



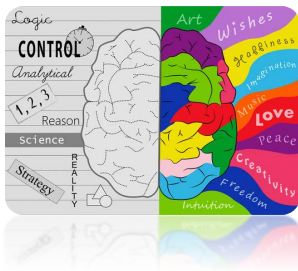
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CAREER STRATEGIES AND INSIGHTS

Engage Your Whole Brain - The Power of Creativity

A fact that is often lost in the pressures of work and the grind of life is that there is more to all of us than meets the eye. Subsequently, there is something to be said for taking the time to nurture the passions and interests that



are aspects of who we are. I've taken enough assessments on brain dominance to know that while I'm pretty close to 50/50, I have a slight bend toward the right (images, creativity, intuition, curiosity) rather than the left (rules, strategy, logic, and details) side of my brain.

What's interesting about this is that my day to day is primarily left brain activity. I run a business, and talk strategy, processes, and logic with clients. While my intuition and curiosity (right brain) do influence my approach; I imagine that like a neglected mate, my right brain is starving for much more time and attention. From time to time (more frequently in recent days) I do feel a pull in the direction of more creativity. I've resisted the pull towards the right primarily because the energy is different; and I have difficulty switching back and forth during the course of the day. Not to mention that it feels more like "play" and who has time for that? Right?

This is not much different from the Head-Heart dilemma that many of us attempt to balance. I can't tell you how many leaders have asked me, "Is this all there is?" That question represents the ringing of a bell that resounds imbalance and one-sidedness. My response is always, "What have you given up? What do you miss?" The answer is usually an interest or passion that somehow has become something that feels out of reach or too time consuming.

Actually, making time for interests and passions that affect the way we see the world does have a few benefits. First, it provides a mental break from the daily grind. Second, taking the time to feed "what's missing" can be energizing in general. Finally, and probably the most significant benefit is that tapping into your personal creativity outside of work can actually fuel your innovation at work. It adds new perspective.

I have always had an interest in fashion. As a matter of fact, I thought that I'd have a career as a buyer with a high-end retailer. While that didn't materialize, I never lost my love of fashion. That interest has been pulling at me for the last few years, so I decided to enroll in a fashion design class. Enrolling in the class has motivated me to manage my time much more efficiently so that nothing interferes with my ability to use all day Thursday to prepare for class Thursday evening. By Wednesday close of business my mind is clear and there are no distractions.

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I've found that engaging in something that I love gives me much more energy to do the work required to "earn a living." I look forward to Thursdays with guilt free abandon; and my approach to my class work is totally uninhibited with limitless possibilities. The lightness that I've discovered as a result of taking the class has carried over into my "day job" as well. The mental expansion provides a unique lens for looking at the same tasks and responsibilities in a different way.

Summer is around the corner. It is typically the time when we allow ourselves a bit more grace and down time. Reflect on something that has been tugging at you (e.g., an art class, writing, learning a new language, photography, learning to play an instrument, an interior design class, or gardening class). **Decide** how much time you can *realistically* give to the activity (e.g., an hour a week, 30 minutes a day). **Determine** the best time for the activity (e.g., week-day evening, Saturday morning, Sunday afternoon). **Schedule** it, put it on your calendar. **Commit** to it and **Negotiate** everything else around it.

Pay attention to how you're thinking about unrelated things changes. Are you approaching problems differently? Are you tackling challenges that once seemed impossible with more ease? Are your thoughts and ideas more creative? I would like to suggest that the answer to these questions will be "Yes!" Activating your creativity can influence every aspect of your world...in a good way.

*Dr. Kym A. Harris is President and CEO of Your SweetSpot Coaching and Consulting, LLC. Her clients are high performing and high potential leaders and executives who are known for their strong performance. Her belief that "competence is **more** than performance" is fundamental to her coaching model which is fueled by the principles of Emotional Intelligence. She is the coach that helps leaders discover, develop, and explore their **more**.*