavior as a phenomenon. Empirical data and Experiencebased Framing are complementary in the approach and support of people and help professionals to better understand and confront reality. Not only with regard to the client, but also regarding peers and colleagues.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Experiencebased Framing is discovered and described by the Dutch psychologist and theologian Dr. Timmers-Huigens, PhD. She realised in the late sixties, while working in an institute for intellectual disabled people, that there appeared to be a large incoherence in the way the patients experienced reality and the way the caretakers were treating them. She became convinced that there had to be a more fitting approach, which would bring joy to the lives of both clients and caretakers. Since she did not find the answers in the existing theories and treatments, she started describing what she thought were the underlying mental schemes that led to certain behaviour in both clients and staff. Based on these concepts she started advising colleagues and staff on how to improve the joy and wellbeing for both clients and themselves. It worked a miracle.

In 1997 Dorothea Timmers-Huigens graduated as PhD. by substantiating the theory of Experiencebased Framing as an explanation for intergenerational transfer of faith and religion. The substantiation is also valid for every form of interhuman contact which is based on a power imbalance, such as the relationship between parents and children, the care for the intellectual disabled or non-congenital brain damage and is a well-used approach for anticipating and solving problem behavior. Scientific background for the Theory of Experiencebased Framing is found in:

### 1. *Chaos theory*

Chaos theory teaches us that child development does not occur in spurts (as is the widespread paradigm), but that every aspect of human existence develops at their own pace. And rapid development in one area may temporarily cause so-called catastrophe-flashes on other already well-controlled areas. This applies to infants but also to adults.

### 2. *Theory of Mind*

Theory of mind teaches that man is equipped with basic psychological concepts that allow common sense. There are several concepts but at least two are relevant for the theory of Experiencebased Framing. In any event, every human being uses the two antagonistic notions from birth:

- That of the **Beliefs** or expectations about reality. This notion brings stability to the reality. (This remains normal, as previously observed).
- The other teaches that **Desires** empower the notion that reality is changeable, can be modified by oneself or with the other peoples help.



### 3. Epigenetic psychology

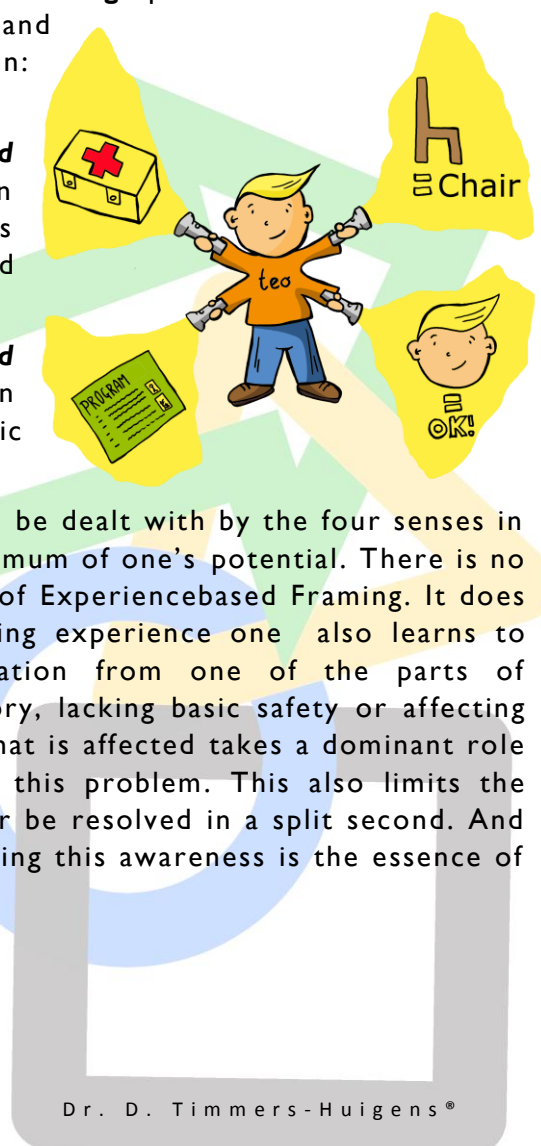
The epigenetic psychology and infant science (Nossent / Fogel) tell us that man is not self-regulating (adaptive to the environment and demands of reality) system, but that every person has a co-regulatory system (innovating, initiating, responding) in relationship to the other. Development depends on the quality of that relationship.

