

The Structural Resolution of the Nature-Nurture Dichotomy: Affective Actualization through the Core Emotion Framework

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Abstract:

The Core Emotion Framework (CEF) introduces a structural-constructivist model of affective function that resolves the long-standing nature–nurture debate by distinguishing innate emotional architecture from learned misuse. It defines ten universal Core Emotions organized into Head, Heart, and Gut centers, with Accepting as the foundational base state. Pathology arises when Constricting fuses rigidly with action components, producing Structural Entanglement and the self-perpetuating Vicious Cycle of compulsive obstinacy. Therapeutic resolution occurs through the Creative Insight Paradox—an “Aha!” moment

of Structural Disassembly—where a suppressed emotion re-emerges to shatter rigidity and restore functional separation. Sustained equilibrium requires continuous practice of Yielding, Discernment, and Elevation, enabling dynamic flexibility and non-compulsive assertiveness. By reframing typological models as descriptive maps of pathology rather than identity, and by proposing validation protocols that measure structural integrity rather than trait intensity, the CEF positions itself as a diagnostic and therapeutic instrument for affective actualization and emotional regulation.

Keywords: Core Emotion Framework, structural-constructivism, affective neuroscience, emotional actualization, Head-Heart-Gut centers, compulsive obstinacy, structural entanglement, emotional rigidity, Creative Insight Paradox, Aha! moment, structural disassembly, emotional flexibility, non-compulsive assertiveness, affective equilibrium, personality typology critique, Enneagram analysis, emotion dysregulation, Borderline Personality Disorder, psychometric validation, nature-nurture resolution.

I. Theoretical Foundations: CEF and the Resolution of the Nature-Nurture Dichotomy

The Core Emotion Framework (CEF) emerges as a distinguished structural-constructivist model, explicitly designed to synthesize established principles from affective neuroscience and cognitive theory to understand and resolve psychological function. The framework views the emotional apparatus not as a passive recipient of external stimuli but as an active, structured system equipped with a universal toolkit for processing and responding to reality. This sophisticated approach provides a definitive resolution to the persistent debate over the relative influence of innate factors (Nature) versus environmental learning (Nurture) in shaping the psyche.

1.1. Structural-Constructivism: Positioning the CEF in Affective Science

The core tenet of the CEF's structural-constructivist position is the differentiation between inherent structure and functional efficacy. The CEF asserts that the psychological challenge of distinguishing between inherited components and acquired behavioral patterns is resolved by defining a clear boundary: **Nature** dictates the universal, innate architecture and the structural potential for emotional operation, while **Nurture** dictates the learned, volitional use of that structure, determining its functional efficacy and the resultant pathology.

The structural resolution thesis is centered on the concept of **Structural Entanglement**.¹ The framework posits that the human psyche possesses a universal, innate structure of ten discrete Core Emotions³, a premise supported by findings demonstrating consistent neural representations of emotion concepts. However, this structure carries an inherent vulnerability—the potential for entanglement, which leads to the pathological fusion of emotional capacities. Nurture is defined as the learned, volitional process by which chronic misuse and suppression solidify this innate potential into a fixed, rigid, and self-perpetuating **Vicious Cycle**.⁵ Consequently, the framework reframes neuroticism and psychological limitations not as purely behavioral disorders, but as structural failures activated by learned, maladaptive choices.

1.2. Nature: The Universal Blueprint and the Inherent Structural Flaw

The foundational premise of the CEF is the existence of a universal and complete set of **ten Core Emotions** shared by all individuals, conceptualized as discrete, actionable forces organized into the Head, Heart, and Gut Centers.³ This full complement constitutes the domain of Nature. This structural view finds conceptual alignment with established discrete emotion theories, such as those that delineate specific, fundamental emotions (e.g., Izard's 10 or 12 discrete emotions, including interest, joy, anger, and fear).⁷ The CEF elevates these states into functional, structurally defined components.³ Within this context, individual differences in character are understood not as missing components but as differential, and often compromised, deployment of this shared, inherent structure.

The crucial structural vulnerability delivered by Nature is the **potential for pathological fusion**. This innate tendency causes emotional components to lose their individual flexibility and become rigidly entwined. When actualized, this potential is termed **Structural Entanglement** or **Compulsive Obstinacy**.¹ This critical state manifests specifically when the function of **Constricting** (discipline, exactness) fuses pathologically with either **Boosting** (assertiveness, grounding) or **Accepting** (submission). This fixed liability is a characteristic feature of the innate system that must be addressed for psychological health.

