

Right Brain, Left Brain and Creativity

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It's become trendy to think of ourselves as right brain or left brain thinkers. For some, it's a helpful way of differentiating talents and preferences from the "other" type of thinker. It's a way to explain why we are the way we are. "Well, I am dominant on this side of my brain, so I can't be expected to be any other way." But, is this an accurate way to describe the phenomenon?

When you think of creative people, you probably think of them as being right brained. These are our dreamers—our creatives. They love art, and music, and other people. They want to create, innovate, and make the world a better, dreamier place. They don't accept that the world is unchanging.

Left-brained people are thought of as being logical and analytical. They are good at looking at data and facts. They like playing with numbers, being scientific, and being streamlined. They like to have life neatly arranged in a way that makes sense.

Is it doing people a disservice to put them in this kind of a box? Maybe you believe you were born a left-brained thinker, so there's no hope for you to become creative. Or, maybe you believe you were born a right-brained thinker, so it's impossible for you to produce and follow through. Perhaps you're somewhere in the middle, sure that you'll never be creative enough to really make a difference.

I'll tell you right now, it's not at all true that you can't access the "other" side of your brain. Yes, we have different ways of thinking and being. But it's not as if access to the other side is completely cut off—that you're doomed to being a certain way with no movement.

A Breakdown of the Right Brain, Left Brain Theory

If you've never heard of this theory, you might be a little confused right now. A little background might be helpful before we dive into a knockdown of the right brain, left brain theory.

Let's talk about what the theory says about each side of the brain. If you are right brained oriented, it says that you're most in tune with the creative process. You are likely to be an artist, feel in tune with world around you, and are naturally intuitive and empathetic.

If you're left brain oriented, the theory says you're better at tasks that are logical and analytical. You may consider yourself to be better with critical thinking, numbers, language, and logic.

Or, maybe you fall somewhere in the middle. You don't quite fit on a certain side, rather somewhere in between. This sounds like the best of both worlds, but it can be even harder to feel like you're not an expert at anything—you feel like you don't fit in, even though this probably describes most people.

I don't want you to worry at all, whether you're right brained, left brained, or somewhere in between. Some of the "experts" have been looking at this the wrong way. This theory is putting a mind block on creativity where none should exist.

Everyone Uses Both Sides of Their Brain

Of course, no one truly believes that we *only* use one side or another. But, the designation creates the wrong mindset and is crippling for those who feel like they can't do something simply because they are dominant on the opposite side.

We know that the brain uses both hemispheres, and the two sides work together to complete tasks. It's always possible to tap into the other side...some just have to work a little harder at it. The fact is that the right

brain, left brain theory has become distorted and blown out of proportion as it relates to creativity and other processes in the brain.

Yes, you may naturally relate to people more than you do to numbers. Or, you may be better with logic and language than you are with art and music. But that does not have to come at the expense of your creativity. You aren't *just* a right or left brained thinker. You are, however, a unique thinker. This makes you a prime candidate for having great, new insights.

It's up to you to use your unique insights and way of looking at the world to become more creative. The world would be a very boring place if there were only one type of thinker and if everyone were good at the same things. Don't envy those who are more artistic than you. Don't envy those who are better with numbers than you. If we all thought the same way, there would be no new ideas. By nature of these differences, unique insights make their way into the world. These ideas lie in wait for people to make new connections to give them shape. It's a wonderful cycle.

Strengthen Your Non-Dominant Side

You can strengthen your abilities in the area you don't feel as naturally strong in. Recognizing your strengths and weaknesses is a great first step. Self-evaluation can go a long way toward helping you become a well-rounded thinker.

For example, those who are more artistic and empathetic also tend to be more disorganized. Disorganization can kill the creative process because the information gets jumbled. Right-brained thinkers naturally come up with the incredible ideas but other things can get in the way.

What can you do? You can use something like mind mapping and other organizational techniques to rein yourself in and make connections where you wouldn't have before. Tap into the other side of your brain.

Or, if you tend to be a very organized master-of-the-spreadsheet, you can use mind mapping as a way to make new connections in a visual way

that isn't quite as linear as what you're used to. This same tool can help you see things in a new way.

Mind mapping can be such a valuable tool, no matter what kind of thinker you consider yourself to be. And it's just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to strategies that can help you increase your creativity.

Every single person reading this right now can think of deficits and leaks in their creative process. Consider how your nature and habits play into that. Consider ways you can tap into other ways of thinking and doing.

The point is that the right brain, left brain theory doesn't matter much at all—subscribe to it, or not. You absolutely use different parts of your brain all the time. Get it out of your mind that you are stuck being a certain way for the rest of your life.

You should also understand that you do have a natural ability and inclination toward certain tasks and certain ways of thinking. But, it's a good idea to branch out from your usual way of doing things to strengthen your skills and enhance your creativity.



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