

"Hypnotherapy can help you to change the limiting habits that stop you from living your life fully" - Philip Braham

Asperger Syndrome - An Alternative View

Asperger is a syndrome and as such has no clearly identifiable cause. We can identify influenza, as opposed to a cold, by isolating the influenza virus, but here all we have is a collection of behaviour patterns and if someone ticks more than a certain number of boxes we label them as having Asperger syndrome.

Asperger Syndrome is sometimes considered part of an Autistic spectrum, with 'high functioning' Asperger at the low end and severe autism at the other. My own experience does not bear this out. Rather, Autism and Asperger syndrome result from problems with the left and right hemispheres of the brain respectively and although are related are fundamentally different in characteristics and treatment.

Some background

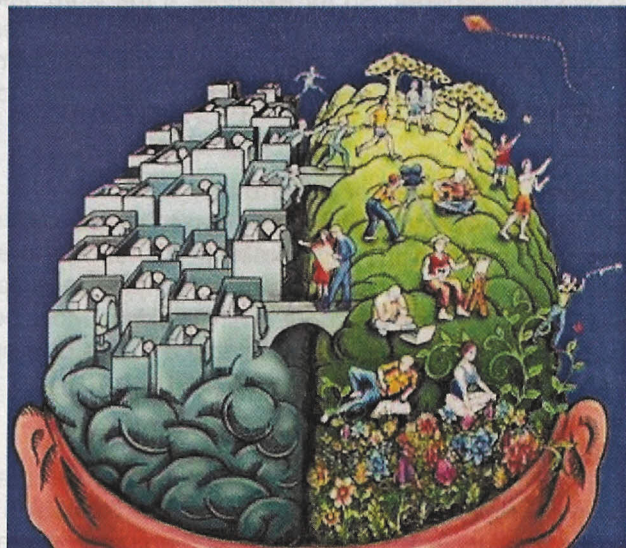
Some academics consider that emphasis on left and right brain functionality is overstated and that much literature on left and right brain differences is exaggerated. Some consider it 'pseudoscience'. Certainly after a stroke, left brain (that is, the left hemisphere of the brain) can take over right brain functionality and vice versa. However there is a clear distinction between the two.

Jill Bolte Taylor was a neuroanatomist, a professor at Harvard who specialised in the human brain. In common with most neurologists she thought the emphasis on right and left brain thinking was overstated in some sections of the community. However on the 10th December 1996 she suffered a stroke to the left hemisphere of her brain. Over the course of a few hours all the left brain functions shut down and she was operating completely from the right hemisphere. Her video can be viewed here. She subsequently published a book describing her experiences "My Stroke of Insight".

Brain Functions

The left hemisphere of the brain deals with anything that involves time: planning, calculating, pattern recognition. Most of our western education is involved with left brain thinking. The left brain is like a computer. There is a series of programs which we develop as we grow up and which enable us to do every task from walking and talking through to reading. To use a computer metaphor, the left brain can be considered a serial processor.

The right hemisphere of the brain is in the here-and-now. It monitors sensations, tastes and smells. It is where the imagination is developed, particularly images. Much body coordination takes place in the right brain. In the computer metaphor it is a parallel processor.



Many tasks use both hemispheres. When reading fiction the reading process is performed with the left hemisphere but the images are produced by the right hemisphere. Listening to music involves both hemispheres. In poetry the words are assimilated using the left hemisphere but the rhyming and metre of the poem is processed with the right.

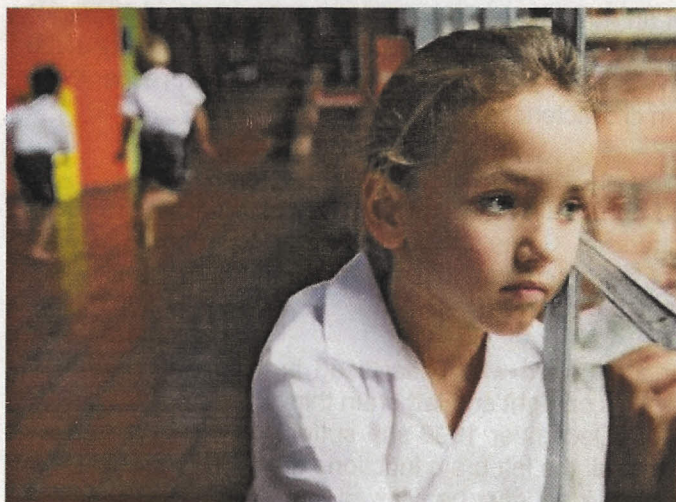
Autism and Asperger Syndrome

Rather than viewing autism and Asperger Syndrome as a continuum, it is better to see them as being the result of differences in development between the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

Joe Griffin and Ivan Tyrrell coined the term "caetextia" and have a similar concept.

Autism is a result of underdevelopment of the left hemisphere. Typically, autistic people have poorly developed language skills and have difficulty in pattern recognition. At its extreme there is no concept of being in a room and recognising, say, a table or chair. There is simply shapes and because of this there is a constant feeling of strangeness. It would be like us being dropped into a world where we could not recognise anything. The only familiarity that autistics can recognise is the sense of touch (which is a right brain function), and thus they often seek comfort in touching things.

Asperger Syndrome is a result of underdeveloped in the right hemisphere so that the left hemisphere predominates. They are generally good at language, maths and calculating but poor at reading body language (which is a right brain function) and, strangely, sometimes have difficulty using language contractions (I am instead of I'm, it is rather than it's etc) and are very literal in their interpretation. Because the left brain processes pattern recognition it is binary in its understanding. Something either fits a pattern or it doesn't - there is no middle ground. Left brain people (and this may include people who are not necessarily Asperger) can be very rigid in their thinking. There is no subtlety. Many asperger people have poor body coordination as this is a right brain function.



Obviously this is a simplification and few autistics or Asperger Syndrome people fit exactly into these profiles. The brain is very complicated and another part of the brain which seems to give rise to issues is the Corpus Callosum. This part of the brain links the two hemispheres. If the Corpus Callosum is removed (an operation called a Corpus

Callosotomy and is occasionally done to prevent epileptic fits), the person has a disassociation between the two hemispheres. So for example, if the word 'telephone' is flashed on a screen so that it is seen by the left hemisphere, it can be acknowledged. However, if the word is flashed to the right hemisphere, it is not acknowledged but if the person is then asked to draw something they will draw a telephone. This gives us a good insight into what is sometimes called 'intuition', something that many Asperger Syndrome people appear to lack.

Hypnosis and Asperger Syndrome

People with Asperger Syndrome typically are difficult to hypnotise as hypnosis involves moving the consciousness into the right brain. In this state the analytical left brain is bypassed. However, the other side of this is that when they can be hypnotised (and with practice this is usually possible) they can develop and understand right brain thinking. Most people with Asperger Syndrome are intrigued by the idea of hypnosis and some are intrigued by the concept that there are experiences that can be understood in a non-rational way.

Sense of Smell

An interesting aspect to this is that certain senses are processed more with the left brain and others more with the right brain. The sense of smell, particularly is a right brain function, which is why smells can be so evocative. People with Asperger Syndrome sometimes find it difficult to identify smells. The mechanics of smelling work well, and they are often able to detect smells very easily, but they find identification of smells difficult.

For more information on how hypnotherapy can help Asperger syndrome people please contact us today.

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