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Left right brain theory

The basic lower brain consists of the spinal cord, brain stem and diencephalon (the cerebellum and cortex are also present, but will be discussed in later sections). In turn, the brain stem comprises the medulla, pons, midbrain, hypothalamus and thalamus [source: Health Pages].Within each of these structures are centers of neuronal cell bodies, called nuclei, which are specialized for particular functions (breathing, heart-rate regulation, sleep):Medulla -- The medulla contains nuclei for regulating blood pressure and breathing, as well as nuclei for relaying information from the sense organs that comes in from the cranial nerves. It's also the most ancient part of the brain.Pons -- The pons contains nuclei that relay movement and position information from the cerebellum to the cortex. It also contains nuclei that are involved in breathing, taste and sleep, and physically connects medulla to the midbrain.Midbrain -- The midbrain contains nuclei that link the various sections of the brain involved in motor functions (cerebellum, basal ganglia, cerebral cortex), eye movements and auditory control. One portion, called the substantia nigra, is involved in voluntary movements; when it does not function, you have the tremored movements of Parkinson's disease.Thalamus -- The thalamus relays incoming sensory pathways to appropriate areas of the cortex, determines which sensory information actually reaches consciousness and participates in motor-information exchange between the cerebellum, basal ganglia and cortex.Hypothalamus -- The hypothalamus contains nuclei that control hormonal secretions from the pituitary gland. These centers govern sexual reproduction, eating, drinking, growth, and maternal behavior such as lactation (milk-production in mammals). The hypothalamus is also involved in almost all aspects of behavior, including your biological "clock," which is linked to the daily light-dark cycle (circadian rhythms).Spinal CordThe spinal cord can be viewed as a separate entity from the brain, or merely as a downward extension of the brain stem. It contains sensory and motor pathways from the body, as well as ascending and descending pathways from the brain. It has reflex pathways that react independently of the brain, as in the knee-jerk reflex. The cerebrum is the largest part of the human brain. It contains all of the centers that receive and interpret sensory information, initiate movement, analyze information, reason and experience emotions. The centers for these tasks are located in different parts of the cerebral cortex, which is the outside layer of the cerebellum and is comprised of gray matter. The inside is made up of white matter.Major Parts of the Cerebral CortexThe cortex dominates the exterior surface of the brain. The surface area of the brain is about 233 to 465 square inches (1,500 to 2,000 cm2), which is about the size of one to two pages of a newspaper. To fit this surface area within the skull, the cortex is folded, forming folds (gyri) and grooves (sulci). Several large sulci divide the cerebral cortex into various lobes: the frontal lobe, parietal lobe, occipital lobe and temporal lobe. Each lobe has a different function.When viewed from above, a large groove (interhemispheric fissure) separates the brain into left and right halves. The halves talk to each other through a tract of white-matter fibers called the corpus callosum. Also, the right and left temporal lobes communicate through another tract of fibers near the rear of the brain called the anterior commissure.If you look at a cutaway view of the brain, you see that the cortical area above the corpus callosum is divided by a groove. This groove is called the cingulate sulcus. The area between that groove and the corpus callosum is called the cingulate gyrus, also referred to as the limbic system or limbic lobe. Deep within the cerebrum are the basal ganglia, amygdala and hippocampus.This ends our tour of the major structures of the cortex. Now, let's see what those structures do. We include products we think are useful for our readers. If you buy through links on this page, we may earn a small commission. Here’s our process. How the human brain worksThe human brain is an intricate organ. At approximately 3 pounds, it contains about 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion connections. Your brain is command central of all you think, feel, and do.Your brain is divided into two halves, or hemispheres. Within each half, particular regions control certain functions.The two sides of your brain look very much alike, but there’s a huge difference in how they process information. Despite their contrasting styles, the two halves of your brain don’t work independently of each other.Different parts of your brain are connected by nerve fibers. If a brain injury severed the connection between sides, you could still function. But the lack of integration would cause some impairment.The human brain is constantly reorganizing itself. It’s adaptable to change, whether it’s physical or through life experience. It’s tailor-made for learning.As scientists continue mapping the brain, we’re gaining more insight into which parts control necessary functions. This information is vital to advancing research into brain diseases and injuries, and how to recover from them.Share on PinterestThe theory is that people are either left-brained or right-brained, meaning that one side of their brain is dominant. If you’re mostly analytical and methodical in your thinking, you’re said to be left-brained. If you tend to be more creative or artistic, you’re thought to be right-brained.This theory is based on the fact that the brain’s two hemispheres function differently. This first came to light in the 1960s, thanks to the research of psychobiologist and Nobel Prize winner Roger W. Sperry.The left brain is more verbal, analytical, and orderly than the right brain. It’s sometimes called the digital brain. It’s better at things like reading, writing, and computations.According to Sperry’s dated research, the left brain is also connected to:logicsequencinglinear thinkingmathematicsfactsthinking in wordsThe right brain is more visual and intuitive. It’s sometimes referred to as the analog brain. It has a more creative and less organized way of thinking.Sperry’s dated research suggests the right brain is also connected to:imaginationholistic thinkingintuitionartsrhythmnonverbal cuesfeelings visualizationdaydreamingWe know the two sides of our brain are different, but does it necessarily follow that we have a dominant brain just as we have a dominant hand?A team of neuroscientists set out to test this premise. After a two-year analysis, they found no proof that this theory is correct. Magnetic resonance imaging of 1,000 people revealed that the human brain doesn’t actually favor one side over the other. The networks on one side aren’t generally stronger than the networks on the other side.The two hemispheres are tied together by bundles of nerve fibers, creating an information