

Balancing Left and Right brain thinking

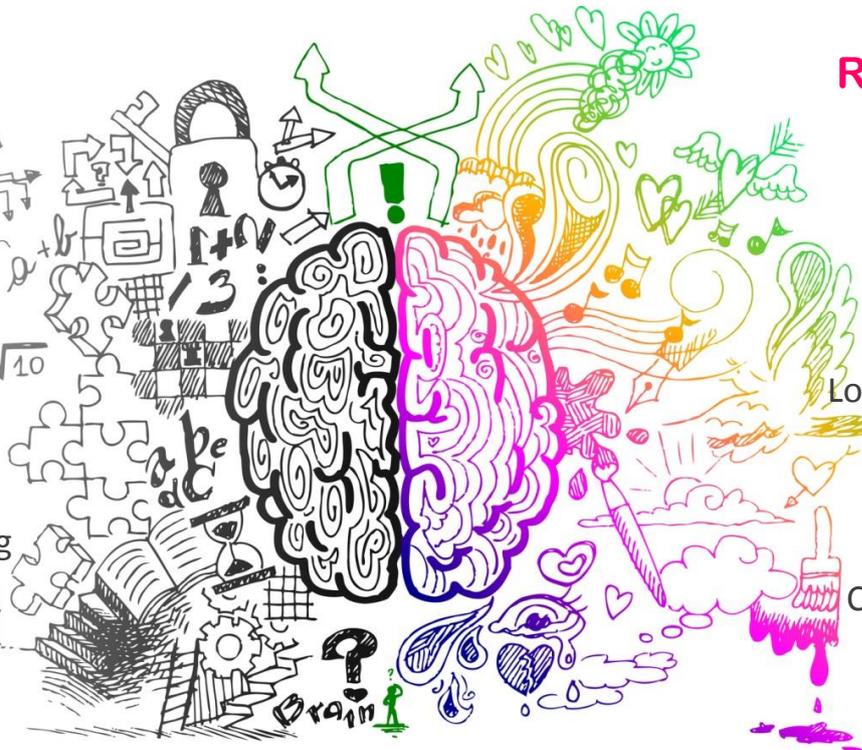
Modern neuroscience shows that the concept of right brain and left brain thinking is a myth. Brain activity during certain tasks doesn't just take place on one side or the other of the brain – we now know that the two sides of the brain work together to perform a wide variety of tasks and that the two hemispheres communicate through the corpus collosum, and studies have revealed that while activity may sometimes be higher in certain important regions of the brain, on average both sides are essentially equal in their activity.

As science writer Carl Zimmer explains in *Discover* magazine "the pop psychology notion of a left brain and a right brain doesn't capture their intimate working relationship." For example when listening to and understanding others, the left hemisphere specialises in picking out the sounds that form words and working out the syntax of the words, and the right hemisphere is sensitive to the emotional features of language, tuning in to the slow rhythms of speech that carry intonation and stress.

However, the terms left-and right brain thinking can still be useful as a model to describe and understand different styles of thinking provided we remember that they don't refer literally to the side of the brain which is in use. The model describes different styles of thinking as follows:

Left Brain

Logical
Sequential
Rational
Analytical
Objective
Looks at parts
Detail
Language
Critical thinking
Numbers
Reasoning



Right Brain

Random
Intuitive
Holistic
Synthesising
Subjective
Looks at wholes
Big Picture
Emotions
Creativity
Colour/Images
Creating

Whole Brain Thinking

Traditionally our education system and workplaces have valued left brain thinking over right brain thinking, but in his book “A whole new mind: Why right –brainers will rule the future” Dan Pink says that “the age of left-brain dominance is over. The future belongs to a different kind of person with a different kind of mind: designers, inventors, teachers, storytellers, creative and emphatic right-brain thinkers whose abilities mark the fault line between who gets ahead and who doesn’t.” He suggests that the future lies in valuing and fostering right brain thinking equally to left brain thinking and promoting “whole brain thinking” – the bringing together of left and right brain thinking to not only find new solutions but to successfully put these into practice.

