



My Stroke of Insight, by Jill Bolte Taylor

One of the greatest lessons I learned was how to feel the physical component of emotion. Joy was a feeling in my body. Peace was a feeling in my body. I thought it was interesting that I could feel when a new emotion was triggered. I could feel new emotions flood through me and then release me. I had to learn new words to label these "feeling" experiences, and most remarkably, I learned that I had the power to choose whether to hook into a feeling and prolong its presence in my body, or just let it quickly flow right out of me.

I made my decisions based upon how things felt inside. There were certain emotions like anger, frustration, or fear that felt uncomfortable when they surged through my body. So I told my brain that I didn't like that feeling and didn't want to hook into those neural loops. I learned that I could use my left mind, through language, to talk directly to my brain and tell it what I wanted and what I didn't want. Upon this realization, I knew I would never return to the personality I had been before. I suddenly had much more to say about how I felt and for how long, and I was adamantly opposed to reactivating old painful emotional circuits.

Paying attention to what emotions feel like in my body has completely shaped my recovery. I spent eight years watching my mind analyze everything that was going on in my brain. Each day brought new challenges and insights. The more I recovered my old files, the more my old emotional baggage surfaced, and the more I needed to evaluate the usefulness of preserving its underlying neural circuitry.

Emotional healing was a tediously slow process but well worth the effort. As my left brain became stronger, it seemed natural for me to want to "blame" other people or external events for my feelings or circumstances. But realistically, I knew that no one had the power to make me feel anything, except for me and my brain. Nothing external to me had the power to take away my peace of heart and mind. That was completely up to me. I may not be in total control of what happens to my life, but I certainly am in charge of how I choose to perceive my experience.

--Jill Bolte Taylor, from "My Stroke of Insight" (more: video [http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/jill_bolte_taylor_s_powerful_stroke_of_insight.html])