

January 28, 2009

Dear Katie: I enjoyed being on the coaching call with you (and others) last Monday night. I'm re-sending some information I had e-mailed to you, but it didn't arrive. Feel free to use what you think is appropriate for your professional resource section.

Katie, it's hard to believe it's been 10 years this month that I first met you and Gay in the Living University program. It truly changed my life! As a result, Maralyn Cale and I have continued a deep friendship over the years.

When I last saw you, we were taping little video interviews of what we had learned. I remember you saying to me, "Where have you been hiding this whole time?" On Monday night, I appreciated you affirming me that my voice sounded integrated and resonant with what I'm doing. I'm excited to be living my purpose. . .

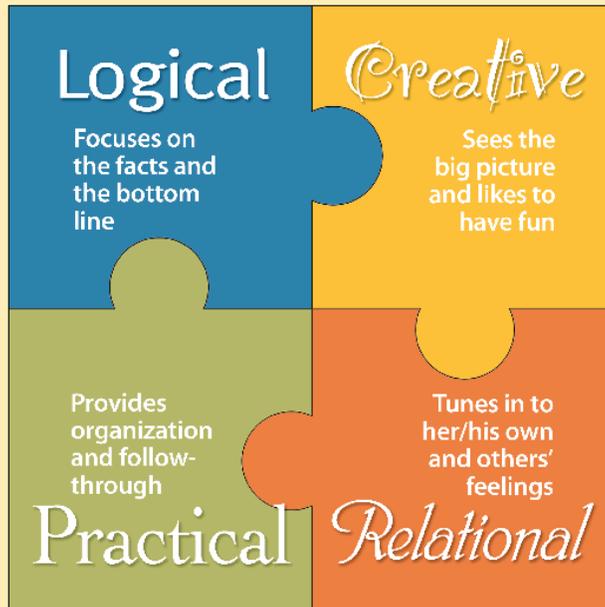
After completing Living University, I trained with Herrmann International to learn more about their whole brain model for communication and making decisions. Since they were mainly applying it for Fortune 500 companies, and I was teaching parenting classes at the Community Colleges of Spokane, I decided to write a book that would make brain research accessible for parents. I'm happy to announce the publication of my new book, **Why Don't You Understand? Improve Family Communication with the 4 Thinking Styles**. You can download free excerpts from it through my website www.susieweller.com or visit www.ParentingPress.com in Seattle, WA. I've quoted the Hendricks work and provided your website in my book.

You and I share many things in common—a curiosity to learn more about the brain and to improve family life--especially with the Conscious Parenting seminars that you've led. Please let me know if there's any information I can share with you that would support the work of the Hendricks Institute.

Here's a brief summary of whole brain® thinking styles provided by Susie Leonard Weller, (509) 255-6676, www.susieweller.com:

1. There are four basic thinking styles. In addition to being left- or right-brained, some take a more intellectual or an instinctual approach to making decisions.

Four Thinking Styles



www.ParentingPress.com

© 2007 by Parenting Press | Illustration from *Solving the Parenting Puzzle: Four Thinking Styles to Unlock the Secret of Family Harmony* by Susie Leonard Welton

Like being right-or left-handed, we have biological preferences for how we think. Most people can easily access two of these thinking styles, but often struggle to use the other two with ease. Dr. Richard Haier of UC Irvine says: “In contrast to your innate preference, thinking in your non-dominant style requires 100% more energy to function.”

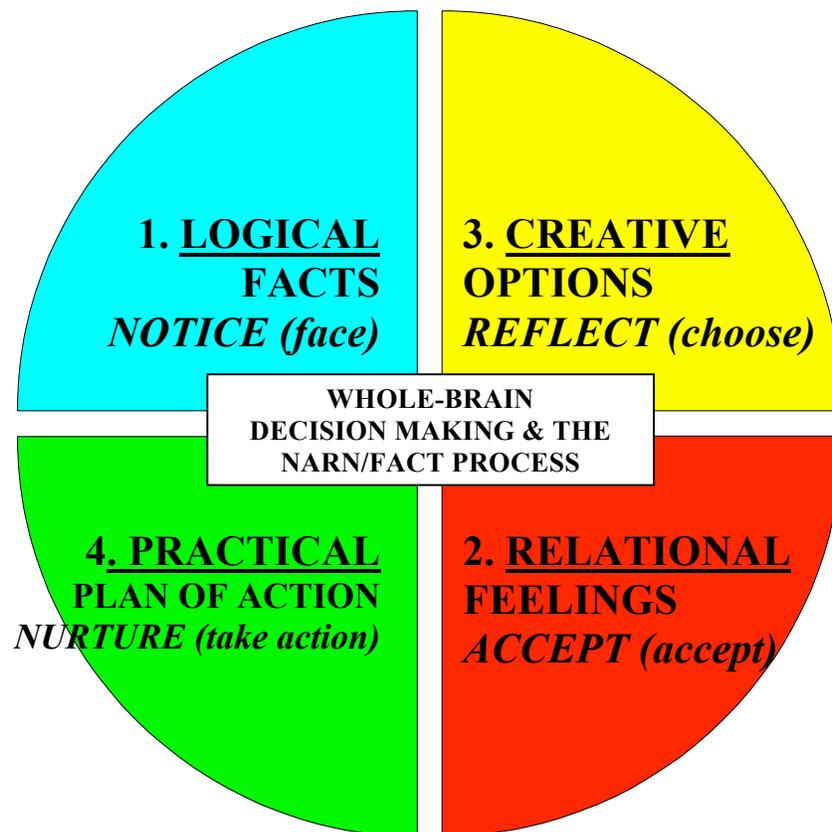
So, when someone naturally prefers the Logical (or head) approach, it requires 100% more energy to think in his or her diagonally opposite style—the Relational (or heart) approach. No wonder we sometimes feel exhausted talking to some people and are easily in sync with others.