#### THE FOUR SENSES OF EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING

**Experiencebased Framing** teaches that every human, through innate qualities of the psyche, is capable of transferring experience (stimuli processed into information) to order in four ways (senses). These senses operate simultaneously and as long as there is conscious life. This means that all four senses are operational from before birth till death. None of the senses can be de-activated or not developed. One can compare the four senses to a quadruplet. They are inseparable, but each has its own unique perspective on reality, sheds its own light.

- **The Physical sense of Experiencebased Framing** provides information on the **safety** of physical existence. This includes the basic question: Is my body **safe**?
- **The Associative sense of Experiencebased Framing** provides information on the **predictability** of the instantaneous and practical reality. This includes the basic question: Is the current reality **reliable**?
- **The Structuring sense of Experiencebased Framing** provides information on the **consistency** of events and episodes. This includes the basic question: Do I understand the **coherence** of the event?
- **The Constituting sense of Experiencebased Framing** provides information on **selfdetermination**. This includes the basic question: Is the **individuality** properly met?

As long as information about the current reality can be dealt with by the four senses in a sufficient way, one is able to function to the maximum of one's potential. There is no conscious awareness of the pre-cognitive functions of Experiencebased Framing. It does effect the conscious actions though. With increasing experience one also learns to organize and manage reality. But if the information from one of the parts of Experiencebased Framing experience is unsatisfactory, lacking basic safety or affecting the balance of Experiencebased Framing. The part that is affected takes a dominant role and limits the potential of the person to resolve this problem. This also limits the possibilities of quality of life. It can happen, alter or be resolved in a split second. And often without significant others being aware. Creating this awareness is the essence of the theory of Experiencebased Framing.



## THE THEORY ON EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING

Whilst applying the insights from her theory, Dr. Timmers-Huigens discovered that her advices were extremely useful for both clients, caretakers, parents and so on. In every situation where people interact, the principles and schemes that are described in the Theory of Experiencebased Framing® apply. Therefore she wrote them down in a methodology for dealing with intellectual disabled, and “the joy of being human” was published in 1980. Since then Dorothea Timmers-Huigens spent the next 30 years further developing and describing the theory and teaching Experiencebased Framing to organisations for intellectual disabled, institutes for geriatric care, and professionals dealing with infants and children in the Netherlands and Belgium.

The Theory on Experiencebased Framing is not a theory about the objective reality as such, but the subjective reality as one experiences on a daily basis. The four senses are present in every human being, no matter how limited the capacities. Everything that has the possibility to experience, requires a way of framing these experiences and value them for everyday life.

The four senses are based on several psychological theories, creating a searchlight on reality that is very useful in dealing with people who have lesser communication skills, i.e. intellectual disabled, young children, elderly or people with latter damage to the brain.

## EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING AND RELATIONAL FRAMES

We know that people are equipped with relational frames to process stimuli into information that creates order. Relational frames are present, even before we are born. You recognize your mother's voice immediately after birth. The framing forces work spontaneous, they are a human condition.

They organize the reality that otherwise would come to us in a big mess. Such forces give human beings a feeling of control over reality around us.

Michael is with his parents in a forest in France, amidst the high trees. Why is Michael not afraid of the forest? He has never been there, what if all the trees fall over and crush him? Because he is confident that the trees themselves will behave like the trees in the woods near his home. Because he sees that his parents are not afraid and he is right to trust the trees.

The two main organizing forces are these:

**The conviction that reality is stable.** A tree remains a tree, your mother still your mother, and a cup will always behave as a cup.

A newborn baby who is dressed once will cooperate when it's dressed for the second time by flexing the muscles a little, that is how fast that conviction works. Thanks to this conviction as a child you learn a lot in the first two years. Never in your life you learn more about reality than in those two years.

