

# Do You Breathe With Your Left or Right Brain?

By: Sharon Calvin, May 24, 2007

Do you know what side of your brain you're using when balancing your checkbook or listening to music? The left side enjoys facts and figures, while the right enjoys daydreaming. You can develop both sides of your brain and learn to shift when appropriate through the breath. Breath is the essence of life and spirituality. Spiritual is from the word spiritus which means breath in latin. If we're right about the brain's division of power, changes in breathing patterns could help shift our moods and attitudes.

Right brain thinkers are intuitive, spontaneous, get the big picture, but forget details, have better motor skills, are emotional, tend to procrastinate, enjoy music, have lots of imagination, dimension and color, have the ability to make quick decisions and usually have good ideas. Visiting art museums, exploring ghost towns or perhaps paying more attention to your daydreams, night dreams and recognize that you do dream will activate your right brain.

Consequently, left brain thinkers are logical, sequential, goal orientated, analytical, have the discipline to carry ideas through, enjoy reading, writing, language and numbers, and are usually more articulate. Public speaking, organizing, making lists, scheduling your time, memorizing and researching or just getting started is left brain activity. The ideal of course, is to use the whole brain. Einstein and Leonardo da Vinci are examples of whole brained people.

Even though Einstein failed at math, he excelled in playing the violin, art, sailing and imagination games. While daydreaming one summer day, he imagined riding sunbeams to the far corners of the universe. He found himself illogically returned to the surface of the sun and that was when he realized the universe must be curved and that his previous training was incomplete. The numbers, formulas, equations and words he wrapped around this new image gave us the theory of relativity which is a left and right brain combination.

Then there is Leonardo da Vinci who was accomplished in art, sculpture, physiology, general science, architecture, mechanics, anatomy, physics and all sorts of inventions. Rather than separate, he combined his talents. His books are filled with three dimensional drawings and images. More interestingly, the final plans for his great painting masterpieces often look like architectural plans with straight lines, angles, curves and numbers.

Therefore being in touch with our whole brain will help us throughout the day. It is known that work performance usually fluctuates every two hours or so, which shifts our modes of intelligence and causes on-the-job doldrums. Perhaps breathing exercises could be a way to break out of them. One can simply activate the right brain by forcing the air through the left nostril and vice versa.

Try this: Breathe deeply in and out of your nose for a moment. Then hold a mirror under your nostrils. You'll find the pools of condensation from your two nostrils are different sizes. This is the right and left brain dominance. Isn't it interesting that we see with both eyes, hear with both ears, yet breathe mainly through one nostril. Right nostril dominance goes with left brain activity, left nostril goes with the right brain. This dominance lasts anywhere from one hour to more than three hours, then reverses over a period of minutes. On the average, our dominant mode of thinking shifts from left to right and back again about ten times every 24 hours. That means you may have better luck balancing your checkbook during an episode of left brain dominance and enjoy the arts when your right brain is dominant.

Long ago the yogis also believed that acute mental discomfort could be alleviated by forced breathing through the congested nostril. As we learn more about the two halves of the brain, the importance of controlling their rhythms may become more significant. Studies done by psychiatrist, Pierre Henry of the University of Alberta suggests that schizophrenia may be left brain activity and depression shows right brain dysfunction.

In an era dominated by drugs and high technology, it seems ironic that such a simple procedure as altering our breathing patterns may give temporary relief from moodiness or even madness. As a result of understanding the shifts that occur between the right and left brain our capabilities of changing our attitudes and becoming what we really want to be at any given time are enhanced.