

Awaken Your Brain - Additional Resources for Gigi Decker's lecture

Neuroplasticity resources, videos, books, activities (Google document created by Gigi)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bjw8CMuZr8AmMvN8IHcp6BAyC-eFvKxr50xO9eDMUfU/edit>

Very helpful books/resources for this lecture:

"Take Five! Staying Alert at Home and School" by Mary Sue Williams & Sherry Shellenberger
ISBN 0-9643041-1-2

"Brain Gym" by Paul E Dennison PhD
ISBN 0-942143-02-7

"The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales" by Oliver Sacks
ISBN 1-4165-4278-7

"The Odd Brain" by Dr. Stephen Juan
ISBN 1-56731-927-0

"The Mind & The Brain" by Jeffrey M Schwartz, MD and Sharon Begley
ISBN 978-0-06-098847-0

"blink" by Malcolm Gladwell
ISBN 978-0-316-01066-5

"Do-It-Yourself Eye Movement Technique for Emotional Healing" by Fred Freidberg, PhD
ISBN 1-57224-256-6

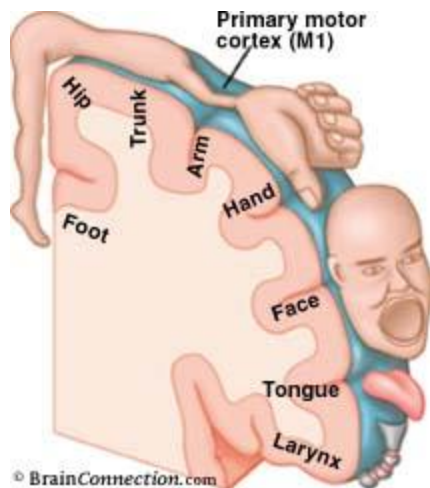
"Acupressure's Potent Points" by Michael Reed Gach
ISBN 978-0553349702

Brain Gym videos:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VL4an7UC3wA>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq2POOCFWJo>

Brain mapping information:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lateralization_of_brain_function
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cortical_homunculus



<http://www.oprah.com/spirit/How-to-Tap-into-the-Right-Side-of-Your-Brain-Martha-Beck-Advice/3>

How to Wake Up Your Right Mind

Deep practice is hard. It makes your brain feel like a piece of raw hamburger. It's also weirdly rewarding, dropping you into rapt concentration, yielding quick improvement, and (if you're lucky) producing good work. Here are some tricks you can deep practice to buff up your right hemisphere.

1. Sign your name every which way. My favorite teacher and artist, Will Reimann, was brilliant at getting his students to use the right side of their brains. There were many squinty eyes in Reimann's studio, much neural myelination. Here's one of his exercises:

Sign your name.

Done?

Okay, now things get gnarly. Sign again, but this time, do it in mirror writing—right to left, rather than left to right (just moving your hand backward fires the right brain hemisphere). Got that? Now sign upside down. Then backward and upside down. Repeat this until you can sign in all directions. Good luck.

2. Have a bilateral conversation. For this exercise, take a pencil in your right hand (even if you're left-handed) and write the question: "How's it going?" Then switch to your left hand, and write whatever pops up. Your nondominant hand's writing will be shaky—that's okay. The important thing isn't tidiness; it's noticing that your twin hemispheres have different personalities.

The right side of the brain, which controls the left hand, will say things you don't know that you know. It specializes in assessing your physical and mental feelings, and it often offers solutions. "Take a nap," your right hemisphere might say, or "Just do what feels right; we'll be fine." You'll find there's a little Zen master in that left hand of yours (not surprisingly, left-handed people are disproportionately represented in creative professions).

3. Learn new moves. You need your right hemisphere to move in an unfamiliar way, whether you're learning a complicated dance step or holding a new yoga posture. Or cutting your own hair (actually, don't—I speak from experience).

Try this: Walk a few steps, noticing how your arms swing opposite your legs. Now walk with your right arm and right foot going forward simultaneously, then the left hand and left foot. Is this difficult? No? Then do it backward, with your eyes closed—any variation that's initially hard but ultimately learnable. You'll master a new skill, sure; more important, you'll build your overall right-brain facility.

4. Toss in the kitchen sink. Time to push your newly awakened right hemisphere into useful service. Think of a problem that's had you stumped for a while: Your preschooler won't nap, you can't make yourself exercise, you need to cut expenses without sacrificing quality of life. With this challenge in your mind, read a few paragraphs in several totally unrelated books. Then relax. Play with your cat, wash the dishes, watch the neighbors through binoculars. Think of the problem periodically, then drop it again.

This process encourages eureka epiphanies, like those moments in TV dramas where the brilliant doctor or sleuth gets the "ping" of insight that solves the case. Your first few ideas may not be perfect—many will be awful—but there are more where they came from. Once you begin encouraging the right brain to churn out solutions, it will do so more and more abundantly.

For example, Laura wanted to travel but hated kenneling her yellow Lab, Buster. She also had partial hearing loss due to meningitis. One day when she had trouble hearing a flight attendant—*ping!*—she realized she could train Buster as a hearing service dog. Now they fly the skies in style together.

