

WEEK SIX:

Left or Right...

Week Six: What's this Left Brain/ Right Brain malarkey?

"According to the theory of left-brain or right-brain dominance, each side of the brain controls different types of thinking. Additionally, people are said to prefer one type of thinking over the other."

~ Kendra Sherry¹

There is so much research regarding the left and right brain; how we access it, how we use them, and whether there is an actual difference between those who are left or right brain thinkers. It's fascinating reading and can be somewhat controversial, as many doctors and scientists don't believe that there is a difference.

And obviously I am no doctor nor a scientist, so I cannot go into any of the specifics of why, how or whether it is actually a real phenomena or just a scientific theory.

BUT...

Do I believe there is a difference between the left and right brain thinking? Yes.

Do I believe that we are exclusively one or the other? No

Do I believe you can change your way of using your brain and access both hemispheres? Absolutely Yes!

Typically if you have an affinity with numbers and linguistics, if you are logical and reasoned, able to do critical thinking then you would be considered a Left-Brain thinker.

Alternatively if you are creative, intuitive, driven by emotion, think in colours or images then you would be considered a Right-Brain thinker.

| Left Brain | Right Brain |
|-------------------|----------------|
| LANGUAGE | EMOTIONS |
| LOGIC + REASON | CREATIVITY |
| CRITICAL THINKING | INTUITION |
| NUMBERS | COLOUR/ IMAGES |

I became aware of the left/ right brain phenomena when I was in school. My form of dyslexia meant writing logical essays and spelling simple words was

¹ Quote from: <http://psychology.about.com/od/cognitivepsychology/a/left-brain-right-brain.htm>

a stressful nightmare, and forget about studying in the traditional way of hitting the books - it was a guaranteed F minus!

The one factor that was in my favour was my mother was a teacher who had done further study on learning difficulties, and that she understood that if I was to succeed at school I needed to think and study differently to what was traditionally taught in our schools. She knew reading over my notes just wouldn't help me - I wouldn't retain the information so I had to use other creative ways of learning.

The tools that helped me at school are still tools I utilise everyday. Like mind mapping or like listening to music when I write or using bright colours and highlighters in my schedules or study notes.

And all of these techniques were designed for me to switch on my left-brain, my reasoned, logical and critical thinking brain. So I do understand the struggle to switch off our dominant brains and change the way we would typically respond to an exercise or a situation, and the challenge in making our brains think differently.

BUT WHY DO WE WANT TO TURN ON OUR RIGHT BRAIN?

What is the point of turning **off** our left-brains.

I believe that when you are in the right brain zone you are more likely to create intuitively. Your brain is less critical and judgmental and logical in the right brain zone.

And therefore, you are less likely in the right brain zone to be upset or frustrated or hyper critical of what you are actually creating than if you are in your left brained zone. And you are more likely to keep being creative, to keep exploring, playing and discovering.

SO HOW DO WE TURN ON OUR RIGHT SIDE BRAINS?

You probably already do but don't realise it!

Have you ever been in the shower washing your hair and solved a problem that has been plaguing you for days? Or been out for a walk and had a great idea?

While your left-brain has been occupied with the very mundane task of hair washing or walking your right brain has taken over without you realizing it to problem solve, daydream and play.

So you already do switch on your right brain but the key is to kick it over anytime you want to use it whether it is to be creative or for some other reason!

It isn't always easy for us to access our right brain on demand but there are several techniques that always help me - like listening to music when I write, or watching a movie or TV show when I paint.

And I have a couple of exercises that I think would be fun for you to try and that can help kick your brain over



6.1 REFLECTION: STIMULATE YOUR CREATIVE SIDE.

Time: 5 minutes a day

Equipment: various

Every day this week try something from this list for just five minutes.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| DAYDREAM | PHOTOGRAPH | BREATH DEEPLY |
| DOODLE | CHEW YOUR FOOD | INSPIRATION LIST |
| WRITE | MOVE/ STRETCH | BE SPONTANEOUS |
| WRITE DOWN YOUR DREAMS | NOTICE COLOUR | MEDITATE |
| SMOOSH SOME PAINT | BLOB DRAWING | COLLECT SOMETHING |
| CLOUD WATCH | JUMP UP AND DOWN | TURN SOMETHING UPSIDE DOWN |
| WRITE WITH YOUR NON DOMINANT HAND | USE YOUR NON DOMINANT HAND TO BRUSH YOUR TEETH | SWITCH YOUR KNIFE AND FORK OVER |

