



Affective Center for Therapy

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I KNOW I AM SMART, BUT...

I seem to do dumb things.

EQ, Emotional Quotient is a measure of both sides of your brain.

Many people with high IQ's can do some of the dumbest things. Having a high IQ does not mean you are using your whole brain. I have known some very smart people who make very dumb decisions. What was Burney Madoff thinking when he did his ponzi scheme? What was Democratic presidential candidate, John Edwards, thinking when he stole money to pay for his mistress? Did he really believe that no one was watching?

Then there was presidential candidate Gary Hart, a lawyer, author, professor, commentator and US Senator. When he was campaigning to be the Democratic candidate for President, he challenged the media, "If you think I am having an affair, prove it," and they did! They caught him on his boat with his mistress.

But I get ahead of myself. You have two hemispheres to your brain, the left and the right sides. It is not just one brain. The two sides work and think differently. The left side of your brain is logical, rational, systematic and based on reason. It thinks in symbols, numbers, and words. It functions very much like Mr. Spock from the old Star Trek show. The left side of your brain is designed to think in logical terms such as: $A + B = C$. This works well most of the time as long as a and b are correct. But, if A and/or B are incorrect, then the conclusion will be incorrect.

In computer science there is a saying, "Garbage in, Garbage out," or GIGO. Having a high IQ is not the answer for happiness, success, achievement, joy or accomplishment. Your IQ is a measurement of how quickly you can learn, retain and utilize information. IQ is a cognitive function of the left side of your brain. See the example GIGO below:

"Professionally, I know a lot and have an economically successful company. My IQ is far above average. I am creative, sensitive, compassionate. . . . I feel pain when I see/feel other people suffer economically and emotionally. Sometimes I wish that I was ignorant about the pain in the world. I'm not desperate so I won't give up on what I call "a world that works for everyone" therefore I need no prescription for an anti-depressant."

Problems can develop on the left side of the brain. There are different types of GIGO, garbage, which can infect your left brain. False information or false beliefs is one category that can have disastrous results. Here are some examples of information/beliefs that have been held as true at one time or another:

- ☒ The world is flat.
- ☒ The atom is the smallest particle and cannot be split.
- ☒ Big boys don't cry.
- ☒ Nice girls don't get angry
- ☒ If you feel guilty, you must have done something wrong.
- ☒ Emotional pain is terminal and should be avoided at all cost.
- ☒ The opposite of love is hate or anger. (The opposite of love is indifference.)
- ☒ The world should work for everyone both economically and emotionally.

If you believe any of these, you may want to seriously reconsider your beliefs/information. Take this last belief: The world that works for everyone.

If that means that no one should suffer economically or emotionally, then the result is that you will feel pain when you see/feel other people suffering economically and/or emotionally. If this is your belief, then be prepared to live your life in pain. From all the evidence and research that I have seen, this belief fits into, "If wishes were horses, the beggars would ride." This is a nice thought and I have also dreamed of a world where no one suffered. However, hanging onto false and/or unrealistic beliefs has the potential of creating more suffering and the need for anti-depressants. False information and facts are a block to your EQ.

A second left brain GIGO problem is when you have contradictory information/beliefs such as:

- ☒ If at first you don't succeed try, try again, vs. If you can't do a job right the first time, don't do it at all.
- ☒ People should do what I think they should do, not what they do, vs. People are free to do what they do, and that is OK.
- ☒ The only person I can change is myself, vs. You should do what I think you should do.
- ☒ All men are created equal, vs. It is OK to treat people differently based on. . .
- ☒ If you make your bed you have to lie in it, vs. You should never stay in an abusive relationship.
- ☒ You should never snitch on anybody, vs. Your neighbor is selling drugs.

As you are starting to see, even a smart IQ can lead you terribly astray. There are no stressful jobs; there are only stressful people. The job find so stressful, another person may not find any stress in it at all. Most of the stress and anger you experience is caused by **your expectations** of how the world/people should be. Change your expectations and you will change your stress and anger. Who said your wife/husband/government/world should live up to your expectations? Contradictory beliefs are a block to your EQ.

Now, let us look at the other half of your brain. The right brain thinks very differently. It is not logical; in fact, it is nothing like it neighbor, the left brain. It is not rational, systematic or based on reason.

Have you ever been in a dumb fight but you kept fighting anyway? Have you ever heard yourself saying, "I understand, it makes perfect sense, **but** . . ." then you keep doing things that

are self destructive? Or, “I understand in my head but, I can’t get it down here in my heart.” These are all signs of right brain dysfunction.

Your right brain thinks in pictures (flashbacks) sounds, smells and textures. What it “sees” it believes is real. Just like when you are having a nightmare, your mind believes that what you are seeing is real and reacts as if it were happening now. You cannot be talked out of what you experience in your right brain. The right brain learns through Stimulus – Response (S-R). It unlearns the same way, S-R. An example of S-R learning: As the result of a trauma, your right brain may decide that the whole world is unsafe and you are not able to protect yourself in this unsafe world.

