



BP - Jill Bolte Taylor

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Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor is a Harvard-trained and published neuroanatomist who experienced a severe hemorrhage in the left hemisphere of her brain in 1996. On the afternoon of this rare form of stroke (AVM), she could not walk, talk, read, write, or recall any of her life. It took eight years for Dr. Jill to completely recover all of her physical function and thinking ability.

Her story illuminates and demonstrates the implications of [hemispheric research](#).

In 1996 brain scientist [Jill Bolte Taylor](#) was on the fast track of her profession. She was moving steadily toward her goal of understanding the chemical foundation of mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, from which her brother suffered. Researching and teaching at Harvard Medical School by day, “Dr. Jill” filled her weekends and evenings educating audiences about what she calls the “tissue issue”—the value of brain donation for research.

But on December 10, 1996, the energetic brain scientist had a stroke: a golf-ball-sized hemorrhage and blood clot shut down the left hemisphere of her brain.

“For eight years I did not exist as a solid; I existed as a fluid entity in a fluid environment. When I lost that perception of “solid” and that defined boundary of my body, I became at one with all that is. That is a very different way of perceiving yourself in relationship to your external world. This was a marvelous experience—to be that enormous in the absence of the distraction of language that has to label everything in my world.”

Our academic system is designed to reward extreme left-hemisphere gifts and behavior. If you look at our level of aggression in society, it tells us what is going on in the left hemisphere. It gets stressed out; it is on a timetable, so it's always urgent and always late and behind, and this results in a snappish attitude and behavior. To the left hemisphere, everything is either right or wrong; It is all about hierarchy, so I know where I sit on that ladder—what's above me and what's below me—and I have to behave accordingly to fit into my little box. Okay, that's one way of being. But how happy are these people?”

It's time for a new paradigm and a new balance to create [a new universe of possibility](#).

She also speaks about the tremendous sense of interconnectedness and compassion she felt while operating in that right hemisphere mode, and goes on to clarify:

“At no time have I said that we should all grow up to just be pure right-hemisphere. The point is balance: I am a true advocate for developing both skills. Now we are out of balance with left-hemisphere dominance”.



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<http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx?id=6526#.UL4oLRN28D0.email>

JBT *When it comes to function, however, I define dominance as which hemisphere is the driving force of our consciousness. The right-hemisphere consciousness is more of a global, unified, everything-is-connected experience of the present moment. This is different than the left, which is more linear, more methodical in its thinking, and which puts everything on a hierarchy: good and bad, right and wrong. The two hemispheres function very differently*

It's the same cells, but the cells are differently organized. They are sensitive to different types of information. For example, the left hemisphere may be able to tune in to the high-frequency tones that are related to voices; the right is more sensitive and cued in to lower-frequency sounds, which are more like body gurgles. Each hemisphere specializes in very specific types of information processing.

The left hemisphere is extremely emotional; it can be extremely angry, extremely sad. So it has its own emotional system. What is going on in the right hemisphere that is different is more of a kinesthetic connection and nurturing perspective, with compassion, such that everything is connected. I would not call it more emotional; that is wrong, a misnomer for what is actually going on.

We essentially have two very different brains in our head. Wouldn't it be nice if we really had an understanding of how to capitalize on the whole organism and recognize when we are skewed more toward one type of thinking as opposed to another? And we're not just skewed toward another type of thinking; it's an arrogance that says that my type of thinking is more important or better than your type of thinking because I do it this way and you don't. We have both hemispheres, and they are equal. One is not better than the other. It just makes us a little bit different in the processing of information.

From her book ***Stroke of Insight***:

"In that instant, I suddenly felt vulnerable, and I noticed that the constant brain chatter that routinely familiarized me with my surroundings was no longer a predictable and constant flow of conversation. Instead, my verbal thoughts were now inconsistent, fragmented, and interrupted by an intermittent silence.

I felt as if all of my systems, including my mind's ability to instigate movement, were moving into a slow mode of operation. Yet, even though my thoughts were no longer a constant stream of chatter about the external world and my relationship to it, I was conscious and constantly present within my mind.

The harder I tried to concentrate, the more fleeting my ideas seemed to be. Instead of finding answers and information, I met a growing sense of peace. As the language centers in my left hemisphere grew increasingly silent, my consciousness soared into an all-knowingness, a "being at one" with the universe, if you will. In a compelling sort of way, it felt like the good road home and I liked it.



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By this point I had lost touch with much of the physical three-dimensional reality that surrounded me. My body was propped up against the shower wall and I found it odd that I was aware that I could no longer clearly discern the physical boundaries of where I began and where I ended. Instead, I now blended in with the space and flow around me.

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Our goal is to help you understand and achieve a balance and a fuller use of your **brain's capacities**.