Myrtle is only two years but she finds it quite normal that she can drink from a red, or a yellow cup. She also knows that she can drink from a cup that has an handle, but it looks very different from the cups she used before. Myrtle used to want only her own drinking cup, now she likes to try all kinds of cups. Myrtle climbs on every seat that she sees, no matter what shape it is. Everything is: to sit on, or for drinking. Nobody taught Myrtle this, she discovered it because they assumes that reality will continue to behave as she first experienced. Therefore she also dares to trust that something very similar to that first experience will behave equally.

**One feels that he or she also can change reality.** Sometimes you can do it alone (I want to put that chair over there, not here), sometimes you need another (would you close my zipper?). You can change the reality as a human being so that your aspirations, that your needs are met. Sometimes you can do it alone, sometimes you need a fellow human being. But you can change the reality within certain limits.

I'm hungry, I'll make myself a sandwich! I'm in pain, I need a doctor to help me

## CO-REGULATION

Everybody is always fellow human being. For everyone, other people are important. We all form a relationship with those other people. We adjust to one another, we react, we encourage the other from a strong interaction. This interaction is not, as is sometimes described, a continuous chain of action (adults) and response (child), but it is a continuous exchange of information. Body language is an important source of information. Information may be a confirmation to your beliefs about reality (watch out, that's barbed wire, yet I'm smiling: you're right to withdraw your hand), you can learn something about the way your wishes can be fulfilled in this process (I like you, here's something to drink). It is an ongoing process of entwined influence and perception. This process is called co-regulation. Co-regulation happens wherever people are, but its quality can vary. Sometimes it is of a high quality (you support each other in managing control of reality) and sometimes it is of poor quality (the information does not fit your situation or mood). There is always co-regulation, any contact between people brings forth co-regulation.

Kevin is outside fighting with Kars. Kars kicked Kevin, but the teacher did not see it. She does however see that Kevin is very angry at Kars and punches him. She walks to Kevin and says, "You naughty boy, punching is not allowed. That hurts, come with me, you cannot play outside anymore. " Kevin is very sad, the teacher does not understand. He is sulking beside the teacher. The co-regulation is of poor quality, not just because of Kevin who is angry, but also because the teacher, had no regard for Kevin's interests or experience of the event.



## EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

### FOUR QUESTIONS TO ANSWER THE BIG ONE

The big question is, when is everything allowed to remain as it is, and when should it change?

People feel good in situations where a positive answer to four questions is possible. All four questions are constantly relevant, but one is not aware of them. They precede and evoke awareness.

The questions are:

- IS THE BODY SAFE?
- IS THE RELIABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT SUFFICIENT?
- IS THE COHERENCE OF THE EVENT UNDERSTOOD?
- IS THE INDIVIDUALITY PROPERLY MET?

Through these questions, you organize reality into that information about what you are experiencing. The information is stored in the memory and can be used to quickly organize future situations. Therefore, these are the questions of Experiencebased Framing . Each question belongs to a certain sense of framing:

- The question: Is my body **safe**? deals with the *physical sense of Experiencebased Framing*
- The question: Is the current reality **reliable**? deals with the *associative sense of Experiencebased Framing*
- The question: Do I understand the **coherence** of the event? deals with the *structuring sense of Experiencebased Framing*
- The question: Is the **individuality** properly met? deals with the *constituting sense of Experiencebased Framing*.

One asks these questions without knowing. For as long as you live you ask yourself those questions. You ask them yourself, without noticing. And you answer them without knowing it. As long as all questions are answered with "YES" you feel fine, nothing needs to change. If you want to change something, you would do it consciously and willingly.

Daisy is sitting outside enjoying the sun. Total relaxation. She's having a Drink, listening to music on her headphones. There is no reason to change her situation. Yet suddenly she thinks: I'm going for a walk. She stands up and walks down the path, still very at ease. She changes consciously and willingly.

But there could be something someone else does, changing the situation.