1.3. Nurture: The Actualization of Pathology and the Vicious Cycle

The actual process that solidifies the innate potential for entanglement into a fixed, pathological characterological disposition is defined as **Nurture**, derived from habitual responses and environmental choices. Pathology is established when the entanglement evolves into the **Vicious Cycle**—a chronic neurosis where compulsive actions fail to resolve the underlying conflict, intensifying anxiety and perpetuating the negative emotional context.⁵

Nurture reinforces this cycle through two key acquired mechanisms:

1. **Learned Suppression:** Individuals routinely suppress core emotional functions that might challenge their dominant, comfortable, yet rigid, state. For instance, an individual relying heavily on the **Calculating** function (intellectual isolation) may learn to suppress the intuitive function of **Sensing** (embodied awareness), perceiving external sensory input as corrupting noise that threatens their cognitive stability. This suppression is a learned, chronic defense mechanism.
2. **Acquired Coercion:** This occurs when one core emotion is misused to enforce the pathological demands dictated by another. A critical example is when acquired fear pathologically influences the **Constricting** function, forcing its rigid demand for perfection onto action centers like **Boosting** or **Accepting**, leading to constrained, coerced behaviors rather than flexible, adaptive responses.

The resulting neuroticism is characterized by a limited and compromised range of emotional responses due to chronically entangled emotions, often leading to inhibiting perfectionism or micromanagement through the compromised use of Constricting. The framework establishes that therapy must prioritize the correction of the fundamental structure (Nature) because the pathology is a structural failure activated by learned misuse (Nurture).

II. The Structural Model: Tri-Centric Organization and Functional Polarities

The Core Emotion Framework maps the ten Core Emotions onto a tripartite structure of Head, Heart,

and Gut, each defined by distinct psychological domains and internal dynamics of polar opposition and central synthesis.³

2.1. Organization by Center (Head, Heart, Gut)

The ten core emotional forces are organized into three primary centers and one foundational component, reflecting different psychological imperatives³:

- **Head Center (Cognition):** This center focuses on mental and sensory processing. Its functions culminate in the central component of **Deciding**.³
- **Heart Center (Emotion):** This center governs the emotional dynamics of relating and self-worth. Its functions culminate in the central component of **Achieving**.³
- **Gut Center (Conative):** This center is responsible for instinct, motivation, impulse, and assertion. Its functions culminate in the central component of **Boosting**.³
- **Foundation Component:** The 10th emotion, **Accepting**, defined as Acceptance/Submission, forms the base state upon which the entire structure rests.³ Its foundational positioning indicates that objective acceptance is a prerequisite for the dynamic flexibility (Equilibrium) of the higher centers (Figure 1).

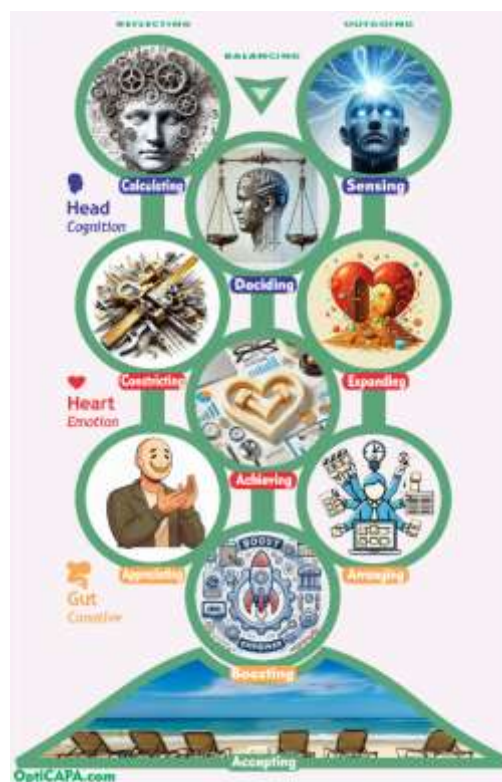


Figure 1. Visual representation of the Core Emotion Framework's tri-centric structure. Each center (Head, Heart, Gut) contains three core emotional functions organized by modality: Reflecting, Outgoing, and Balancing. The foundational emotion, Accepting, anchors the system at its base.

