

Deepening Communication – Engaging Left-Brain/Right-Brain Language

By: Dorothy M. Neddermeyer, PhD

To effectively deepen the communication process, you need to be aware of other processes at work within the listener. Developing a Frame of Reference does not mean simply gathering information so that you can drop the right word at the right time in conveying a message. A person perceives messages in a style unique to that individual's development. Does the person understand information better when it is presented in a logical, straightforward manner or when it is offered with descriptions and allegories which can be visualized? Or would a combination of both the logical and descriptive styles be more appropriate?

When we communicate, we too often make the unfortunate assumption that people are logical at all times. Such, however, is not the case. Behavioral scientists have long known that we sometimes have trouble reconciling our emotions and our logic. One does not need to be a disciple of Freud to know that our emotions interfere with our ability to reason.

There are physiological reasons to explain the frequent dichotomy between our emotional and rational capabilities. The brain of the Western World human clearly delineates or lateralizes emotions and logic and assigns these activities to opposite sides of the cerebral cortex. The 'emotional side' is housed in the right cerebral hemisphere and the 'logical side' is found on the left. A muscle mass known as the corpus collasum connects the two hemispheres or 'brains,' allowing messages to travel back and forth so that the activities of both can be integrated.

The left brain allows one to be logical; it controls analytical ability, order and sequence, mathematics, problem solving, decision making, and formal language. To address the logical brain exclusively, however, is to do injustice to the whole person's perception, capabilities, and preference in understanding information. Equally as strong, though perhaps more amorphous, is the emotional brain, the right brain.

The right hemisphere allows one to have imagination, draw analogies, and be intuitive, artistic, and creative. Since both the emotional and the logical side are involved in your communications, it is critical that you become aware of the role of each and learn ways to appeal to both. You can use analogies to paint a picture which will appeal to your listeners' artistic, creative inclinations. In addition, you can analyze your rationale for a decision, appealing to their problem solving, decision making abilities. In this way you can assure that you are communicating with the whole person's perception capability and preference. This double-pronged approach increases the likelihood that the core of the message will be received on both cognitive and affective levels.