

How the Best Handle Stress – A First Aid Kit

The “Rules”

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By Ron Rubenzer, EdD, MA, MPH, MSE, FAIS

“At home it is better to be happy than right;
At work it is better to be right than happy.”

Take the five-minute Brain Scan.

*Men and Women aren't from
Different Planets, but from Different
Hemispheres (of the Brain)
The sole purpose of the body is to
support the life of the brain.
Thomas Edison*

Since about every other person you meet on earth will be of the opposite sex, it would be good to be aware of the real anatomical and functional gender differences in our brains. Each person's brain is as different as his or her individual facial features. "Can the brain understand itself?" is an age-old question. In order not to create too much stress in "thinking about thinking," we will take a lighthearted look at some possible thinking-style differences. Since it is hard to get volunteers for an anatomical study of brain differences between males and females, a five-minute paper and pencil Brain Scan has been provided in this chapter. Take a Brain Scan yourself, then give it to your significant other. The gap between your thinking styles may be as wide as the Grand Canyon, which could be stressful when you're trying to see eye-to-eye.

Your thoughts imprint your brain.

A major brain research discovery is that maintaining anxious/depressed thoughts for as little as two weeks depresses the production of our major natural antidepressant, serotonin. The use of antidepressant medication merely "jump starts" the brain's production of serotonin again. As stated earlier, always see your doctor first when experiencing unusual emotional discomfort. It could be another gland that's not working correctly (e.g., thyroid). A 2002, *Scientific American* special publication on how the mind makes the brain examines how your thoughts form your physical brain, and how your physical brain shapes your meta-physical (beyond the physical) mind.

Some research suggests that females use both right- and left-brain hemispheres when thinking because they allegedly have a thicker neural bridge (corpus collasum) between the left and right brain. They are more adept at talking to several people at once and are more sensitive to subtle emotional cues. This supposed ability to switch between left and right brains may result in better intuitive thinking. It is believed that males are more single-minded, making it easier to make decisions (which may or may not be wrong, we just make them faster). Hormone differences, jokingly referred to by many women as "testosterone poisoning," may also affect the force with which we deal with things and ideas. It is also held that the brain doesn't totally integrate until about 40 years old. Therefore, it may be that the other person can't see things your way, rather

than refusing to see things your way.



The “so what” bottom line of all this brain/hormone research is that there may be unchangeable brain-based or gender-linked differences in how we view and interact with the world. Differences often create sparks and tension. Just knowing that the other person’s view may actually be valid, even though it is not the way we look at things, may provide some understanding in becoming stress- intelligent. It should be noted that you can reroute your brain’s physical operation in as little as two weeks by being negative and depressed.

The “Rules for the sexes.” Thanks to Bill Flynn, prominent radio personality, hundreds of thousands of listeners know about the survival manual, *Rules for husbands*. Written by comedian Jim Dale, this manual takes some of the mystery out of trying to figure out what women want. Mr. Dale, also wrote a companion book, *Rules for wives*.

- The related topics that may help you learn your brain-base of operation and how to cope with others’ styles follow:
- Brain Scan (Five-minute).
- Change your mind to change your life.
- Male Aggression-Female Expression: Possibly different brain styles.
- Brain-based communication gaps. Won’t versus can’t remember.
- Seeing eye-to-eye: Making it work. A woman’s work is never done.
- Correctivitis (over-correcting compulsion), or anything you can do, I can do better.
- Unplanned, unexpected but “on-target” gifts to show good intent, including in-home “room service,” with a smile, and “I owe you a favor” coupons. Surprise her with a gift of manners.
- Rules for husbands and Rules for wives. The unwritten laws are now written.

BRAIN SCAN: A FIVE-MINUTE EXERCISE

I have half a mind to . . .

This is a no-brainer . . .

He is so scatter-brained . . .

If I only had a brain . . .

