

## What causes catatonia?

**Dr. Fricchione:**

We know that so many medical, neurological and psychiatric conditions can cause catatonia.

So every living thing does four operations. Whether you're a single-cell organism or you're a redwood tree or you're a human being, you're sensing your environment, you're analyzing the information, and you're affecting a motor response. And that defines you as being alive.

Patients with any kind of psychiatric disorder, that psychiatric disorder is going to contaminate all four operations. And so it's hard to pick out a specific place where there's a lesion or ... because in order to integrate all four of those operations, you have to have a connectome. You have to have areas that are connecting with one another and are being modulated by different systems to either go up or go down, or these kinds of things. So psychiatric disorders become even more complex.

But there are also different ways in this complicated system — if you have a basal ganglia lesion you're going to mess up this communication and you may wind up locking up in catatonic withdrawal. If your cerebellum, which is modulating all of this, has a tumor, you may lower the threshold for that person to become catatonic. If you put a patient on a drug, like an antipsychotic drug that blocks up the dopamine (that lubricates the system so that people can move) that can make people rigid and stiff and mute. And other drugs can do it, or removing drugs in this system can do it. I think this is why it's so complicated.