Dieting made Betsy feel grumpy, bored, and isolated. She and her friend Janet began e-mailing each other for support, then—*ping!*—decided to create a blog (bitchyourselfthin.com) where dieters could gather to share food fantasies and grumpy harangues. Now Betsy has her ideal body and an Internet community.

Brenda was unnerved by an ex-boyfriend's increasingly paranoid, angry phone messages. Then she realized—*ping!*—that his very paranoia could shut him down. She had three private detectives ask him about his phone messages; he became convinced she was having him followed, and he disappeared.

All of these women puzzled about a difficult situation, tried many solutions that didn't work, let the problem go, and got a brilliant response from their own creativity. They couldn't force that to happen, but they made it highly likely with Kitchen Sink thinking.

Turning on your right brain is a skill, one that grows steadily stronger the more you work at it. Trigger the sensation of deep practice by mastering any unfamiliar task, feed challenges and stray information into your right brain's database, and see new ideas begin to emerge. As they do, you'll move more confidently and productively through an increasingly complex world. When I see you out Rollerblading, eyes locked in a vacant yet squinty stare, I'll know you're getting the hang of it.

Martha Beck is the author of six books, including Steering by Starlight (Rodale).

Read more:

<http://www.oprah.com/spirit/How-to-Tap-into-the-Right-Side-of-Your-Brain-Martha-Beck-Advice/3#ixzz22GMD3wx1>

Chocolate & the Brain

<http://www.learningrxblog.com/flavanols-found-in-chocolate-benefit-your-brain/>

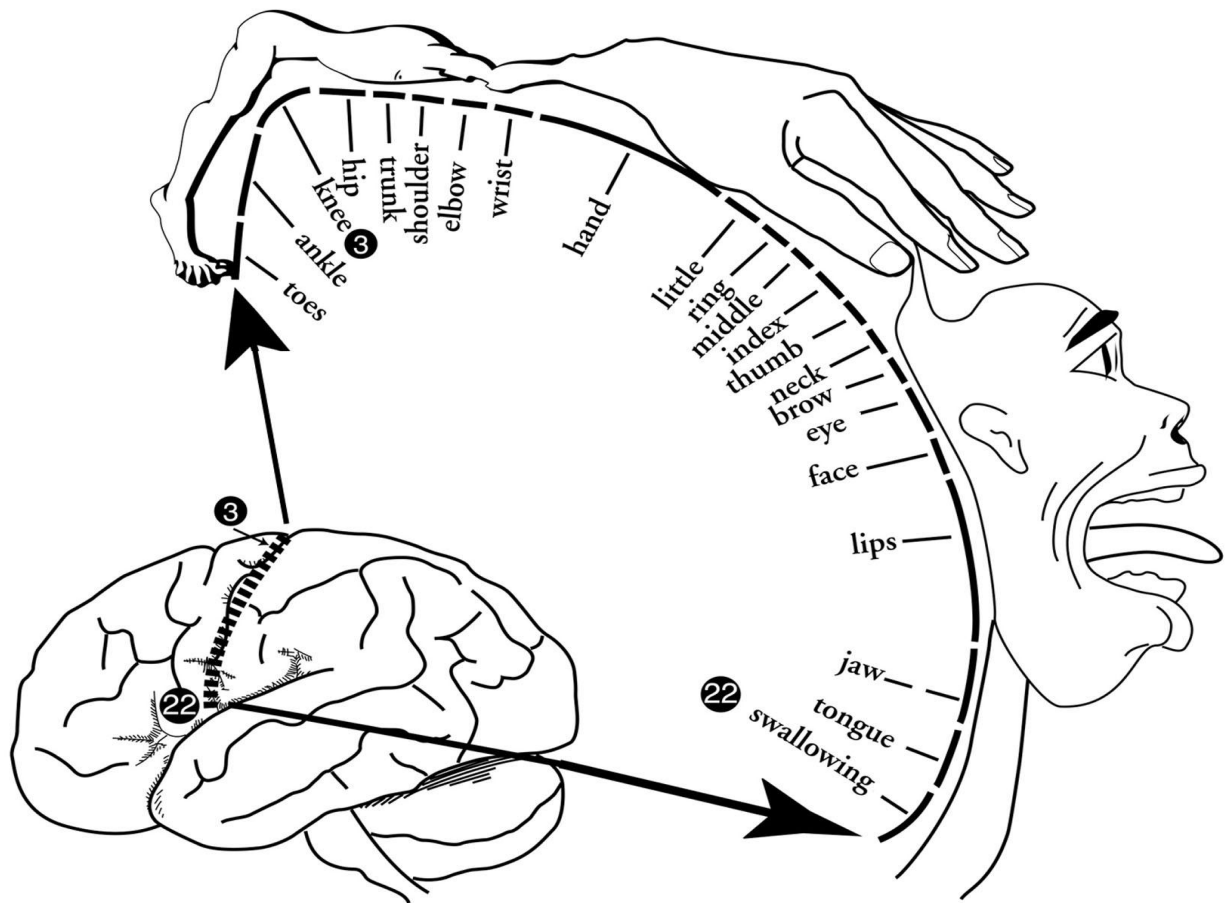
A recent [study](#) proves something you've been wishing were true: Chocolate is good for you! You heard right! Chocolate has been scientifically proven to boost blood flow to certain areas of the brain. It's the flavanols in chocolate that make it so healthy, and the darker the chocolate the better. Flavanols can also be found in foods like red wine, green tea, and blueberries. But let's get back to the business of discussing chocolate.