2.2. Functional Polarities: Reflecting and Outgoing Modes

Within the Head, Heart, and Gut Centers, the emotions operate through complementary polarities that dictate their functional modality: **Reflecting** (Internal Processing) and **Outgoing** (External Engagement).³

Within the Head, Heart, and Gut Centers, the emotions operate through complementary polarities that dictate their functional modality: Reflecting (Internal Processing) and Outgoing (External Engagement). Pathological states often stem from the dominance and suppression of one polarity by its counterpart. *Table 1* illustrates this polarity distinction in the Head Center, showing how Calculating exemplifies the Reflecting mode while Sensing exemplifies the Outgoing mode.

Table 1. Functional Polarities in the Head Center (Reflecting vs. Outgoing)

Polarity	Characteristic Modality	Example (Head Center)
Reflecting (Left)	Internal analysis, calculation, discipline, abstract processing. ³	Calculating (Mathematical Computation) ³
Outgoing (Right)	External engagement, sensory reception, expansiveness, embodied input. ³	Sensing (The Power of Human Sensory) ³

This table demonstrates how the Core Emotion Framework distinguishes internal (Reflecting) and external (Outgoing) modalities. Calculating represents structured, abstract processing, while Sensing represents embodied, intuitive input. Deciding synthesizes these polarities to maintain cognitive balance.

2.3. The Balancing Mechanism (Deciding, Achieving, Boosting)

The central component in each center serves as the mechanism for synthesizing the opposing polar inputs, thereby maintaining functional homeostasis and directing output.³

- **Deciding:** Synthesizes the internal data of Calculating with the external data of Sensing to produce **Realistic Decisions**.³
- **Achieving:** Integrates the boundary-setting demand of Constricting with the relational demand of

Expanding, enabling the complex capacity to **Juggle to Perform** effectively.³

- **Boosting:** Acts as the central assertive core, translating motivation into action, and providing **Grounding** for the conative impulse.³

Table II summarizes the organizational structure of the Core Emotion Framework, mapping each center to its psychological domain and functional components.

Table II. CEF Structural Model: Centers, Modes, and Component Organization

Center	Psychological Domain	Left (Reflecting/Internal)	Right (Outgoing/External)	Central (Balancing/Synthesizing)
Head	Cognition	Calculating ³	Sensing ³	Deciding ³
Heart	Emotion	Constricting ³	Expanding ³	Achieving ³
Gut	Conative/Instinctive	Appreciating ³	Arranging ³	Boosting ³
Foundation (10th)	Existential/Base State	N/A	N/A	Accepting ³

This table organizes the ten Core Emotions into Head, Heart, and Gut centers, plus the foundational Accepting function. Each center contains Reflecting (internal), Outgoing (external), and Balancing (synthesizing) modalities, illustrating how emotional capacities are structurally differentiated yet integrated for adaptive functioning.

III. Functional Definitions of the Ten Core Emotions (The Affective Toolkit)

The Core Emotions are defined by their functional role as operational forces necessary for adaptive

psychological engagement.³

3.1. Head Center Functions (Cognitive Synthesis)

These functions govern the accurate intake, processing, and output of data:

- **Calculating:** This Reflecting function is responsible for structured, abstract processing, intellectual discipline, and **Mathematical Computation**.³ When pathologically dominant, it leads to intellectual isolation by enforcing rigid boundaries against experiential input.
- **Sensing:** This Outgoing function enables the integration of intuitive, non-intellectual, and bodily information, defined as **The Power of Human Sensory**.³ Its suppression prevents access to crucial embodied and external data, leading to skewed cognitive outputs.
- **Deciding:** The synthesizing function of the Head Center, ensuring that calculation and sensing result in **Realistic Decisions**.³

3.2. Heart Center Functions (Emotional Dynamics)

These functions manage emotional boundaries and relational complexity:

- **Constricting:** The Reflecting function focused on **Precision** and the necessity of setting boundaries and maintaining discipline.³ Its pathological fusion is the mechanism of Structural Entanglement.
- **Expanding:** The Outgoing function defined by **Inclusiveness** and openness, vital for empathy, connection, and emotional integration with others.³
- **Achieving:** The Balancing function that enables the system to manage competing emotional demands and complexities, defined as the ability to **Juggle to Perform**.³

