



Editorial

EDITORIAL NOTE ON BRAIN FUNCTIONING

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EDITORIAL

Cognitive psychologists, sometimes called brain scientists, study how the human brain works-how we expect, remember and learn. They apply psychology to know how we perceive events and make decisions. The hind-brain includes the upper part of the medulla spinalis, the brain stem, and a wrinkled ball of tissue called the cerebellum. The hindbrain controls the body's vital functions such as respiration and heart rate. The cerebellum coordinates movement and is involved in learned rote movements. When you play the piano or hit a tennis ball you are activating the cerebellum. The uppermost part of the brainstem is that the midbrain, which controls some reflex actions and is a component of the circuit involved within the control of eye movements and other voluntary movements. The forebrain is that the largest and most highly developed part of the human brain: it consists primarily of the cerebrum and therefore the structures hidden beneath it. When people see pictures of the brain it is usually the cerebrum that they notice. The cerebrum sits at the topmost part of the brain and is that the source of intellectual activities. It holds your memories, allows you to plan, enables you to imagine and think. It allows you to acknowledge friends, read books, and play games. The cerebrum is split into two halves (hemispheres) by a deep fissure. Despite the split, the two cerebral hemispheres communicate with each other through a thick tract of nerve fibres that lies at the base of this fissure. Although the 2 hemispheres seem to be mirror images of every other, they're different. For instance, the power to make words seems to lie primarily within the left brain, while the proper hemisphere seems to regulate many abstract reasoning skills. For some as-yet-unknown reason, nearly all of the signals from the brain to the body and vice-versa

cross over on their thanks to and from the brain. This means that the proper hemisphere primarily controls the left side of the body and therefore the left brain primarily controls the proper side. When one side of the brain is damaged, the opposite side of the body is affected. For example, a stroke within the right brain of the brain can leave the left arm and leg paralyzed. Each hemisphere is often divided into sections, or lobes, each of which focuses on different functions. To understand each lobe and its specialty we will take a tour of the cerebral hemispheres, starting with the two frontal lobes, which lie directly behind the forehead. When you plan a schedule, imagine the longer term, or use reasoned arguments, these two lobes do much of the work. One of the ways the frontal lobes seem to try this stuff is by acting as short-term storage sites, allowing one idea to be kept in mind while other ideas are considered. In the rearmost portion of each frontal lobe is a motor area, which helps control voluntary movement. A nearby place on the left lobe called Broca's area allows thoughts to be transformed into words. When you enjoy a good meal-the taste, aroma, and texture of the food-two sections behind the frontal lobes called the parietal lobes are at work. The forward parts of these lobes, just behind the motor areas, are the primary sensory areas. These areas receive information about temperature, taste, touch, and movement from the remainder of the body. Reading and arithmetic are also functions in the repertoire of each parietal lobe. As you look at the words and pictures on this page, two areas at the back of the brain are at work. These lobes called the occipital lobes, process images from the eyes and link that information with images stored in memory. Damage to the occipital lobes can cause blindness. The last lobes on our tour of the cerebral hemispheres are the temporal, which lie in front of the visual areas and nest under the parietal and frontal lobes. Whether you appreciate symphonies or rock music, your brain responds through the activity of these lobes. The underside of every lobe plays an important role in forming and retrieving memories, including those related to music. Other parts of this lobe seem to integrate memories and sensations of taste, sound, sight, and touch.

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