

Thinking Styles

Name: _____

Date: _____

“If you think you can, you can. And if you think you can’t, you’re right” – Author Unknown

Introduction

In 1981, Dr. Roger Sperry won the Nobel Prize for discovering that each half of the brain thinks in a different way. Sperry’s work suggests that the left side of the brain – referred to as the verbal side – thinks in words and that the right side of the brain – referred to as the visual side – thinks in pictures. Are you a right – brain or a left – brain thinker? Is one way of thinking better than the other?

Before you started school, you were probably more right – brained in your thinking. Like many pre – school children, you may have enjoyed unstructured play and lived in a world of make – believe and fantasy. It is possible that you thought in pictures, since it is likely that you hadn’t learned to read yet. Later, when you went to school, your teachers taught you another way of thinking. You learned how to read and how to solve problems using specific kinds of logic. In fact, if you answered a question using your intuition, the teacher may have asked you to explain how you arrived at your answer.

Schools often forget to value right – brain thinkers. In fact, right – brain thinkers are often perceived as weird, ridiculous, or outrageous. It is important to point out that historically, right – brain thinkers have been responsible for the inventions and theories that have changed the way we think and live.

No one is totally right – brained or left – brained in their thinking. Everyone uses both sides of their brains. It is true, however, that one side of your brain will tend to dominate the other. In the workplace, employers like to have both types of thinkers because there are excellent qualities in each. They know that there are advantages to having right – brain and left – brain thinkers work together, as each kind of thinker tends to focus on different aspects of a task. However, when right – brain and left – brain thinkers are asked to work together, they can irritate each other. Since a left – brain thinker prefers to organize tasks in specific ways, he or she may not enjoy having to work with the spontaneous and inventive tendencies of a right – brain thinker. As you begin to understand how you think and how the people around you think, you can adjust your behavior to build positive relationships with people who think differently than you.

Neither side of your brain is more valuable than the other. In fact, it is advantageous to use both sides of your brain. Albert Einstein known as one of the smartest people that ever lived, saw many of his theories as images in his “mind’s eye”, meaning that these theories were conceived with the right side of his brain. He then used left – brain thinking processes in order to explain, in words, the images he saw. Einstein was famous for effectively using both sides of his brain.

Questions

1. Complete the “Discover Your Thinking Style” questionnaire on the following page, to help you discover whether you think more with the right side or the left side of your brain.

Discover Your Thinking Style

Circle the number beside the statements that best describe you. Choose only one number from each row.

Left – Brain Thinker (Verbal)	Right – Brain Thinker (Visual)
1. You recognize and remember names.	1. You recognize and remember faces.
2. You respond best to verbal instructions.	2. You respond best to visual and demonstrated instructions.
3. You can control your emotions.	3. You have strong emotional response.
4. You listen to words for meaning.	4. you interpret body language.
5. You have “logical” thoughts and ideas.	5. You have “funny” thoughts and ideas.
6. You seem to process information in a sequence, or orderly fashion.	6. You seem to process information as you see it, in your own way, in patterns and pictures.
7. You prefer a serious, systematic problem – solving approach.	7. You prefer a playful problem – solving approach.
8. You respond to logical requests.	8. You respond to emotional requests.
9. You learn best when you can think critically and analytically about what you read or hear.	9. You learn best by applying and practicing what you read or hear.
10. You remember through language.	10. You remember with images or pictures.
11. You read for details and facts.	11. You read for main ideas or overviews.
12. You prefer realistic stories.	12. You prefer fantasy, poetry and myths.
13. You think about improving existing things or ways of doing things.	13. You think about inventing new things or ways of doing things.
14. You learn best with systematic plans.	14. You learn best through exploration.
15. You prefer to create an outline of detailed information, rather than summarize it.	15. You prefer to summarize detailed information, rather than create an outline of it.
16. You like activities that are mentally challenging.	16. You like activities that are physically challenging.
17. You are impatient with guesswork or trial and error.	17. You are impatient with systems and structures.
18. You prefer structured assignments.	18. You prefer open – minded assignments.
Total Left – Brain Responses: _____	Total Right – Brain Responses: _____

2. Were you surprised by the results of the thinking style questionnaire? Explain your answer.

3. What does right – brain or left – brain thinking have to do with how you learn best? Explain your answer.

4. Describe a time that you has success with learning something new. Why do you think the learning went so well? Was it because of the setting, the subject, the teacher or something else? Did your success have anything to do with your right – brain or left – brain strengths?

5. Think about a time that you had trouble learning something. Why do you think you had such difficulty? Do you think that your difficulty had anything to do with your right – or left – brain strengths? Describe the situation and suggest ways that might have helped to make your learning experience more successful.