3.3. Gut Center Functions (Conative Action and Grounding)

These functions are responsible for motivation, execution, and stability:

- **Appreciating:** The Reflecting function of internal gratitude and positive recognition, defined as **Thanking and Enjoying**.³
 - **Arranging:** The Outgoing, action-oriented function responsible for logistical management and execution, defined as **Organize**.³
 - **Boosting:** The Balancing function and core motivational force, providing **Grounding** and the assertive impulse required for movement and persistence.³
 - **Accepting:** The foundational emotional capacity, defined by **Acceptance** and **Submission**.³ This capacity for non-resistance acts as the structural bedrock for flexible operation.
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IV. Structural Pathology: Entanglement, Dysregulation, and Clinical Applications

The CEF's structural analysis provides a clear mechanistic etiology for psychopathology, linking innate vulnerability to acquired fixed behavioral cycles.

4.1. The Critical Pathology of Structural Entanglement

Structural Entanglement occurs when emotional components lose their distinct, functional separation and fuse into a rigid pattern, termed Compulsive Obscurity.¹ The critical pathology involves the **Constricting** function binding pathologically with action components, corrupting their neutral utility.

The consequence of this fusion is the onset of the Vicious Cycle, a chronic state characterized by negatively entangled emotions.⁵ For instance, the fusion of Constricting with Boosting results in a coercive, rigidly enforced system where control and perfectionism dominate adaptive assertiveness. Similarly, the fusion of Constricting with Accepting leads to a debilitating, paralyzed submission, where necessary discipline becomes a fixed restraint against movement. This restriction of dynamic flexibility is structurally equivalent to the chronic emotional instability observed in Neuroticism.¹⁰

4.2. CEF Application to Clinical Constructs

The CEF provides a framework for analyzing emotion dysregulation disorders through the lens of structural failure (*Figure 2*).

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)

Borderline Personality Disorder is clinically characterized by a pervasive, long-term pattern of significant interpersonal relationship instability, acute fear of abandonment, and intense emotional outbursts.¹¹ It is marked by profound difficulties in regulating emotion.¹¹

The CEF analysis suggests that BPD pathology is rooted in the structural failure of the Heart Center's central function, **Achieving** (Juggle to Perform). The intense, prolonged emotional reactivity characteristic of BPD¹² stems from the inability of Achieving to dynamically mediate the polarized demands of **Constricting** (the desperate need for control and rigidity to manage abandonment fear) and **Expanding** (the intense drive for connection and inclusion).³ This structural instability results in constant, high-amplitude oscillation between the emotional poles, preventing any sustained equilibrium. The structural fragility of the Heart Center, compromised by entanglement, therefore dictates the clinical presentation of severe emotion dysregulation.

NATURE

All core emotions coexist and are free to use.

They appear in different sizes and shapes and also the sequence of dominance is different to each person.



NURTURE

Activated core emotions are controlling the suppressed and some fuse or entangle.

Recessive core emotion act only according to rule of dominant, fused work only together.



PATHOLOGY

Core emotions are disformed and unrecognizable.

Messages are misleading with no individual function. Person loses ability to use each when needed.



RESOLUTION

Identify, isolate and process each core emotion individually, until it gets back in shape.

This process is painful, but you will watch the core emotions return to life, granting you agility and efficacy.



EQUILIBRIUM

Core emotion are optimized; they are uniform in shape, balance each other, work when needed and silent when unneeded.

Keep on processing, cycling and shifting each core emotion individually, until you get the most out of them.



Figure 2. Emotional Lifecycle in the Core Emotion Framework

4.3. Critique of Typological Limitations

The structural-constructivist nature of the CEF provides a precise critique of descriptive personality models such as the Enneagram and the Big Five.¹⁰

While typology models categorize observed behavioral patterns—such as the three centers in the Enneagram (Head, Heart, Gut) ⁴ or the dimensions of the Big Five ¹⁰—the CEF asserts that these models describe the *resultant*, acquired character configuration stemming from the Vicious Cycle. Individual differences are structurally attributed to the differential and compromised deployment of the universal toolkit, not to the possession of a unique, fixed set of traits. The critical distinction is that these typologies measure the extent of the **restriction**, or the *consequence* of entanglement. In contrast, the CEF focuses on the correction of the foundational structural deficit itself. The goal of the CEF is not to optimize one's "type," but to achieve **Equilibrium**—the capacity to flexibly access and deploy all ten core emotional components.

