

Is Your Brain Dominating You?

Category – left and right brain dominance for cognitive development and performance development.

...When Harvard trained brain scientist Jill Bolte Taylor experienced a massive stroke in the left hemisphere of her brain, her mind deteriorated to the point that she could not walk, talk, read, write or recall any of her life – all within four hours. For Taylor, the stroke was a blessing and a revelation. It taught her that by ‘stepping to the right’ of our left brains, we can all uncover feelings of well being that are often sidelined by ‘brain chatter’, when we are out of balance and in left brain dominance.

To live a whole and thriving life, it is essential to stimulate and develop **both the right and left brain hemispheres individually and simultaneously**. If we don't, when we become stressed, our dominate side (hemisphere) will kick in and over time, with continued stress, we wire our brain to this unhealthy imbalance, and it becomes our default dominance. Somewhat similar to a stroke, where the uninjured side takes over for the injured side – we compensate so we can simply get the job done fast. Results are limited and often a struggle.

One example could be a 4 year old, who may not be developing at the same pace as the “norm”. This could look like the child is non verbal, and has a preference for playing alone and has extreme emotional outbursts, like tantrums. Playing alone so they don't have to engage in the frustration of communicating with others in play and tantrums to meet immediate needs could be coping mechanisms they have developed due to their current level of language ability. This is a guessing game for the parents, and very stressful for the whole family. The symptoms may result in a lack of development of a particular area of the language brain. In about 98 percent of right hander's, the left hemisphere accomplishes most language processing functions. In non-right hander's (which include left-handed and ambidextrous people), language functions are far more likely to involve the right hemisphere. If a child is underdeveloped in those areas, it can make learning and functioning very difficult.

Our level of childhood development and self-awareness carries into adult hood and rather than affecting us in the classroom, it affects us in the workplace. Here is an example with an individual who works in the field of sales and is great at sourcing new prospects, identifying sales opportunities with the right decision makers. This person is very good at key aspects of their job. However, when he makes a sale (which he makes many) the transactions are not very profitable. With professional coaching, his results still don't change, so the company decides to release him. This person may be dominant on their Gestalt (right hemisphere) which is why they are great at sourcing potential clients, making connections and closing the business, however further development of the Logic (left hemisphere) of the brain through Cognitive Fitness movements will develop their Logic (left hemisphere) so they can better understand the timing, sequence, calculations, pieces and details so he can price more effectively and create viable, profitable exchanges and use his brain in a more balanced and productive way.

Complex behaviours and cognitive functions require the integrated actions of multiple brain regions in both hemispheres of the brain. Information is processed in both the left and right hemispheres of the brain in different ways, so that the processing carried out on one side of the brain complements, that being carried out on the other.

The learning and thinking process is enhanced when both side of the brain participate in a balanced manner. This means strengthening your less dominate hemisphere of the brain, and practising Cognitive Fitness techniques that stimulate both hemispheres individually, simultaneously and in various patterns is key to our success, in school, day to day life and in the workplace.

How does your brain process information?

Here is some information on processing styles that are characteristically used by your right or left brain hemisphere. Read on to get a sense of how your brain processes information. Pay attention to the words that sound more familiar and comfortable to you – from that you can determine your dominant and less dominant style, and learn which side needs support.

Linear Vs. Holistic Processing

The left side of the brain processes information in a linear manner. It processes from part to whole. It takes pieces, lines them up, and arranges them in a logical order; then it draws conclusions. *The right brain however, processes from whole to parts, holistically. It starts with the answer. It sees the big picture first, not the details. If you are right-brained, you may have difficulty following a lecture unless you are given the big picture first.*

Sequential Vs. Random Processing

The left brain processes in sequence. The left brained person is a list maker. *By, contrast, the approach of the right-brained student is random. If you are right-brained, you may flit from one task to another. You will get just as much done, but perhaps without having addressed priorities.*

Symbolic Vs. Concrete Processing

The left brain has no trouble processing symbols. Many academic pursuits deal with symbols-such as letters, words, and mathematical notations. The left brained person tends to be comfortable with linguistic and mathematical endeavours. *The right brain, on the other hand, wants things to be concrete. The right brain person wants to see, feel, or touch the real object. Right brain students may have had trouble learning to read using phonics. They prefer to see words in context, to see how the formula works.*

Logical Vs. Intuitive Processing

When you process on the left side, you use information piece by piece to solve a math problem or work out a science experiment. When you read and listen, you look for the pieces so that you can draw logical conclusions. *If you process primarily on the right side of the brain, you use intuition. You may know the right answer to a math problem but not be sure how you got it. You may have to start with the answer and work backwards.*

Verbal Vs. Nonverbal Processing

Left brain students have little trouble expressing themselves in words. *Right brain students may know what they mean, but often have trouble finding the right words.*

Reality-Based Vs. Fantasy-Oriented Processing

The left side of the brain deals with things the way they are-with reality. When left brain students are affected by the environment, they usually adjust to it. *Not so with right brain students. They try to change the environment!* Left brain people want to know the rules and follow them. In fact, if there are no rules for situations, they will probably make up rules to follow! Left brain students know the consequences of not turning in papers on time or

of failing a test. *But right brain students are sometimes not aware that there is anything wrong. So, if you are right brain, make sure you constantly ask for feedback and reality checks.*

These are some differences that exist between the left and right hemispheres. Because left brain teaching approaches are used most often in the classroom, right brain students sometimes feel inadequate. However, you now know that you can be flexible and adapt material to the right side of your brain. Likewise, those of you who are predominantly left brain know that it would be wise to use both sides of the brain and employ some right brain strategies to bring more emotion, creativity and balance to your life.

To learn more about your brain and gain understanding of the simplicity of the brain's ability to grow and rewire itself for enjoyment, efficiency, achievement and health, consider joining one of our personal/professional development courses and make some new brain links for your success! Cognitive Fitness is easy and extremely beneficial to us all, no matter your age or ability. [Next Courses...](#)

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are co-founders of Brain Works Global Inc., licensed Brain Gym® Trainers and *Cognitive Fitness* Experts. Their company trains clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

For over a decade [Jill Hewlett](#) has been providing inspirational and educational [keynotes](#). As well, Brain Works Global provides [in house](#) and [community training](#) and personal and professional coaching services to a wide range of [organizations](#), [schools](#) and the [community](#). For more information go to <http://www.brainworksglobal.com> or call Sharon Todd, Director of Sales and Operations 905.235.5546



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