The SCARF model (Rock, 2008) is a summary of important discoveries from neuroscience about the way people interact socially.

The model is built on three central ideas:

1. The brain treats many social threats and rewards with the same intensity as physical threats and rewards (Lieberman, & Eisenberger, 2009).
2. The capacity to make decisions, solve problems and collaborate with others is generally reduced by a threat response and increased under a reward response (Elliot, 2008).
3. The threat response is more intense and more common and often needs to be carefully minimized in social interactions (Baumeister et al, 2001).

The model is made up of Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness. These five domains have been shown in many studies to activate the same reward circuitry that physical rewards activate, like money, and the same threat circuitry that physical threats, like pain, activate (Rock, 2009b).

Understanding that these five domains are primary needs helps individuals and leaders better navigate the social world in the workplace (Rock, 2009b).

Understanding the five domains

The SCARF model involves five domains of human social experience: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness.

- **S**tatus is about relative importance to others.
- **C**ertainty concerns being able to predict the future.
- **A**utonomy provides a sense of control over events.
- **R**elatedness is a sense of safety with others - of friend rather than foe.
- **F**airness is a perception of fair exchanges between people.

These five domains activate either the 'primary reward' or 'primary threat' circuitry (and associated networks) of the brain. For example, a perceived threat to one's status activates similar brain networks to a threat to one's life. In the same way, a perceived increase in fairness activates the same reward circuitry as receiving a monetary reward.

The model enables people to more easily remember, recognize, and potentially modify the core social domains that drive human behavior.

For a more detailed look at the neuroscience behind the model, please read SCARF: A brain based model for collaborating with and influencing others, by David Rock.

Source: http://www.scarf360.com/about/
Retrieved on July 18, 2014