Table III summarizes the structural progression from innate potential to pathology and resolution.

Table III. Etiology and Resolution: The Nature-Nurture Chain

Psychological Domain	Nature (Innate Structure)	Nurture (Acquired Pathology)	Resolution Mechanism
Structural Basis	Universal, complete 10-emotion toolkit ³	Learned suppression and chronic misuse	Creative Insight Paradox
Pathological State	Potential for Structural Entanglement (Fixed Liability) ¹	Actualization into a rigid Vicious Cycle (Neurosis) ⁵	Structural Disassembly (Shattering Entanglement)
Goal State	Innate capacity for dynamic flexibility	Acquired compulsive/coerced behaviors	Affective Equilibrium (Deployment of all ten functions) ³

This table outlines the progression from innate emotional structure (Nature) through acquired pathology (Nurture) to therapeutic resolution via Structural Disassembly. It highlights how the Creative Insight Paradox restores equilibrium by shattering entanglement.

V. Therapeutic Resolution and Neurocognitive Basis

The CEF proposes a mechanism for therapeutic change that targets the innate structural flaw, leading to rapid, non-linear transformation.

5.1. Structural Disassembly: The Therapeutic Mechanism

The structural solution is realized through the **Creative Insight Paradox**, universally recognized in cognitive science as the "Aha! Moment." This phenomenon is an opaque leap—a sudden, non-incremental reorganization of problem elements, distinct from analytical, gradual thought.

The CEF provides a precise structural interpretation: the Aha! Moment is **Structural Disassembly**. This event is defined by the powerful, non-linear emergence of a suppressed core emotion that has remained untouched by the Vicious Cycle. This pristine emotional signal introduces irrefutable data that directly targets and shatters the rigid structural entanglement (Compulsive Obstinacy).¹

This process offers a profound resolution: by surgically correcting the underlying innate structural rigidity (Nature), the compulsive need for the learned, chronic behaviors (Nurture) that formed the characterological disposition automatically becomes obsolete. The system is liberated because the structural necessity for the defense mechanism has been removed, allowing the psyche to move toward flexible **Equilibrium**.

5.2. Sustaining Affective Equilibrium: The Continuous Practice

Once Structural Disassembly restores the functional separation of emotional components, continuous volitional practice is required to prevent the re-entanglement of capacities. This continuous maintenance involves three practices: Yielding, Discernment, and Elevation. The structural efficacy of these practices is derived from their correspondence to key CEF functions:

- **Yielding (Submission):** Corresponds directly to the foundational capacity of **Accepting**.³ Yielding maintains the required base state of non-resistance and submission, ensuring the system remains open to reality and prevents defensive rigidification.
- **Discernment (Cognitive Separation):** Requires the active, deliberate use of the Head Center's capacity to distinguish and separate concepts, primarily through **Calculating** and **Deciding**.⁴ This practice safeguards against re-fusion by maintaining the functional boundaries between the restored emotional components.
- **Elevation (Joy):** Involves the continuous practice of positive affect.¹⁵ This ensures the activation and dynamic deployment of positive, outgoing functions, such as **Appreciating** (Thanking and Enjoying) and **Expanding** (Inclusiveness)³, which are essential for maintaining the vitality and flexibility of the recovered system.

Table IV details how the practices of Yielding, Discernment, and Elevation correspond to specific CEF functions.

Table IV. Sustaining Equilibrium: Functional Mapping

Maintenance Practice	Corresponding CEF Function	Structural Goal
Yielding ³	Accepting (Submission) ³	Non-resistance; maintaining the foundational base state necessary for flexibility.
Discernment ¹⁴	Calculating / Deciding (Cognitive Separation) ³	Preventing re-entanglement by maintaining clear functional boundaries between components.
Elevation ¹⁵	Appreciating / Expanding (Joy/Positive Affect) ³	Ensuring activation of positive, outgoing capacities to support dynamic vitality.

This table maps the practices of Yielding, Discernment, and Elevation to their corresponding CEF functions, showing how each contributes to maintaining affective flexibility and preventing re-entanglement.

