
A Whole New Mind: Part III Symphony & Empathy

Posted on November 21, 2011 by Louisa



Symphony: Daniel Pink describes symphony as the "ability to put together the pieces. It is the capacity to synthesize rather than to analyze; to see relationships between seemingly unrelated fields; to detect broad patterns...and to invent something new by combining elements nobody else thought to pair."

When the right brain is active we see relationships and integrate them. That is why when we are driving for long periods of time, we start to think of new things...the right brain takes over and the patterns of the lines in the road and trees, etc. promote right brain activity.

We live multi lives with multi interests and that is good, Pink says.

Powerful ideas come from all these backgrounds and areas. Also the use of metaphors, understanding things in terms of other things is important. Did you know that velcro was invented when Georges de Mestral noticed how burrs stuck to his dog's fur? Some say that MQ (metaphor quotient) is as valuable as IQ.

Application: Teach and use metaphors. Have youth start a metaphor log. Teach youth to make connections between different areas of content. Teach the big picture not just the details. Listen to great symphonies. Create collages.

Empathy: Empathy is one quality that most youth workers have in abundance. Why else would we accept low pay and long hours to work really hard? Often it is because we remember what it was like to be a youth and how we needed someone like us back then. For example, some of our parks & recreation youth workers "grew up" at community centers and now work there so they can help the youth that need them.

Did you know that we both express our emotions and read the emotions of others through our right hemisphere? And we can actually improve our ability to read faces. For example, genuine smiles involve 2 facial muscles while "fake" smiles involve only one. So to detect a real smile, look to see if the eyes are "smiling" too.

Application: Take an empathy test on line. Check out www.ideo.com for IDEO Method Cards that put empathy at the center of a design process. Put yourself in your youth's shoes and remember what it was like to be a middle schooler or a teen.