[For more information about how we can help you increase creativity and promote creative thinking, click here.](#)

Activities to balance left and right brain thinking

Here are a few simple and light-hearted ways to integrate our left and right brains and to help balance their activity to promote whole brain thinking:

Cross Crawls

Derived from kinesiology, the basis of the cross crawl is rhythmic movement. In adults, it is said to help integrate the functioning of the two sides of the brain, speeding communication through the corpus callosum, improving dyslexia and boosting the immune system, amongst other benefits. It involves alternately touching the right hand (standing) or elbow (seated) to the left knee and vice versa, 25 times each or for 2 minutes.

Lazy Eights (Infinity Sign)

Lazy Eights are said to exercise both sides of the brain, with benefits including enhanced attention, hand-eye co-ordination and emotional wellbeing, as well as stress reduction. With a pen and paper, using first your dominant, then your non-dominant hand, draw the infinity sign (the number eight lying on its side) for 1-2 minutes daily.

An alternative that doesn’t require pen and paper consists of ‘drawing’ figures of eights in the air for up to a minute daily. To do this exercise:

- Make a fist with your dominant hand and position your thumb up
- Hold your arm out straight in front of you and bend your elbow slightly
- Line up your extended arm and thumb in front of your nose
- Lifting your thumb up slightly, begin making horizontal figure eights in the air for 30 seconds to a minute
- Then switch to the non-dominant hand and arm to begin another series and complete the exercise

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Breathing in through your left nostril will access your right brain, and breathing in through your right nostril, will access the left brain. Consciously alternating your breath between either nostril will allow you to activate and access your whole brain.

Step one: Use right thumb to close off right nostril.

Step two: Inhale slowly through left nostril

Step three: Pause for a second

Step four: Now close left nostril with ring finger and release thumb off right nostril

Step five: Exhale through your right nostril

Step six: Now, inhale through right nostril

Step seven: Pause

Step eight: Use thumb to close of right nostril

Step nine: Breathe out through left nostril

Step ten: This is one round. Start slowly with 1 or 2 rounds and gradually increase. Never force. Sit quietly for a few moments after you have finished.

Puzzles

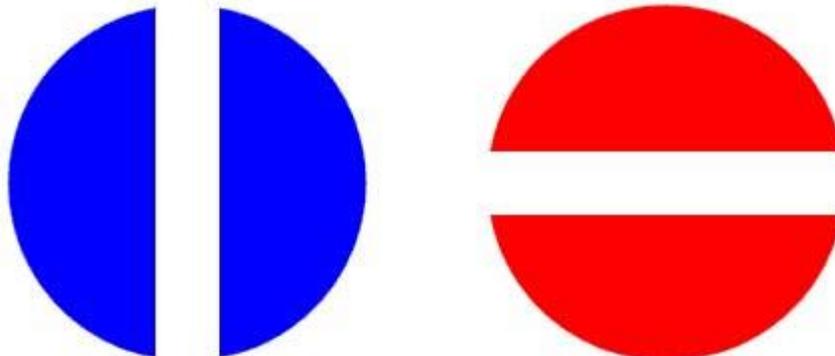
Puzzles which combine logic with lateral thinking (the ability to see the big picture and the detail together) are good for exercising both brain hemispheres. These include cryptic crosswords, Sudoku, and lateral thinking puzzles.

Music making and singing

These are proven to activate the whole brain and generate heightened wellbeing as well as exercising the brain. Sing at the beginning of each day, or hold regular singing or drumming workshops in your workplace ([click here](#) for more information).

Cross eyes

Cross your eyes and look at the images below. If you see the vertical (blue) line, your more left-brained. If you see the horizontal (red) line you are more right brained. Try to balance your brain so that you see a cross.



Colour words

Try to say the colour of the writing, not the word below:

Red Yellow White Green
Pink Black Blue Yellow
Green Red Blue White
Green Black Red Yellow
White Blue Pink Black
Orange Brown Green
Red White Yellow Blue

To find out more about how we can help you
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