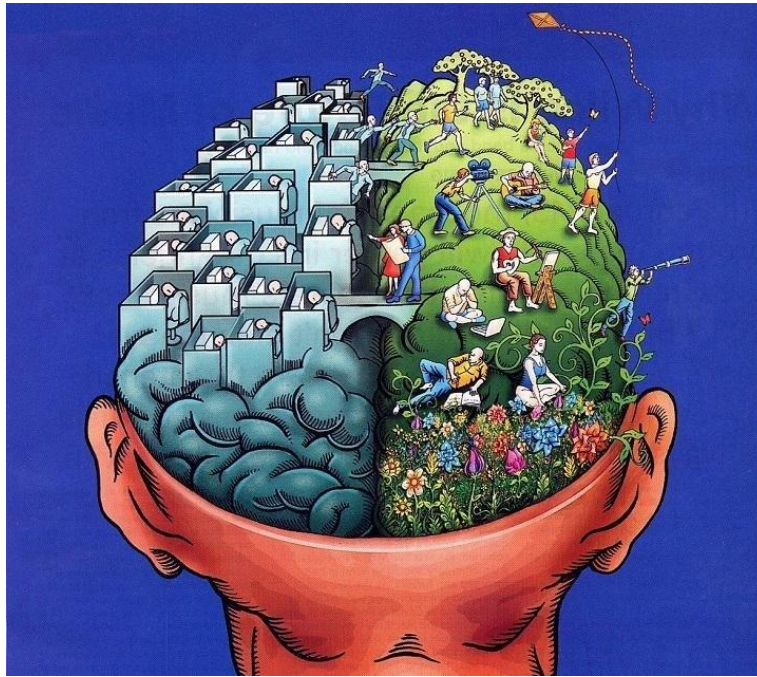


Benefits of Right Brain Training



Little Aniya loved to play with blocks. Her teacher had planned a whole session of building block activities at school, and she had been eagerly waiting for the day. Aniya's mother went to pick her up after school, expecting to hear happy reports of what had been done. Instead, she was shocked to find her little daughter close to tears. When she asked the teacher what had happened, the lady let loose a tirade. She said she had taken a lot of effort to create building block models and had asked the children to recreate them with their own sets of blocks. But Aniya, instead of building the lovely house with coloured windows and a beautiful chimney that she was supposed to, had made a rocket. And, instead of reproducing the lovely green turtle the teacher had made, she had built a huge castle. The teacher said that she had never seen a more wilful or disobedient child.

Scenarios like these are common in Indian schools. Unfortunately, our school education system is geared towards creating cookie-cutter children using cookie-cutter activities. In general, the curriculum is designed to train the left hemisphere of the brain more than the right. Although the left brain is responsible for a host of wonderful functions, those of the right brain are equally important.

For a better understanding, here are some pointers on the functions of each side of the brain:

- The left side of the brain controls the right side of the body and vice-versa. In most right-handed individuals, the left hemisphere of the brain is dominant.
- In most people, the left side of the brain is the logical, rational and sequential side. It is associated with language and speech.
- The right side of the brain is the creative and emotional side. It is associated with visuospatial understanding.

Having understood this, let us look at some of the advantages of training your child's right brain, as well as a few ideas on how to do it.

1. Enhances Creativity

The right side of the brain is found to be more active during creative behaviour. Make time and space for your child to be creative.

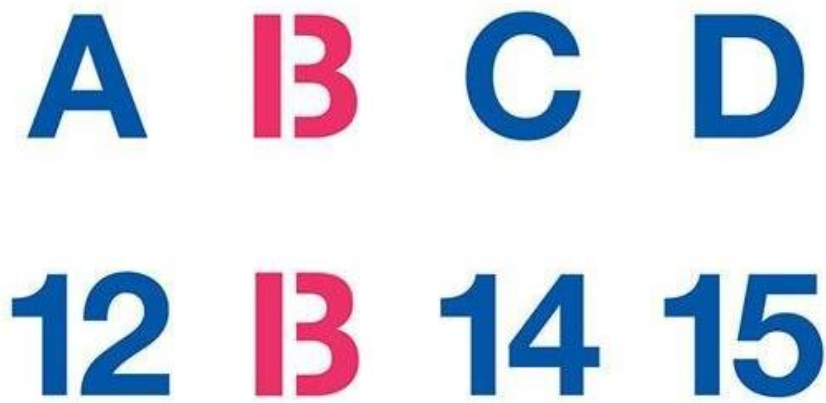
Activities:

- Non-toxic paint, play dough, building blocks, strings and beads are all wonderful tools for creative projects for younger children. (Make sure there are no choking hazards for very small children).
- Origami, robotic kits, home-made science experiments and creative story telling are wonderful activities for older children.

2. Develops Holistic Reasoning

The popular story about an elephant and the blind men is a great example of holistic thinking. Three blind men were asked to describe an elephant. The first one touched the leg of the elephant and said it was a tree. The second touched the tail and said it was a rope. The third touched its body and said it was a wall. All of them were wrong because they couldn't perceive the elephant as a whole.

The left brain specialises in breaking down problems into smaller parts while the right side sees everything as a whole.



As you can see in the image above, the second component in each row is identical. But, whether we perceive it as a B or 13 depends on which row we're looking at. Holistic reasoning helps your child to tackle everyday problems by seeing things from different perspectives, resulting in better solutions.

3. Improves Visuospatial Abilities

Studies have shown that the right brain in London's taxi drivers had much more grey matter than some other categories of people in the city. Their ability to map locations and navigate through London's streets is believed to contribute to this increase in brain matter.

Activities:

- Draw your little ones a map and go on an exciting treasure hunt with them. It is certain to turn boring Saturday mornings into times they will never forget!
- Playing blind chess is a wonderful and challenging game for older children and adults alike!

4. Hones intuition

Commonly called the intuitive brain, the right hemisphere has been linked with instinct and emotional sensitivity. Although language is associated with the left brain, understanding intonation, parody and sarcasm are linked with the right side. This sensitivity to emotion and non-verbal cues helps your child to get in touch with the intuitive self.

Such children are sensitive to others' feelings and are generally very empathetic. They often make intelligent choices as they are able to perceive things that others cannot.

5. Boosts mental speed

Individuals using the right brain are capable of speed reading and typically take less time to grasp things.

Activities:

- Doing puzzles such as jigsaws with time restrictions, playing chess, etc., are good ways of improving processing speed.

As mentioned earlier, with the current school curriculum, it is easy to be drawn into a world that focusses mainly on left brain activities. It is, therefore, important to be proactive in providing opportunities for your child to train her right brain. You will find that this improves her ability to think out of the box and live a fuller life.

**Left brain
learners**



**Right brain
learners**

Like to make a daily list of tasks	Remember images and concepts well
Good in maths and science	Good in creative activities (e.g., music/drawing)
Rational and logical	Spontaneous and emotional
Detail-oriented and analytical	Philosophical and take time to ponder
Research and document facts	Make subjective statements
Have a practical nature	Indulge in imagination and daydreaming
Good problem solvers	Good in expressing themselves

All said and done, remember that the brain functions as a whole. Neuroscientists no longer believe that brain functions are limited to specific brain locations alone. The brain works like a network with different locations communicating with each other. Therefore, make sure that your child puts the functions of both sides of her brain to good use.