Daisy soaks up the sun, she feels totally at ease, as far as she's concerned nothing needs to change. But her mother comes out and says, "Do you want an ice cream Daisy? ". Yes, I would like some." Then come over here, we are sitting in the front yard and we've got ice cream ". Daisy joins her mother. She feels fine.

There may be other reasons why Daisy would change, in fact, there are reasons why Daisy must change!

-Her body is no longer safe.

Daisy soaks up the sun, everything is fine, until she feels she must go to the bathroom. She gets up and goes to the toilet. She may ignore the urge to go to the toilet for a while, but not too long, she has to change.

- The current reality is unreliable.

Daisy soaks up the sun, everything is fine. But suddenly it starts raining. The current reality is no longer suitable for this activity. Daisy cannot rely on it to stay the same (sunny and warm) and she must go inside.

- The coherence of the event is not clear.

Daisy is sitting outside. She just sits there, waiting for her parents come to take her to town. But they do not show up. Where are they? Daisy is getting restless. I think I will give them a call....

- Daisy feels that she cannot constitute her own reality.

Daisy is sitting outside in the sun, with her headphones. She feels totally at ease. But she knows her mother detests her sitting in the sun doing nothing. Soon she will come and say that Daisy is idling. She will cause a scene for sure. Why won't her mother understand that you need a little break from homework now and then and just want to sit outside? She always stresses you have to finish homework first. -Don't you have something else to do? - She will never understand, Daisy thinks to herself. She wants to relax, but she feels restless. - I'd better go back inside and finish my homework, she thinks, and yet she feels angry with herself.

## **SUBCONSCIOUS AND CONSCIOUS USE OF EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING**

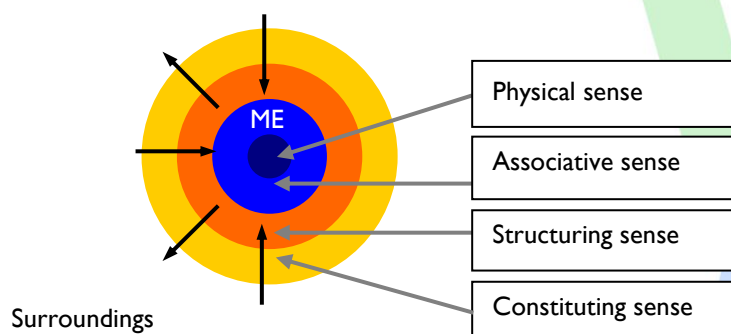
Experiencebased Framing is a psychic power that works spontaneously. One is not cognitively aware of this. It is the flexible learning brain that is being used. The way the senses work cannot be analyzed as a separate activity of the brain. It is a theoretical model (stepping stone) to understand complex processes that can be interactively affiliated. The psychic forces described and referred to in the theory are used from birth (and before that). We humans have an agile mind. Use of the forces occurs

spontaneously. Gradually there is more awareness of the information that is processed using the psychic powers the theory of Experiencebased Framing describes.

Experiencebased Framing is not used deliberately, but plays a major role in the way a person experiences and interprets the world. Thus Experiencebased Framing nurtures cognitive and emotional functioning.

Baby Luna smells, feels, and tastes her mother. The physical proximity is very familiar, thereby her own body also is secure, but if the body becomes unsafe because Luna is hungry, the physical sense is dominant. She now employs the other senses to regain the safety of her body. Luna is looking for that special place with the mother that represents the reliability of the current reality in the distress of hunger, the mother's breast. When Luna has had a single drink from that breast she knows it so well that her anticipating lips form exactly in the shape of the nipple. That is how the associative sense works in the service of the physical sense of Experiencebased Framing. But Luna also knows the whole ritual of being taken from the cradle, cuddled on her mother's lap just before the drinking begins. It set itself accordingly. If a stranger grabs her from the cradle and the structuring sense notices that the little ritual before the drinking is disrupted, it will render Luna uncertain. Maybe her body does not feel safe anymore and gives of a signal: Luna cries. If all goes well, Luna also needs eye contact to be acknowledged and recognized in its own way of just drinking a little and then stopping, smiling and then continue. This subtle interplay between human and fellow human remains even after the babyhood extremely crucial.

