

When the King Listens: A Gentle Guide to Resolving Emotional Dissonance through Modular Spiral Cognition

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Introduction

Most people carry unresolved tension inside them. A strange tightness in the chest, a pattern of avoidance, or a strained relationship left untouched for months. Often, we assume we're just too busy, too hurt, or too uncertain to address it. But what if that discomfort is more than just avoidance? What if it's a system-level governance failure happening inside your mind?

This paper is not an academic article, but a practical and intuitive walkthrough of a powerful insight I recently stumbled into while reflecting on my own emotional blind spots. Using the MSC framework—a model I developed to explain how minds manage internal conflict and value systems—I walked myself through a real-time emotional conflict and came out the other side with clarity, calm, and choice.

If it worked for me, it might work for others.

What is MSC?

Modular Spiral Cognition (MSC) is a systems-level model of thought. It breaks the mind into three core subsystems:

- **The Reactor** — fast, emotional, instinctive; detects threat, urgency, desire
- **The Interpreter** — narrative-driven, identity-protective, rationalizes decisions
- **The Observer** — metacognitive, slow, reflective; watches for conflict or misalignment

These subsystems are influenced by **Spiral Modules**: internalized value systems based on life experience and social modeling. The four foundational ones are:

- **Red**: Power, control, loyalty, dominance
- **Blue**: Rules, duty, tradition, moral authority
- **Orange**: Efficiency, logic, success, strategy
- **Green**: Empathy, fairness, harmony, compassion

And when integration begins, a new mode becomes available:

- **Yellow:** Meta-awareness, synthesis, reflection, perspective-taking

In MSC, your thoughts and behaviors aren't driven by a single personality or identity—they emerge from shifting coalitions between these subsystems and value modules.

The Realization

I hadn't spoken to my sister in months.

After a long-standing conflict with my parents, I had slowly reestablished contact with them by offering my research as a bridge. But I hadn't reached out to her. When I finally thought about why, I felt anxiety, tightness in my chest, and a racing pulse.

That's when I remembered to ask the question: **Which subsystem is generating these emotions?**

I started with the MSC flow. I activated the Observer and began listening inward.

The Yellow King and the Four Advisors

Imagine your mind as a kingdom. At its center sits a thoughtful King—the Yellow-mode Observer. Around him are four powerful advisors, each representing a core value system.

Each advisor speaks:

- **Red:** "She didn't take your side. That's a betrayal of loyalty."
- **Blue:** "She stood by your mom. That's what a good daughter does. You're the one breaking the rules."
- **Orange:** "She sees your mom every day. She helps with the kids. You live far away. Her choice was efficient."
- **Green:** "She disregarded your pain. She chose comfort over compassion."

Each advisor has a point. And none of them are fully right.

The King listens, but does not act. The decision is too complex. So, he waits.

In that stillness, something changes. He sees that Red is right about the hurt, but wrong about retaliation.

Blue understands tradition, but not justice.

Orange is practical, but cold.

Green is empathic, but emotionally overwhelmed.

The King does not choose a single advisor. He synthesizes their wisdom.

That's Yellow.

It's not compromise. It's clarity. It's the emergence of **self-governance** over emotional reactivity.

How to Use This Yourself

Here's a simplified, walkable process anyone can use to try this for themselves.

Step 1: Notice the Tension

- Where do you feel it? (Chest, stomach, throat?)
- What situation or relationship does it involve? (What were you thinking about when it started? What's been on your mind? Is anything bothering you?)

Step 2: Ask Who's Speaking

- What is Red saying? (Power, respect, betrayal?)
- What is Blue saying? (Duty, tradition, morality?)
- What is Orange saying? (Efficiency, fairness, cost/benefit?)
- What is Green saying? (Empathy, injustice, belonging?)

Let each voice speak. Don't argue yet.

Step 3: Activate the Observer (Yellow)

- Pause.
- Acknowledge each value system. Ask: *What wisdom is hiding beneath this bias?*
- Now ask: *What's missing? What would resolve this, not just suppress it?*

Step 4: Self-Govern

- Don't choose an advisor. Choose clarity.
 - What action, if any, integrates the insights of all four?
 - What can be forgiven, reframed, or postponed with intention?
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Why This Matters

This process is more than a clever metaphor. It's a real-time diagnostic for emotional dissonance. Instead of being pulled in four directions, you become the one who listens, integrates, and decides.

It reframes emotional spirals as governance failures. And it gives you a chance to unbottle pain you didn't even realize you were carrying.

Therapists might use it. Coaches might teach it. You might try it in the middle of a hard conversation, or a sleepless night.

You don't have to be at war with yourself. You can learn to rule.

Final Reflection

This was my first deliberate attempt to mediate internal conflict through the MSC model. I suspect it won't be the last.

There may be flaws in the metaphor, or blind spots in my self-assessment. But the outcome was undeniable: clarity, calm, and the return of choice.

If this sparks something for you, I encourage you to try it. Listen inward. Name the advisors. Let the King think.

Then govern wisely.