

## Left and Right Brain Theory

For many years, the concepts of '*intelligence*' and '*creativity*' have been actively discussed and there have been some fairly fixed ideas of what these concepts stand for. Intelligence has normally been seen as potential. People are IQ tested and judged idiots or geniuses in terms of the IQ scores.

In the past Intelligence was considered as something which we all have in some measure but which cannot be increased to any great extent. Creativity was perceived as something which could be developed through the application of various techniques of creating ideas and a stimulating environment. Creativity was much more related to the environment, even though opinion said that certain creative gifted people were born with these abilities.

Research has shown how the consideration of these abilities was a little too simple. We now know how complex the brain is and how it is still greatly unexplained. The brain consists of two parts, a left and right hemisphere, each with its own particular functions. With some licence, left-brain thinking can be related to the concept of intelligence and right-brain thinking to the concept of creativity. Logical, evaluating, criticising and analysing activities involve left-brain activity. Intuitive and creative activities involve right-brain activity.

We also know that the left hand side of the brain controls the right side of the body, while the right hand side of the brain controls the left side of the body.

There is a simple physical test that you can do to indicate which side of your brain is more dominant. All you need to do is fold your arms. Looking down at your arms identify which arm ends up on top when you fold them. This is the arm which has the hand tucked in underneath when you fold them. Whatever arm is on top, it is the opposite which indicates the side of the brain that is more dominant. Try now to fold your arms the other way, you should find it harder to do and it will feel uncomfortable when you have done it. The other physical test you can do is to clasp your hands together so that your fingers and thumbs are interlocking. Whatever thumb comes out on top, it is the opposite that is showing the brain dominance. You might find that this is different to when you folded your arms. If this is the case it shows that you have a balance between the left and right brain.

## Brain Characteristics

| Left-brain   | Right-brain  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intellect</li><li>• Speech</li><li>• Numeracy</li><li>• Commonsense</li><li>• Literacy</li><li>• Analytical</li><li>• Detail</li><li>• Logic</li><li>• Dealing with one thing.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Intuition</li><li>• Music</li><li>• Humour</li><li>• Artistic</li><li>• Visual</li><li>• Creative</li><li>• Big Picture</li><li>• Physical activity</li><li>• Dealing with lots of things at once.</li></ul> |

## Developing the Left and the Right Brain

We can develop that side of us which may have been neglected. School often encourages us to use the left-brain. We are rewarded for left-brain thinking. Those who see pictures instead of words, or think in circles – instead of in lines – often have a difficult time in the traditional classroom.

We are beginning to appreciate the differences between the right and left brain and understand how important it is to develop both together. Many of us have neglected the right side of our brain while we have concentrated on nurturing and developing our intellect. We have learnt reading, writing and arithmetic, but have forgotten how to daydream or be spontaneous. By not using both our brain hemispheres we are at best using only one half of our potential.

Understanding the theory of the right and left brain is also very important in communication. When we are working out of the left-brain, we are thinking in a more logical way than when we are working out of the right-brain – which is the more emotional side of us. Many misunderstandings arise when we are unaware of this difference. One of the best ways to improve communication within an organisation is, therefore, to be aware of these differences and create an environment which encourages people to use the resources of both hemispheres.

When we have rediscovered our right-brain and when we let it work in harness with our left-brain, we can begin to use the full potential of our brain.

The left and right brain theories can help us:

- Become more creative
- Solve problems faster
- Learn things more quickly
- Improve our memory
- Decipher “body language” better
- Improve communications

If you have had a very left-brain day at work, try and do right-brain activities when you get home. If your day has been very right-brain, then practice some left-brain activities in the evening. By stimulating both sides of the brain we will develop more potential and also become less stressed.