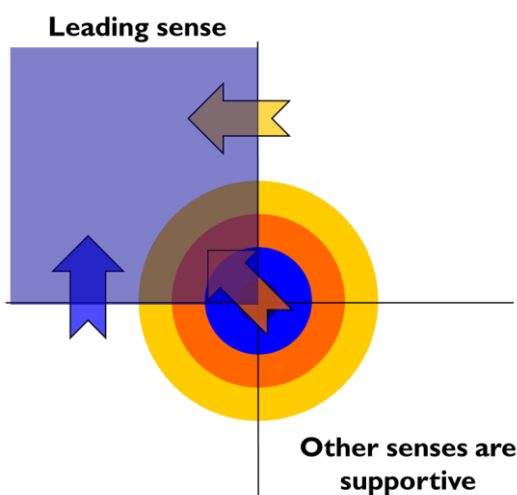
## THE SEARCHLIGHT OF EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING



## LEADING ROLE OR DOMINANT SENSE

Experiencebased Framing is not only a passive system that can be stimulated or addressed, but it is actively used to confront reality, both conscious and subconscious. This ability to gather information and use this to respond to current experience develops as it is more and more known, appreciated and used. Significant others support, stimulate and train this use of the four senses by their actions, responses and presence in the ongoing co-regulative process. There is a catch, though, to the use of experiencebased Framing and co-regulation. This is defined as the leading or dominant role of one of the senses. When asked the four questions (always ask all four!) one or more of them are answered in a negative way. No. The difference between a leading role or dominance is the amount of influence one has over the current process or event. Whether it is leading or dominant, one of the senses becomes more pronounced and the other senses take an accessory role. As a significant other, it is crucial to recognize and acknowledge this pronounced sense and subsequently approach this sense. Especially when a sense becomes dominant, all other interventions are futile or contra-productive.

## TAKING THE LEAD



Generally the quadruplets get along just fine. They explore the surroundings and gather their own unique information to create experience. A leading role of one of the senses occurs more often than not, but usually this is a subtle and fleeting process. Sometimes the leading role is very obvious. If you get hungry, the physical sense takes the lead and the other senses provide information and support. You know where to find some food (it's always in the kitchen), won't eat too much, because it is almost dinnertime, and prefer chocolate chip cookies, they're your favorite! There is no problem, but the leading

role needs to be addressed. You can choose to overpower it when another part takes the lead. You promised yourself you would lose some weight, get a grip! Still, no problem. It is crucial though, that significant others, especially if they have power over you, take your leading role in account. A denial of food, for example because the other knows it's dinnertime soon, must be combined with recognition of your own reality.

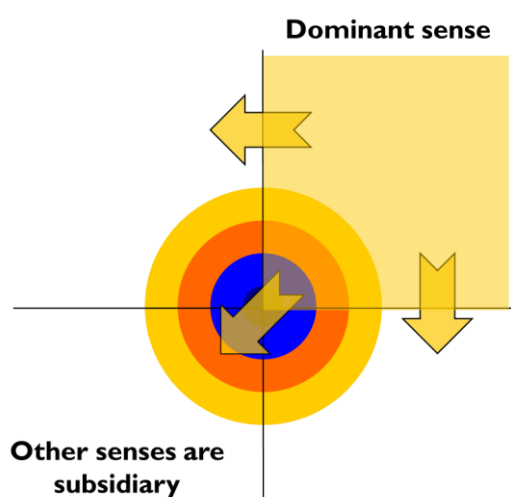
The significant other can address the supportive senses of Experiencebased Framing, but in a way that is congruent with my possibilities and limitations in that moment.

A leading role does not always trigger behavior that is desirable for the significant other. It is the way I deal with reality. For example, I know that nagging irritates you and usually lets me have my way. In this perspective you are very reliable to me, even though this is in fact a inconsistency in your behavior.

