

## The Science Behind Your Inner Child

In the 1960s, physicians began conducting a specific type of brain surgery on epileptic patients to help reduce or eliminate their seizures. They found that if they cut the corpus callosum (the bundle of neural fibers that connects the left and right hemispheres of the brain) in these patients, their symptoms would often disappear. So they began performing this procedure with great excitement.

Unfortunately some of these patients began developing side effects. One man went to light up a cigarette, and his left hand, acting entirely on its own, knocked it out of his mouth. A different man had to restrain one of his arms from attempting to strangle his wife. Another woman woke up to someone slapping her across the face. It was her own right hand. She'd overslept.

Scientists determined that because the right hemisphere of the brain controls the left half of the body, and the left hemisphere controls the right half of the body, cutting off the communication between these hemispheres must have resulted in each half of the body acting independently from each other. Oops.

Of course once this realization was made, the procedure was no longer performed. But some of the subsequent studies conducted on these "split brain" patients had major psychological implications.

The patients were given questionnaires with both hands. They knew what their right hand was writing, but because there was no communication between the two sides of their brains, they were unaware of what their left hand was writing. These left-handed responses effectively served as a link to the unconscious.

When asked neutral questions, both hands responded with the same answer, but when asked specific questions about childhood trauma, the two answers differed greatly. For example, when one participant was asked how upset he was by a third grade bully he'd previously mentioned, his right hand responded "not at all"; after all, it was 30 years ago. But his left hand, unbeknownst to him, answered "extremely."

The results were consistent across the board, and these and other experiments lead a new understanding of the brain. Neuroscientists determined that the left side of the brain is more rational, objective, and present-minded, while the right side is more emotional, impulsive, and lives in the past. Time doesn't exist in this side of the brain. In your right hemisphere, there's no difference between 30 years ago and 10 seconds ago.

This was a significant discovery in the field of psychology. The idea of the "inner child" was no longer an abstract, intangible concept, but rather a clearly defined, measurable component of the mind.

[\*Click here to return to the exercise on generating self-compassion.\*](#)