1. **Brain Scan.**

Some of the characteristics that correspond to left-right brain thinking styles are listed in the table below. Of course, we always use more than “half a brain” when thinking, just as we actually use more than one hand [even back muscles] when we pick up a soda to drink. For the overly left brained, a set of serious resources is provided in the text for follow-up.

One-Minute

BRAIN SCAN

How to see “Eye to Eye”?

Dr. Ron Rubenzer

From the *How the Best Handle Stress by Using your Head and Heart*

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All brains are created equal (on average) – with the inborn capacity to learn any one of 6909 languages on earth. After a quarter century, your brain is so individually matured and sculpted, it is as unique as your facial features, or your fingerprints. This can be a Good-Thing-Bad Thing. Your personalized 25-year-old Brain is delicately fine-tuned to help you navigate life’s many challenges. The downside is that the 25-year-old level of brain maturity is THE ceiling for some (who stop cultivating their)

Your brain is the most important organ in your body. Thomas Edison is credited with saying the only purpose of your body is- to support the life of your brain. You have a hardwired ‘Brain-bias’. Everyone thinks that “the way they think “MUST BE THE CORRECT way- because the thought came from their very-own brain. But “Don’t believe everything you THINK.”

Not seeing eye to eye? Sometimes when we don’t see “eye to eye” it may be that the other person CAN’T Think like you. Why – because of possible brain wiring differences related to gender,

age and sometimes handedness. Remember it's not that the other person WON'T think like you, perhaps they CAN'T. It has also been suggested the brain doesn't even finish its wiring until a person is about twenty-five years! So, give the benefit of the doubt to others -if they- just "don't

LEFT BRAIN	RIGHT BRAIN
1. Emotionally positive (Hope)	1. Emotionally Negative (Despair)
2. Early Bird	2. Night Owl
3. Consistent	3. Creative
4. Demands "Response Correctness"	4. Pushes for "Speed" of response/ideas
5. Doer	5. Dreamer
6. "Bottom-Liner" (summarizes)	6. "Whatever" comes to mind
7. Forced	7. Fluid
8. Intellectual	8. Artistic
9. Logical	9. Intuitive "Feeling"
10. Single-Tasker ("Rush-hour" driving)	10. Multi-tasker (Children's Field Trip -chaperone)
11. Motivated by grades, income, security	11. Motivated by satisfaction, recognition, fame
12. Evidence-writing- factual questions -[what, when, who, how, where?]	12. Open-minded-speculative questions -[What if, why not, what's my life's purpose?]
For Your Left-Brain score Please add this LB Column Total = ____/12 WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE SUGGEST?	For Your Right-Brain score Please add this RB Column Total=____/12 WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE SUGGEST?
If this LB is MUCH higher (8U/4R) than RB column-- Be Alert to below:	If this RB is MUCH higher (8R/4L) than LB column-- Be Alert to below:
Over-correct-ness (always trying to provide more precise details)- Interrupts/corrects- impatiently saying- And the POINT is? While person is talking this person is thinking- what clever thing - he'll say next- = To improve- try to Remember-	Drifting into Senseless Chatter (Stream of consciousness-stories with no "bottom line"). Engages in Parallel talk when several talking at once, but no one listening
It's better to be HAPPY than right (at home)	The faintest ink is better than the best memory
Watch for Rigidity (my way or highway)	Watch for Chaos - "Why be normal?"
Watch for HARDENING OF THE ATTITUDES	WATCH FOR -It's ALL Relative- (i.e. nothing is good or bad, but the mind makes it so!?)

get it."

Seek Balance to avoid "lopsided" mental development. Imagine if you will a champion bowler, with his bowling arm twice as muscular as his non-bowling arm. Likewise, "lopsided brain" development results from over-use of one brain style, to the neglect of the opposite -brain style- (Left Brain [unfeeling knowledge] or all Right Brain- [mindless arousal]).

How to do your own Brain Scan – (For amusement only.) The only intent of this quick brain scan- is to provide a launching point for discussion about everyone's uniqueness and the need accept other's differences.