5.3. Neurocognitive Basis and Structural Integrity

The CEF's premise of a universal, innate emotional blueprint is grounded in neurocognitive data indicating that concepts for specific emotions are stable and structurally distinct within the neural architecture. The tripartite organization of the CEF (Head, Heart, Gut) corresponds functionally to distinct components of the emotional process, such as appraisal mechanisms (Head), motivational mechanisms (Gut), and motor expressions.¹⁶

The efficacy of Structural Disassembly relies on the assumption that emotional components correspond to functionally separable neural systems. By restoring the original, uncorrupted separation of these components, the therapeutic process enables the flexible integration of previously constrained neural pathways. This validation underscores why the resolution of the *structural flaw* (Entanglement) is

necessary to unlock dynamic psychological function, confirming that the framework operates on a level deeper than observable behavior.

VI. Empirical Validation Requirements and Protocols

To establish its rigor, the CEF requires validation protocols that measure structural integrity—the extent of functional separation—rather than merely the intensity or frequency of traits or emotional states.

6.1. The Need for Structural Psychometrics

The core challenge for validating the CEF Scale lies in shifting the measurement focus from affective intensity (e.g., as measured by the Differential Emotions Scale ⁷) to quantifying the degree of structural integrity and functional flexibility. The psychometric criteria must be designed to assess the degree of **Structural Entanglement** versus **Functional Separation**.¹⁷ This necessitates an instrument that can measure an individual's ability to activate or suppress specific emotional components independently, reflecting dynamic flexibility.

6.2. Validation Protocols: Measuring Functional Flexibility

Validation protocols must be designed to quantify the mechanisms of pathology and health within the structural model:

1. **Quantifying Entanglement:** Items must assess the chronic, correlated misuse of components—specifically, measuring the frequency and context of acquired coercion. For instance, psychometric testing should identify the degree to which Constricting is bound to Boosting in non-adaptive, anxious contexts, providing an objective score for the structural pathology.
2. **Quantifying Equilibrium:** The validation must establish reliable measures of the capacity for dynamic deployment. This involves testing the ability to utilize all ten core emotions adaptively and demonstrating functional proficiency across complementary polarities (e.g., successful, balanced deployment of both Calculating and Sensing, not dominance by one).³ Crucially, the scale must measure the consistent application of the maintenance functions (Yielding, Discernment, and Elevation) as a proxy for sustained affective flexibility.
3. **Predictive Validity:** Empirical protocols must test the scale's ability to predict clinical phenomena characterized by restricted range. Specifically, measured entanglement levels should correlate strongly with established metrics of emotion dysregulation¹², particularly those central to Borderline Personality Disorder.¹¹ Demonstrating that high structural entanglement predicts severe clinical indices would confirm the CEF's value as a diagnostic tool for underlying structural

deficits, distinguishing it from purely descriptive, trait-based models.¹³

VII. Conclusion

The Core Emotion Framework offers a comprehensive, structurally grounded theory for affective science. It successfully resolves the nature-nurture debate by defining pathology as a failure of innate structure (Nature's vulnerability to entanglement¹) actualized by learned misuse (Nurture's Vicious Cycle⁵). The framework provides a clear therapeutic path through **Structural Disassembly**, a non-linear intervention that corrects the innate flaw, thereby enabling the psyche to achieve **Affective Equilibrium**—the flexible, adaptive deployment of all ten core emotional components.³ Sustaining this freedom requires continuous volitional use of **Yielding, Discernment, and Elevation**, structurally corresponding to the foundational, cognitive, and outgoing capacities of the emotional system.

The neurocognitive basis of the CEF rests on the separability of emotional concepts in the brain, justifying the emphasis on structural correction. Future work must focus on developing psychometric tools that accurately quantify the structural state of entanglement and separation, allowing the CEF to move from a powerful theoretical model to an empirically validated diagnostic and therapeutic instrument capable of identifying and resolving the structural roots of human psychological distress.

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Visual representation of the Head, Heart, and Gut centers, each containing three emotional functions, anchored by Accepting as the foundational base state.

- **Figure 2. Emotional Lifecycle in the Core Emotion Framework**

Shows the five stages: *Nature* (all emotions present), *Nurture* (fusion and suppression), *Pathology* (distorted entanglement), *Resolution* (separation and restoration), and *Equilibrium* (balanced, flexible deployment of all emotions).

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