*Catherine, age 3, gets out of bed around six times every night. Her mother always tells her to go back upstairs, but subsequently asks what is wrong. Catherine tells she's thirsty, needs to use the toilet, is scared. All three options are part of a bigger event that involves getting out of bed, talking to her mother, etc. This event feeds the leading role of the structuring sense. Mother is not happy, but Catherine learned long ago that she will always join the event and let Catherine linger for a while. An unsatisfactory event for mother, but satisfactory for Catherine.'*

Each sense can take a leading role, there is no hierarchy. The other parts become supportive, but are not limited in their own function and broadness. The leading role is often applied subconsciously, based on previous experience (operant conditioning). Leading roles can interchange in a spur of a moment, if all senses appear to cooperate in harmony.

### DOMINANCE OF ONE OF THE SENSES



Dominance is a different story. One of the senses fails to address the current chain of events. All other senses immediately come to an aid to remedy the dominance. They are limited to this one task, take on a subsidiary role.

Dominance is a survival strategy, that is applied if one of the questions is answered with a negative answer that cannot be dealt with. One tries desperately and uncontrollably to remedy this, using all means necessary. Whereas a leading role triggers application of (expected) successful methods, dominance has one (sometimes literally) clashing significant others

or objects. Aggression, inappropriate behavior, even self-mutilation can occur. It is likely that the person experiencing the dominance is not capable of remedying, but depends fully on others. A dominance overcomes a person and is never actively applied. Addressing the dominant sense is indispensable. When a person suffers a hartattaque, immediate aid in the physical sense is required. It is not functional for a paramedic to hold al lecture about the characteristics of a hartattaque. A day later, at the hospitalbed talking to the same paramedic, it can be very enlightening.

*Catherine and her mother are taking a walk. Even though summer has gone, Catherine insisted on wearing her favourite summerdress one last time. It could be the last time ever, she already grew out of her matching shirt. When Catherine runs down a little hill, she trips and falls flatout. Her mother hurries towards the crying child and kneels next to her. "I told you wearing this dress was a bad idea, look at you, now you've busted your knee, blood all over your*

<sup>1</sup> Taken from "Observere and rapport", second edition 2011



*new shoes. Will you listen to me now?" Catherine cannot answer her mother, but cries louder and louder until her mother picks her up, holds her close and comforts her. The dominance of the physical sense (the busted knee) prevents Catherine from listening to what her mother said. Only when the physical distress is dealt with, are the other senses capable of dealing with the information mother was sharing with Catherine.*

To recognize dominance in the concept of Experience based framing is crucial in preventing and resolving problematic behavior. More often than not, caretakers, coaches or significant others address the senses in a way they cannot handle at that time. The event becomes a negative context for both, whilst neither feels capable of changing the chain of events. Let me stress here that the experiencebased frame of the significant other also plays a crucial role in the quality of co-regulation.

## RESPONDING TO THE LEADING OR DOMINANT SENSE

When one part becomes leading or dominant, the other parts of the Experiencebased Framing are employed in the service of that one part of the experience to regain control over reality.

Florence is sent to the kitchen to fetch a spoon. The coach has forgotten to tell her the drawers of the kitchen are organized differently than before. Florence opens the cutlery drawer, and there are now tea towels. As such this is a problem in the structuring sense of the Experiencebased Framing. The coherence of the drawers is changed.

When Florence discovers the change in coherence, this does not necessarily mean that Florence will react within her structuring sense of Experiencebased Framing to solve the problem. Neither will it necessarily mean that this structuring sense in Florence is now dominant. The coach, who must help Florence because she did not immediately succeed to get the spoon, cannot therefore assume that aid within the coherence of the event will be effective. The coach applies his own Experiencebased Framing and has no problem adjusting to the new coherence, so the coach will immediately resolve this little problem using its context and thus rely on the structuring sense of Experiencebased Framing. That's a first impulse. But following that impulse leads to co-regulation of low quality. And that can lead to conflicts or problems.

As a coach you tend to follow your own inner logic because your Experiencebased Framing is also applied and that analysis is a major part of your own existence.

