

The **SCARF Model** explains social needs. It's especially valuable in times of change, because whether people welcome or resist change depends on whether one or more of the following needs are threatened:

Rewards

Threats

Positive feedback,
(public) acknowledgement

STATUS

Ranking compared to others

Getting unsolicited advice,
performance reviews,
(public) critique

Clear expectations & goals,
realistic schedules

CERTAINTY

Ability to know & predict the future

Unpredictable behaviour,
lack of transparency,
dishonesty

Self-organization,
having choices

AUTONOMY

Sense of control over events

Being micro-managed,
authoritative leadership

Having a friend at work,
mentoring programmes,
socialising

RELATEDNESS

Sense of belonging & safety with others

Competition,
strangers

Transparent decisions,
open communication,
clear rules

FAIRNESS

Fair exchanges between people

Lack of ground rules,
unequal treatment

For the brain, social pain is very similar to physical pain. When we feel threatened our biochemical responses make it hard for us to think. If more than one need is threatened, the effects multiply. Use SCARF to understand how people react.

Each person's "neediness" is different. What threatens one person may not affect another, e.g. people who are confident in their skills deal better with uncertainty. That being said, **Certainty** is the most important need for most people.

When planning a change, use SCARF to identify how the change will affect others' needs. Then try to lessen the impact by strengthening other needs, e.g. if the future is uncertain, try to increase people's influence on what happens so that their autonomy is higher and increase their group spirit so that relatedness is higher.

When you are affected by change you can reflect on which of the needs are threatened and find ways to strengthen the other needs for yourself.