- Sit still for five minutes and daydream about what makes you feel alive?
- Photograph something as close up as possible with your phone camera that would make it difficult for some one else to tell what it is. Print it out and stick in your notebook to share with us.
- Breath deep for five minutes - in for three counts out for three build up to five counts
- Chew your food with intention - like you tell the kids “chew twenty times and then swallow” ;)
- Write an inspiration list: Start a page in your notebook and keep a list of things, people, songs, poems, movies, books etc that inspire you
- Stretch your body or go for a walk.
- Write down any snippet of your dreams that you may remember or your feelings when you woke up.
- Notice colour! This is the best time of year to see all the different colours we are surrounded by - keep a list.
- Meditate for five minutes
- Jump up and down three times
- Smoosh some paint
- Doodle or do a blob painting
- Collect leaves, feathers, stones, acorns, press flowers, collect something notice why you chose that particular thing.
- Sit outside and see if you can make patterns or shapes in the clouds
- Turn a book or a magazine upside down and see how it changes the images and text
- Write with your non dominant hand
- Try using your non dominant hand and clean your teeth
- Switch over your knife and fork hands

After each exercise, think about when or if your brain switched over. Think about how you felt, whether you could turn off the little bitch telling you some of these were crazy or stupid!

6.2 ACTION: SWITCH OFF LOGIC

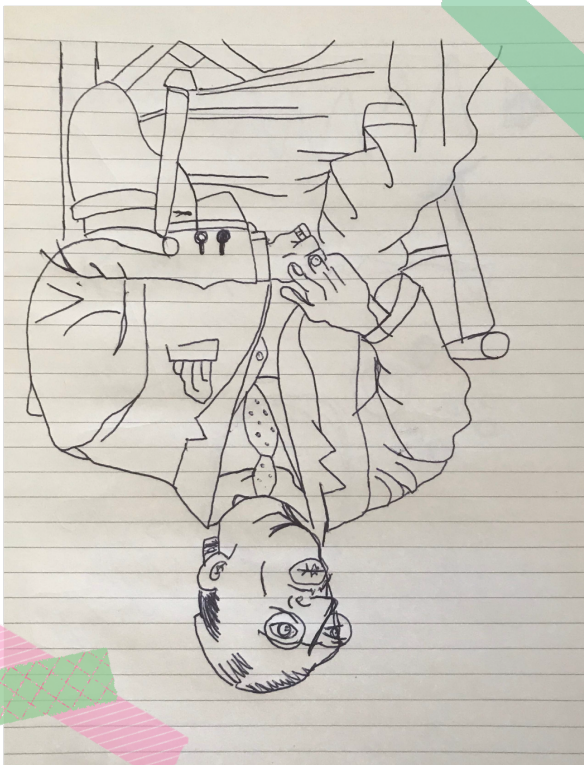
Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: your notebook + pen

This exercise is one that I originally did as part Dr Betty Edwards 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain' book and it is so amazing at helping you shift mindsets that I had to include it in this chapter.

But be warned it may make your head explode!

This is a longer exercise than most of our exercises but I promise the result is well worth the time.



I found for this exercise that a piece of loose paper worked better for me but feel free to use your notebook but what ever works for you

Sit comfortably with the drawing that you will copy. Try to do this exercised from start to finish in one go. Being distracted during the exercise will keep your mind from shifting so I would suggest not watching TV during this exercise.

You can use any line drawing for this exercise but at the end of these notes are two line drawings: One of Rainbow Brite and the other is Picasso's *A Portrait of Igor Stravinsky*.

Print them off and choose one to have in front of you for this exercise.

Now this is the most important part of your exercise. Turn the line drawing **UPSIDE DOWN**.

No you didn't read that wrong. Turn it upside down and **keep** it upside down.

Run your eyes over the upside down drawing and pick a place to start. You can start anywhere and start to draw the image on your paper.

While you are drawing try to stop yourself from labeling the parts you draw. Instead of thinking - this is an eye, this is a collar and this is hair, think in more abstract terms - this is a curve, this part is a bit wiggly, this is a straight line etc.

If you need something to distract your little bitch that by all accounts must be shrieking, try drawing with music on in the background. I would choose something you're not likely to be distracted by.

And **RESIST** turning your page or the drawing you are reproducing. Don't compare your drawing to the print. Don't check it out or turn it around half way through this exercise. **KEEP FOCUSING ON YOUR LINES, SQUIGGLES AND CURVES.**

Your head may be shrieking "**WHAT!?!**" right about now, (one of my course participants emailed me asking if I was trying to make her crazy because this just about did her in.) But if you can put that aside and focus on the lines, you will find your little bitch settles down and by the end is silent.

And you will be surprised by what you create in the end. *I promise!*

Feel like trying again? Grab a kid's colour in page from the Internet turn it upside down and play again.

Little Bitch Buster

Don't be disheartened if this exercise takes a couple of goes. I did this exercise every day for two weeks, because I would stop halfway through, watch TV or turn it around to compare drawings.

The little bitch is a crafty one.

So set yourself up for success in the very beginning.

Set a realistic time to do this exercise - not before dinner or when you have to run out the house, or when your favourite TV show is on etc.

6.3 FUN: CONTINUOUS LINE DRAWINGS.

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Your notebook, a pen.

Remember our continuous line drawings from week two? Here are a few different continuous line drawings that are just as fun!

☆ CONTINUOUS LINE DRAWING ONE:

Without lifting your pen off the page draw your hand.