Florence is angry because it does not add up, she screams that the spoon is not there and by the time the coach is nearby, tears of anger are running down her cheeks. Although the problem occurs within the structuring sense, she displays a physical response. She obviously feels no longer physically safe in this situation and shows that this way.

- The coach who understands the anger comes forth from confusion, is not angry because Florence is mad, but put stops her anger by taking hold looking at her and

say, "Stop right there Florence, I'll help." And then he takes Florence along and assists her to find the right drawer by pointing it out or by opening the tray with her.

- Only then can the structuring sense be addressed by explaining how the kitchen has changed.

Limitation of certain mental capacities makes dominance or leading roles more likely in certain situations. When people (children) are well known, the predictability can be mapped. The ability to recognize a dominant or leading sense of Experiencebased Framing can increase the quality of co-regulation greatly.

Florence blames herself for not finding the spoon; she is sad and tells the coach that Florence cannot find it. So she solely blames herself for the failure of her mission. Her constituting sense of the Experiencebased Framing is dominant, her confidence is disrupted. Florence is employing the physical sense of Experiencebased Framing in order to clarify this, he starts crying "Florence cannot" she cries.

- The coach comforts Florence and reassures her. "You can do it, but the spoon is somewhere else." He restores her self-esteem and asks her now to use her constituting sense of the Experiencebased Framing to find the spoon. "Where can we look together?"

Experiencebased Framing offers clues in the communicative sphere. But in the Individual supporting plan and in working with materials Experiencebased Framing can be taken into account.

In the first place:

When a person performs worse than usual, or not clearly thrives, the following questions can be asked:

- **IS THE BODY SAFE?**
- **IS THE RELIABILITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT SUFFICIENT?**
- **IS THE COHERENCE OF THE EVENT UNDERSTOOD?**
- **IS THE INDIVIDUALITY PROPERLY MET?**

In all situations where the answer to these questions (one or more) is NO, the following questions need to be considered:

- Is there a shortage or jammer effect causing the question to be answered NO?
- Is there an inner cause for the dominance of one sense of the Experiencebased Framing?
- Where is the source of the problem: with the client, the pupil, the child, the resident, or the approach of the group leader. Or are there other residents, peers, that trigger the dominance of one sense of the Experiencebased Framing.

## EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING APPLIED TO PROFESSIONAL INTERACTION

The Theory of Experiencebased Framing is an explanatory model for how people view the world around them and what their behavioral response is. This applies to all people. 85% of communication consists of non-verbal communication, influenced by cultural and social assumptions. In professional communication, most attention is paid to the 15% verbal communication because that part much easier to interpret and explain. For the majority of people this is so evident, that they are barely aware of this.

For vulnerable people in every sense this is not so evident. They are often more dependent on nonverbal communication and behavior. Experiencebased Framing enables identification, explanation and anticipation of such communication. That makes it a very valuable basis for all interpersonal acting within a team or institution. The theory is currently being used by various institutions as a unifying theory for interpersonal action in a dignified and professional way.

### THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEMANDS CAN BE MAPPED

When all senses are in harmony (all questions are answered with YES), the client can actively use its Experiencebased Framing. In this situation can be easily supported by the coach, answering questions and giving information and instruction.

When client shows restless behavior, particular attention should be given to empowering the self-esteem, the singularity or the constructive sense.

Is there a problem in the response to guidance, then support should be given especially in clarifying the consistency. The structuring sense of Experiencebased Framing is emphasized.

If there is dysfunctional, problematic behavior throughout, particular attention should be on the reliability (clarity) of current reality. The associative sense becomes dominant, assistance is required in that area.

Is there a serious disruption there usually also is body-related acting out. The safety of existence is at stake (whether real or in the perception of man with intellectual disability and the physical sense of Experiencebased Framing is dominant. Assistance should be given aiding this physical sense, before anything else is possible.

If a certain sense of Experiencebased Framing gives dominant signals, guidance or support should be applied to that dominant sense. The person can get blocked in using his or her Experiencebased Framing, and someone else must come to his or her aid.