GIGO applies to the right brain as well as to the left brain. When a belief/conclusion is tied to a “picture” (S-R learning) it cannot be changed by talking yourself out of it. For example: Choose an object to your right, look at it carefully. Keep looking at it. Now, tell yourself that it is not there. Stare at it until it disappears. If that did not work the first time, keep repeating: It is not there. It is not there, until it disappears. Any luck in making it disappear?

If that did not work, this next part will not work either. Keep telling yourself, “The molest never happened. The molest never happened.” Any better luck doing that? Or, try telling yourself, “My father never came home drunk and beat up my mother. It never happened. It never happened.” Then turn around three time and click your heels! This also will not work with the trauma pictures from war, a car wreck, a dysfunctional family, molest or a rape.

The stimulus (rape) is accompanied by an adrenalin-fueled physiological reaction which “burns” that rape picture into your right brain. Now, whenever that picture of the rape comes up, your body starts reacting as if it were happening again right now. That sets off the warning alarms and puts you into fight, flight or shutdown mode. When emotions seem to suddenly explode and your body starts reacting, this is usually the result of your right brain “seeing” a picture that is stored there.

For this reason, a strict Cognitive, Behavioral Therapy, CBT, approach has only limited success in dealing with the right brain pictures/flashbacks. What the right brain learned through Stimulus—Response, S-R, it must unlearn the same way.

The biggest false belief found in the right brain is: The world is not safe and I am not able to protect myself in this unsafe world. What make the belief so difficult to change is the “pictures” stored in the right brain that “PROVE” the truth of this conclusion. These are pictures from your past traumas and when you see these flashbacks, your body reacts as if they are true and are happening right now. What often happens is that when you see the picture, your body starts with its reaction and you experience your heart pounding, the room spinning, feel like you are going crazy and fear that something is very wrong. You are going to die. By this time, you have forgotten what the picture was that triggered the symptoms or you did not consciously see the picture in the first place. Now, all you are aware of are the symptoms. Right brain trauma pictures are a block to your EQ.

There are a number of right brain therapy techniques which have proven to be effective. These include: Psychodrama, Visualization, Exposure, Metaphors, and Story Telling. In each of these techniques, the common denominator is their ability to create a new “picture” of strength to be placed alongside the old trauma picture. The correct or best technique depends on the person and their particular situation.

Awareness is the next element that is important when it comes to increasing your EQ. Every second, your brain processes over a million pieces of physical and emotional information! However, you can only make logical decisions on what you are aware of. The time it takes to snap your fingers twice is about a second – you mind just processed over a million pieces of information; did you get them all? Your brain monitors/processes all the systems in your body plus all of your feelings, even the feelings you are not aware of.

Have you ever had an interaction with someone, then ten hours later, you are lying in bed thinking, “I should have said this when he said that.” Now you are aware! Babies have no problem with delayed awareness. It is not until you reach three or four years of age that your parents start teaching you to repress your feelings. “Think before you talk.” “Don’t sass me.” This is followed by a slap or swat. Parents often teach their children what not to say BUT, do not teach acceptable ways of expressing feelings. As a result, the child learns to repress their feelings and soon are no longer aware of what they are feeling when they feel them—delayed awareness.

Delayed awareness is another EQ block

Another way to lose awareness of what you feel starts with false beliefs: “Nice girls don’t get angry. Pretty is as pretty does. Do you want your face to freeze that way?” If you are that girl, what options do you have? Repress, suppress, cover up and deny until you are no longer aware of what you are feeling. I do not know how many times I have had a client come in and say something like this, while laughing: “I’m so angry at my mother,” and all the time her fists are clenched. When confronted with this discrepancy, the answer I will get is, “If I don’t laugh, I will end up crying.” Once she gets through the crying, then finally the real feeling comes out, anger.

Men will often do a similar thing. They will cover up their tears with laughter because they know that “Big boys don’t cry.” Some men will have problems with feeling anger because they have exploded and hurt someone. Then they felt ashamed or threatened by their feelings. That is when you get the big apologies, flowers and promises, promises, “I will never do that again.” That is also when they do the repress, suppress, cover up and deny, . . . until they blow up again. In this case, the problem is not the anger. No one has ever gone to jail for being angry. It is what you do with your anger that gets you into trouble. Counting to ten is just another way of repressing your feelings. Having feelings of anger and not having acceptable ways of expressing them will end up with a repeating cycle of anger and violence. For both men and women, the false belief that the opposite of love is hate, reinforces the anger and violence cycle.

Your EQ is the ability to utilize your whole brain to: 1) Clear the false and contradictory information in the left side of your brain, 2) Replace the trauma pictures on the right side of your brain with pictures of strength, and 3) Be aware of what you feel when you feel it.

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