Do the drawing looking **ONLY** at your hand. With your eyes trace each line, each curve of your hand, the wrinkles, the rings, the nails and create those same details on your paper **WITHOUT LOOKING AT YOUR DRAWING.**

If you peek you have to start again!

This drove me slightly bonkers and I will confess that I peeked - many times! And I had to restart several times, but in the end, I was pretty impressed with how mine turned out.

Draw several versions of your hand using different colours on the same page to end up with a really cool pattern!



☆ CONTINUOUS LINE DRAWING TWO:



Similar to our hand drawing - with out lifting your pen off the page draw something in your home. For example a vase, knife, kids toys, your phone, your TV, your couch. Something you can physically touch and not from a photo.

Do the drawing looking **ONLY** at your object. **DO NOT LOOK AT YOUR DRAWING WHILE YOU ARE DRAWING IT.**

And remember - if you peek you have to start again!

☆ CONTINUOUS LINE DRAWING THREE:

Is it a vase or a face? Do you remember those images where you would see an ugly face one minute and a vase the next? Well let's make our own version of this.

Firstly fold a page in half. On one half of the page draw a squiggly, jagged line from the top of the page to the bottom.

On the other side of the page replicate the squiggles and jagged lines so that it is a mirror(ish!) image.

Join the two lines at the top and bottom with a horizontal line.

Now step back - what do you see?



6.4 BONUS FUN: PSYCHEDELIC FUN.

Time: 5 minutes

Equipment: Your phone or computer

Remember when all those magic eye puzzles were all the rage - is it a psychedelic mess or deer drinking from a river. They were everywhere in the late 1990's - from books, to a daily puzzle in the newspaper, or large prints for your home.

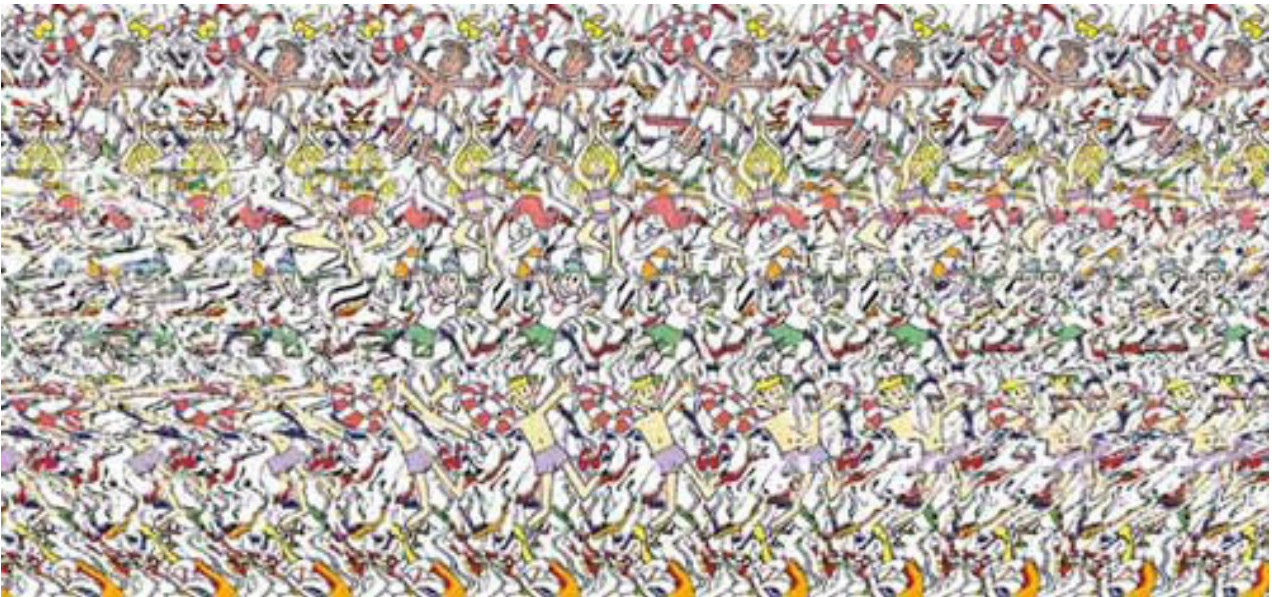
Remember how the first time you did a puzzle you rarely saw what you were looking for? And how the more you did them the quicker you were.

Do you also remember a fuzzy feeling in your brain; maybe a headachy feeling just before you saw the hidden image? (Or was this just me?) And if you blinked - just like that the image disappeared?

These are fun little puzzles that I believe can be used to quickly snap from one side of your brain to the other.

To solve the puzzle your logic and reasoned brain needs to switch off and your creative and intuitive brain takes over.

If you have the books at home bring them out and have a play with them. Or visit this website for puzzle of the day:



<http://www.magiceye.com/3dfun/stwkdisp.shtml>





A Portrait of Igor Stravinsky, by Pablo Picasso