highway. Although the two sides function differently, they work together and complement each other. You don’t use only one side of your brain at a time.Whether you’re performing a logical or creative function, you’re receiving input from both sides of your brain. For example, the left brain is credited with language, but the right brain helps you understand context and tone. The left brain handles mathematical equations, but right brain helps out with comparisons and rough estimates.General personality traits, individual preferences, or learning style don’t translate into the notion that you’re left-brained or right-brained.Still, it’s a fact that the two sides of your brain are different, and certain areas of your brain do have specialties. The exact areas of some functions can vary a bit from person to person.According to the Alzheimer’s Association, keeping your brain active may help increase vitality and possibly generate new brain cells. They also suggest that a lack of mental stimulation may increase the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.Here are a few tips to keep your brain stimulated:In addition to thinking exercises, your brain benefits from a good physical workout. Just 120 minutes of aerobic exercise a week can help improve learning and verbal memory.Avoid junk food and be sure to get all the essential nutrients you need through diet or dietary supplements. And, of course, aim for a full night’s sleep every night.If you’re trying to nourish your creative side, here are a few ways to get started:Read about and listen to the creative ideas of others. You might discover the seed of an idea you can grow, or set your own imagination free.Try something new. Take up a creative hobby, such as playing an instrument, drawing, or storytelling. A relaxing hobby can help your mind wander to new places.Look within. This can help you gain a deeper understanding of yourself and what makes you tick. Why do you gravitate toward certain activities and not others?Keep it fresh. Break your set patterns and go outside your comfort zone. Take a trip to a place you’ve never been. Immerse yourself in another culture. Take a course in a subject you haven’t studied before.Even something as creative as music takes time, patience, and practice. The more you practice any new activity, the more your brain adapts to the new information.Want to boost your creativity? Give adult coloring books a try.Whether you’re working out a complicated algebraic equation or painting an abstract work of art, both sides of your brain are actively participating and providing input.You’re not truly left-brained or right-brained, but you can play to your strengths and continue broadening your mental horizons. A normal, healthy brain is capable of lifelong learning and boundless creativity.Read this article in Spanish. Sandro Di Carlo Darsa/PhotoAlto/Getty Images In order to explain why our mental states impact pain perceptions, researchers Ronald Melzack and Patrick Wall proposed what is known as gate control theory during the early 1960s. This theory suggests that the spinal cord contains a neurological "gate" that either blocks pain signals or allows them to continue on to the brain. Researchers have long observed that factors such as thoughts, emotions, and expectations can influence our perceptions of pain. If you expect something to hurt, it probably will hurt worse. If you are upset or frightened, pain may seem more intense than it would if you were calm. Unlike an actual gate, which opens and closes to allow things to pass through, the "gate" in the spinal cord operates by differentiating between the types of fibers carrying pain signals. Pain signals traveling via small nerve fibers are allowed to pass through while signals sent by large nerve fibers are blocked. Gate control theory is often used to explain the phantom or chronic pain. Following an injury, pain signals are transmitted to the spinal cord and then up to the brain. Melzack and Wall suggest that before the information is transmitted to the brain, the pain messages encounter "nerve gates" that control whether these signals are allowed to pass through to the brain. In some cases, the signals are passed along more readily and pain is experienced more intensely. In other instances, pain messages are minimized or even prevented from reaching the brain at all. This gating mechanism takes place in the dorsal horn of the body's spinal cord. Both small nerve fibers (pain fibers) and large nerve fibers (normal fibers for touch, pressure, and other skin senses) both carry information to two areas of the dorsal horn. These two areas are either the transmission cells that carry information up to the spinal cord to the brain or the inhibitory interneurons which halt or impede the transmission of sensory information. Large fiber activity excites the inhibitory neurons, which diminishes the transmission of pain information. When there is more large fiber activity in comparison to small fiber activity, people tend to experience less pain. This means that the pain gates are closed. Small fibers impede the inhibitory interneurons, allowing pain information to travel up to the brain. When there is more small fiber activity, it inactivates the inhibitory neurons so that pain signals can be sent to the brain in order for pain perception (also known as nociception) to take place. In other words, the pain gates are now open. While it is perhaps the most influential theory of pain perception, gate control is not without problems. Many of the ideas suggested by Melzack and Wall have not been substantiated by research, including the very existence of an actual gating system in the spinal cord. Melzack and Wall suggest that this process explains why we tend to rub injuries after they happen. When you bang your shin on a chair or table, for example, you might stop to rub the injured spot for a few moments. The increase in normal touch sensory information helps inhibit pain fiber activity, therefore reducing the perception of pain. Gate control theory is also often used to explain why massage and touch can be helpful pain management strategies during childbirth. Because the touch increases large fiber activity, it has an inhibitory effect on pain signals. Melzack and Wall themselves noted that the "gate" metaphor for pain perception served as a helpful way of helping people understand the basic concept, regardless of whether they grasped the complex physiological processes behind the theory. Doctors often utilize the gate metaphor to help patients understand how and why pain can fluctuate so much. While gate control theory does not explain every aspect of how people experience pain, Melzack and Wall's theory was the first to consider the psychological factors that influence the perception and experience of pain. Initially, there was resistance to the theory, but evidence increasingly pointed to the existence of a spinal gating mechanism. The theory helped transform approaches pain management. Thanks for your feedback! What are your concerns?

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