- Casually read each left brain/right brain style choice column: (They are not prioritized).
- Circle the one that seems *more* like you.
- It is all right to circle corresponding opposites if both describe you.
- Add the column totals (Write L= [for left brain column total]; R = [right brain]).
- The column (left or right) with more items circled suggests your thinking/feeling bias (left or right brain).

Of course, we think with our whole brain, just like picking up a glass of water involves a complex coordination of hundreds of actions, far beyond your hand wrapping around and picking up the cup.

- For Lopsided bias (nearly all LB or RB) – tips are provided in each column to counterbalance underdeveloped talents.

See chart on page 61 of Book PDF

Insert scanned image: Rubenzer_LeftRightBrain.PDF

2. Change your mind to change your life.

“At home it is better to be happy than right;

At work it is better to be right than happy.”

The only adult’s mind you can really change is your own. If you are constantly in a state of agitation because everyone else seems scatterbrained, you might consider consciously trying to change your mind. Using the Brain Scan below, you may wish to take a couple of the items that you feel you can’t give up (which you are “urgently addicted” to) and try to change them.

An excellent way to start to change your mind is to read pages 58 to 65 in Chapter 3, “Getting Back to the Moment,” of the excellent book, *Living at the Speed of Life*. Solid reasons and methods are provided to help you shift your thinking into a more balanced, productive, satisfying and sociable gear.

Two different worlds; like oil and water. Brain styles separate eventually.

Brain styles differ. In real life, brain style differences can cause real problems.

A person who plays house, will never understand a person who plays at writing.

Opposite brain styles are like trying to mix lightweight oil and water. No matter how you stir them up, they always separate.

If you are really interested in an educational analysis of four basic thinking styles, please see the book and materials in the 4Mat series. (Just ask your local media specialist).

Also see the 2000 edition of an *Annotated Bibliography: Brain Research* by Marny Sorgen. It is an excellent review of over forty books and articles on the brain.

3. Male Aggression — Female Expression: possibly different brain styles.

Here’s another example of the different styles

Seeing eye-to-eye is difficult

There is some research that suggests that the male brain is more designed for aggression. The female brain may be better designed for expression.

One brain style wants to aggressively get to the bottom line, the other wants to talk in a free-flowing stream of words.

An excellent guide to helping us navigate through the opposite sex's thinking style is a book by Dr. Deborah Tannen, a communications expert. Her book, *You Just Don't Understand* (Ballantine Books, 1990), will not only smooth the way across the gender gap, but also helps in bridging the age gap between parents and their children.

It may be biological: brain-based communication gaps

Men may only be “half-listening” when women are trying to communicate. A November 2000, brain study conducted at Indiana University School of Medicine by Dr. Joseph T. Lurito, shows that men may only be half-brained listeners. When listening to a story, men used only the left side of their brain, whereas women used the left side and the right side of the brain (associated with more abstract reasoning). There seems to be a biological brain-based difference between the sexes in information processing. Other related studies suggest that women are better at listening to two conversations at once, which may be overwhelming for men. In phone conversations, it would probably be annoying to most males if you try to talk to them while they're talking on the phone, since they devote one brain to one conversation at a time. Also, don't try to talk to a male while expecting him to navigate onto complex highway exits. He will have to make a choice of either listening to you and missing the exit or getting the exit and giving the speaker surface attention (what, huh, oh yes). Since listening differences are probably hard-wired in the brain, don't get stressed out over communication glitches. It is not a matter that the opposite sex won't think like you do, it's that they can't think like you do.

To narrow the communication gap and reduce the stress between the sexes when communicating, simplify the amount and details of the message, and have the receiver rephrase the message to make sure it just didn't go in only one brain, and out the other.

Since the right side of the brain, which women also use to communicate, is more sensitive to the tone of voice, make sure your tone of voice matches the intent of your message. The right brain is also responsible for reading facial expressions, so once again, try to make your facial expression match your verbal expression. In other words, if you are communicating with someone who uses both sides of their brain, then you have to speak to both sides of the brain through words, tone and gesture.