Scientists found that drinking a flavanol-rich cocoa drink increased the flow of blood to the brain for two to three hours. Using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), these scientists were able to detect increased activity in specific areas of the brain in individuals who drank just one serving of the chocolaty drink. The activity is linked to dilation of blood vessels which allows more blood—and therefore more oxygen—to reach key areas of the brain. The result? Better performance at specific cognitive tasks, plus greater alertness.

Scientists are going to continue looking into how this information can be used to enhance brain performance for people battling fatigue (can you say everyone?) and sleep deprivation, and it may even fight the effects of aging! The study also suggests that chocolate may be helpful in treating vascular impairment (things like strokes and dementia), thereby maintaining cardiovascular health.

So the truth about chocolate is finally out. Eating (or even drinking!) chocolate can actually make us healthier and smarter. It's important to choose the right chocolates, meaning those high in flavanols, like dark chocolate. So the next time you're tired or unfocused, hit the dark chocolate instead of the coffee pot – your brain will thank you.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/02/070221101326.htm>



Non-dominant coloring/exercises

<http://seeingcreativevisions.wordpress.com/category/inventiveness/>

[This hand. That hand. Right hand. Left hand. No. your Other hand!](#)

14JAN2011 [Leave a Comment](#)

by seeingcreativevisions in Creativity, Imagination, Inspiration, Inventiveness, Resourfulness, Uncategorized, Vision

“Your other right!” is what my kids father use to tell me when he had told me to turn right and I went left. Being ambidextrous has its own set of drawbacks like you never know what is truly right or left. On the “other hand” it is quite convenient when someone asks you do draw, color, or write with your non-dominant hand. Yes, I did tell you in my last post on creativity that we would be working with our non-dominant hands or the hands we don’t normally use.

I have several assignments that can be very good for opening of the brain and fertilizing your creativity. The first one I want to discuss is the coloring with your “other” (non-dominant) hand for 20 minutes everyday. Just get yourself one of those little kids coloring books and start in coloring EVERYDAY! The

use of color crayons is important because they have a certain smell that invokes another sense. If you are not used to being creative, then this could spur all kinds of strange dreams, or at least open up dreamland to you, and allow you to remember those strange dreams you have been having all along. Me, I have all kinds of strange dreams all the time. Dreams to me are a way for the subconscious/Spirit to speak to me. So much information can be gotten out of a dream that you could not access in any other way, but your subconscious/Spirit is using your sleep time to reach you. Let's see for me there was the large snake so big I could not see it's head or it's tail, and it's belly was over a foot tall. Can you imagine? It just kept jumping at me! To me the snake means transition or transformation, and only being able to see the middle section of the "BIG" snake, meant BIG transformation in my life and I was in the middle of it. So don't be freaked out by the dreams this may bring on, it is just your creativity coming out in a new way.

The second is kind of fun too. This is great when you have an issue or question you just seem to not have an answer for. Write it with your ? dominant hand (the one you write with everyday) and then switch hands, and start to write with your non-dominant hand the answer. You will be amazed at the answers that just come out. This is called guided writing. Your dominant hand represents your conscious mind and your non-dominant hand represents your subconscious mind. The biggest thing is to just trust the process and don't second guess the answers. Don't worry about the legibility of the writing with the non-dominant hand, it is necessary for pulling out the answers. Here is the thing, never write a "should" question. Instead ask what would be my highest and best for this situation. You also may need to start the process out by asking your higher self or your inner child permission for the answers, so if you are having trouble with this process try asking permission from yourself.

Now the third process may seem like the most daunting, especially if you tend to not think of yourself as an artist, but just work with it anyways. If it does not turn out just as you were thinking be gracious to yourself, and give gratitude for whatever does come out on the page. Here we will be drawing pictures with our non-dominant hand. These are not necessarily works of art that you will someday frame and put up on your wall (although, you may find that they turn out just that way, as you find the artist within you). These are just exercises in creativity. This is great way to bring out your feelings about a certain situation. This could be a great way to grieve a loss of life, a loss of a relationship, a loss of a job, or just process what is going on inside you. You may find yourself drawing happy pictures or drawing angry pictures or sad pictures, but the point is to just be there in the moment and expressing yourself.

The point of these exercises are to open up the brain to new ways of thinking, and start to listen to the creative side of yourself. Here is an interesting tidbit, the creative side of yourself is in fact your heart, and not even in your brain. That is why it is often said to follow your heart. I say follow your heart to happiness through creativity! Who knows what you find inside of you...