In a situation of dominance all forces if the other senses are employed in order to reduce the negative feelings that the dominant sense of Experiencebased Framing evokes. The social worker, counselor, teacher or parent can then see where the misery comes from by recognizing and acknowledging the dominant sense. This way problem behavior and the need for more support (or more coaches) can be prevented.

Communication (including communicative action, which is any form of supporting, coaching, etc.) of a high co-regulatory quality is consistent with the dominant sense of Experiencebased Framing. When co-regulation is of a high quality all senses are in harmony, all senses are employed and both coach and client are able to use their abilities and enjoy their human capacities.

## ADVANTAGES OF EXPERIENCEBASED FRAMING

- Employing Experiencebased Framing justifies the experience and capabilities of the client. As a result, employees are able to explain behavior of clients and anticipate on this.
- As behavior can be recognized and interpreted timely problem behavior can be prevented and the quality of life increased.
- The quality of care and welfare for both employees and clients can be improved. It is also possible for significant partners (parents, healthcare providers, specialists) to participate in a familiar way.
- The Theory of Experiencebased Framing is an explanatory model, which means that the complex reality can be divided into manageable parts (especially the four questions: Is my body safe, is the environment reliable, do I understand the coherence, am I allowed to be myself). This can be employed quickly and visibly.
- Employees recognize that they are adequately qualified and supported so that the sense of security for both coach and client improves.
- The Theory of Experiencebased Framing can be used in combination with any other method or theory that revolves around shared understanding. The effectiveness of these methods is also increased.
- The Theory of Experiencebased Framing is based scientifically, but lies close to the theoretical and practical common sense. This can be translated in different ways to care for and by everyone from the kitchen help to members of the board.
- For over 30 years Experiencebased Framing is considered among the most practical and effective methods of care to people with intellectual disabilities in the Netherlands and Belgium.
- Employing Experiencebased Framing in daily routines does not require additional funds, it only requires the preparedness and the knowledge or training to use it in the approach of professional care and the use of the potential in every human being, intellectual disabled or not.

## TEO: BUILDING A NEW WAY OF UNDERSTANDING

Based on the principles of Experiencebased Framing, people from different organisations and institutions are building together, creating a way of understanding people from their own point of view. As the name suggests, the best way of learning about Experiencebased Framing is by experience. Dr. Timmers-Huigens is available for information about her theory and the possibilities it suggest. She is supported in expanding and spreading knowledge about Experiencebased Framing by TEO (Timmers Ervaringsordening), founded by two of her sons.

TEO is founded to help the Theory of Experiencebased Framing remaining a strong and effective approach to human behavior and interaction, but also in spreading an entwining knowledge, methodology and techniques in every aspect of human interaction. Leading concept is the small world theory, wherein TEO intends to be a hub and reliable and inspiring partner in development.

Curious about prospects and possibilities? Contact us, and find out what we are all about! Information (in Dutch, but also this summary) can be found on the internet, [WWW.EXPERIENCEBASEDFRAMING.COM](http://WWW.EXPERIENCEBASEDFRAMING.COM). TEO can be reached by e-mail: [TEO@EXPERIENCEBASEDFRAMING.COM](mailto:TEO@EXPERIENCEBASEDFRAMING.COM). Questions, cases and suggestions (in English is no problem) by e-mail are most welcome and will be addressed by Dr. Timmers-Huigens or one of her sons, Merlijn and Levien Timmers, working together in TEO.



### LITERATURE USED (original books are in Dutch, written by Dr. Timmers-Huigens)

**Experiencebased Framing : Opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities;** <sup>5</sup> th completely revised edition of “Opportunities for the intellectually disabled, for whom works with mentally handicapped” and “joyfull humanity, you can do something about it” (4 parts). Elsevier Publication (2005) ISBN: 9035227557 nur.897.

**More than listening,** the empathic moment of communication. Elsevier Maarssen, 2001. ISBN: 9035224094.

**Observe and rapport in professional care and support,** 3<sup>rd</sup> revised edition. Van Tricht uitgeverij, Deventer, 2011. ISBN: 9789077822494.