4. Seeing eye-to-eye: making it work. A woman's work is never done.

On the home front, remember it is better to be happy than right.

Don't fight battles you won't win. It is not “stress-smart.”

Seeing eye-to-eye may require holding back on what seems natural. Of course, until we know better, we think everyone thinks as we do. Nothing could be further from the truth. Trusting the value of the other person's thinking style and realizing that he or she did make it this far using that style, it may be necessary to show a little respect, back off and listen to the other person. This may reduce a lot of stress from unchangeable brain-based communication gaps.

A woman's work is never done. You better believe it.

In some cultures, there is the belief, "A woman's work is never done." This is the "mantra" that some grow up with. If you are going to help someone who has this belief, then understand that "your work will never be done." It's not a good or bad belief, it's just if you expect closure on helping out, you probably need help yourself (which this book aims to do). So get ready for "work without end," and get a grip.

5. ORDER-COLLIES-Overly correctness (correctivitis) or anything you can do I can do better.

"And always is heard a discouraging word and the skies are cloudy all day." (*The theme song of victims of correctivitis, sung to "Home on the Range."*). Some adults are natural-born ORDERCOLLIES. Although well-meaning, the Order-obsessed people are always nipping at the heels of those around them.

Correctivitis is the obsession with being right, having the last word and dominating. This common malady is highly stressful to surrounding people. Every single time you try to make a point they always counterpoint, to the point that you don't even try to talk around them. Get the point? In our parents' day, there was a song, "Anything you can do I can do better," which is a good example of two people dueling it out through one-upmanship. People with correctivitis just have to be a little more "righteous." Those who need to be correct are left brained to a fault. Being a target of someone with correctivitis is like jarring over unnecessary speed bumps when you are trying to talk.

People with correctivitis are always interrupting and correcting you, whether they know what they're talking about or not. They look for any loophole to unravel your thread of thought until you completely lose your train of thought. These are the people you hear say, "I don't need to read—just ask me." They are the first to say, "I don't need stress-control coaching, more education, etc." In the old days these people were the bossy "know-it-alls." Since we can practically access the Library of Congress with our computers, it is unlikely that anyone will "know-it-all" and get away with it. But that has never dawned on those afflicted with correctivitis.

If you feel you can't even open your mouth without being criticized, you should try the book, *I Only Say This Because I Love You*, by Deborah Tannen, who was mentioned previously as an expert in communication.

I was looking for "Mr. Right." Once we hooked up, he turned into "Mr. Always- Right"

Annoying “know-it-alls” somehow remember minute details of events that often didn’t even happen, confident in their enlightened knowledge. If you try to talk with someone afflicted with correctivitis, they’ll always punctuate what you say with “Yes, but did you know” or “No, it really wasn’t that way or “That’s not what I heard.” They even say, “What she

means to say is.” These people don’t waste time gathering facts. They are planning ahead as you speak, just waiting for you to inhale so they can talk again. As if we are completely lacking direction without their guidance, they fill our day with often pointless and endless lists of tasks. On top of everything else, these people are often loud and annoying. If you ask how these people are, they’ll always answer with an IT (It’s too . . .) It’s too hot, cold, slow, expensive here, etc. You usually don’t want to take these people out to dinner (service is too slow), a movie (it’s too cold in here), or on a picnic (it’s too sunny out here).

Sometimes, people with chronic correctivitis are well-meaning, hoping to save you from yourself by protecting you with valuable (and endless) lessons from their lives. However, they may “cry wolf” so much that when they do hit the nail on the head with an important suggestion or warning, no one listens to them. Sometimes, however, people with correctivitis are the human relations equivalent of “fingernails being scratched across a chalkboard.” They never feel good and are always negative. You say, “It’s going to be a great day,” They’ll say, “What makes you think that? You obviously have not heard about the latest.”



You will never please these people. So often, people start avoiding the “overly correct.” It is draining being around these “emotional vampires” who suck all the joy out of your life because you know what’s coming next, some criticism or unpleasantness.

An excellent book for those afflicted with correctivitis is *Living at the Speed of Life*, by Richard Carlson, author of the best-selling series, *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff In Living at the Speed of Life*, he and his co-author, Joseph Bailey, talk about shifting from the analytical (critical) thinking mode to the free-flowing processing mode to actually reduce your stress and get along better. This book would make a great anonymous contribution to your work library.

Try tolerance for a change. When you are tempted to correct someone's life (overeating, overindulgence, sloppiness, poor grammar, senseless chatter, driving, the list could go on forever), say this to yourself:

My love for them is not affected by their self-abuse.

William Joyce, 2001.

If you are courageous enough to look at yourself under the “Miss Martha S. Manners” microscope, just change this saying to:

My love for myself is not affected by my self-abuse.

After forgiving yourself, concentrate on improving that behavior (e.g., being overly critical, overspending, looking for faults, not listening).

6. Unplanned, but “on target” gifts. “Room service,” and “I owe you a favor” coupons.

“On target” gifts.

Folks who use their right brains actually like pleasant surprises more than a left brained person would ever imagine. Right brainers love surprises; left brainers loathe surprises (even good ones). It never dawns on a Mr. Datum type “left brainer” that a person who has access to both sides of thinking (left and right brain) may really enjoy a surprise. Providing unplanned gifts will actually force the overly left brained person to pay attention to his or her significant other. The flip side of the coin is if you forget to give a gift to this person when they expect it (e.g., birthday) this person will be very upset. It's a great idea to have a “gift/card drawer for any occasion,” which you can use to pull gifts and cards from if you should ever accidentally forget that special occasion. If this idea has never occurred to you, you are probably a strong left brainer, which is good for running the world's military campaigns but not your family.

“Room service” — at home, with a smile.

Provide your partner with “room service” for a predetermined time. This includes the amenities you'd find at a nice hotel (breakfast in bed, massages, baths, getting the newspaper, slippers, good movies, flowers, pleasing conversation). People consider these amenities so important they

are willing to pay a lot for them. Hotels have spent millions on research about what makes people happy. Take advantage of the research they have already done for you.

“I owe you a favor” coupons.

For the person who has everything, you could give her a “I owe you a favor” coupon. A “favor coupon” is a coupon that can be redeemed anytime, anywhere, for you to do her a favor (without whining or questioning).

7. Rules for men, and Rules for women — “Rules for the sexes.”

The unwritten laws are now written. Top radio personality, Mr. Bill Flynn, brought these survival manuals to light for hundreds of thousands of listeners on December 5, 2001, in the North Carolina area. This author had to pull his car over (safely) to the side of the road to fully enjoy Mr. Flynn’s revelations from the books, *Rules for husbands*, and *Rules for wives*. These companion books, written by comedian Jim Dale, are the true relationship-survival manuals, which should be part of every pre-nuptial, pre-house sharing agreement. The abbreviated list below paraphrases Mr. Bill Flynn’s “read” on Mr. Dale’s books.

Rules for Men:

- Apologize — even though you don’t know what you’ve done wrong.
- Don’t count her shoes. Pointy toes, square toes, round toes, no toes. It will never make sense to you.
- Don’t burp and then laugh about it. Only men and their sons think that burping is funny.
- Don’t make fun of Oprah.

Rules for Women:

- No trick, “Am I fat?” questions.
- Beer is to men what flowers are to women.

Thank you, Mr. Bill Flynn. Sometimes it takes more than a lifetime of trial and error, especially for men, to learn these tried and true rules for pleasing the opposite sex. And men, if you think you know the rules, think again. Even Einstein did not know the “Rules for the sexes” as testified to by his far less than ideal marriage.

**Folks are usually about as happy as they make
their minds up to be.”
Abraham Lincoln**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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He has also conducted speaking engagements for conferences and presented for a number of television shows.

His latest book is *How the Best Handle Stress – Your First Aid Kit* <https://www.amazon.com/How-Best-Handle-Stress-First/dp/1731056508>