And, our preferred thinking style(s) affect how we make decisions.

Unfortunately, we can make “half-brain” decisions when we only consider two of the four thinking styles. A “whole brain” decision making method respects diversity and provides a balanced perspective.

2. In 2003, I completed my training with Herrmann International (see www.hbdi.com) to become a thinking styles consultant. They developed a specific method for making whole brain decisions that integrates both hemispheres of the brain. You’ll notice that the process begins with the Logical style and gathers the facts. The second step purposely crosses to the diagonally opposite, right side of the brain and focuses on feelings. The third step explores creative options. Finally, the fourth step re-crosses over to the left side of the brain to make a specific plan for

implementation. Like Brain Gym, making a conscious effort to integrate both sides of the brain, leads to more balanced decisions that respect multiple perspectives. See the graphic below:



Maralyn Cale and I also developed a process called NARN (NOTICE, ACCEPT, REFLECT AND NURTURE) that takes this decision-making method, a step further to integrate our mind, body, emotions and actions. It's another way of expressing your FACT Process.

NARN: 4 STEPS TO NEW BEHAVIOR

1. NOTICE

- **DESCRIBE:** Briefly write down the annoying behavior in 1-2 sentences.
- **BODY:** Name your physical warning signs of when you start to feel upset.
- **FEELINGS:** Describe the layers of your feelings.

I'm mad that:

I'm sad that:

I'm fearful that:

I feel guilty or regret that:

- **THOUGHTS:** What's difficult to face about the reality of this situation right now?

2. ACCEPT

- **RESPECT DIFFERENCES:** What's difficult for you to accept about this situation?
- **MINIMIZE YOUR DEFENSES:** What defenses are you using to avoid facing and accepting the current reality? (Feel like a victim? Blame others? Fix or rescue? Deny or minimize?)
- **STOP USING EXTERNAL SOLUTIONS:** Do you do things to distract yourself from feeling -eat, drink, smoke, sleep, shop, or over analyze?)
- **BE COMPASSIONATE:** What would it take to accept yourself and others more fully as they are?
- **COACH:** What new skills would be helpful for you to use in this situation?

3. REFLECT

- **ACTIONS:** What have you said or done? Has it helped or made things worse?
- **RE-FRAME:** What else could be contributing to this behavior, or your reaction to it? (ie thinking style differences, too many stresses, poor self-care, old patterns, etc.)
- **PREDICT:** When does this behavior happen most often? What are the triggers?
- **IDENTIFY:** What are the needs (yours and the other person's) that this behavior is trying to meet? (Behaviors are the tip of the iceberg, needs are under the water-line)

4. NURTURE:

- **PREVENT:** In the future, how will you avoid this situation from happening?
- **COMMUNICATE:** What do you need to say clearly, without blame?
- **TAKE ACTION:** What baby steps will you take today to start changing your behavior?
- **PRACTICE:** These skills aren't learned in a day, they require on-going practice!
- **REINFORCE:** How will you recognize and celebrate your efforts to change your behavior?

You'll notice that the NARN steps follow the same brain integration steps as the whole-brain decision making method.

Katie, I recently had an article published in the Spokesman Review about how I was applying the NARN process when discerning a decision. I quoted the Hendrick's work in the article. I've attached it below for your review:

SPOKESMANREVIEW.COM

Guest Column

Discernment brings freedom from fear, closeness to God

[Susie Leonard Weller](#)

Special to The Spokesman-Review

November 15, 2008

"I don't know how to decide."

"I feel torn between two good choices."

"I feel stuck and confused."

How do you make decisions? When decisions are easy to make, there's rarely a need for discernment. But when I was facing my diagnosis of colon cancer two Thanksgivings ago, I needed more help.

The Latin root for discernment means to separate things in order to distinguish information – like a sieve sifting what's essential and what's not. Regardless of our faith tradition, the goal is to hear God's "still small voice" and to increase our attentiveness before making decisions.

Each dimension of our life – body, mind, emotions and spirit – provides a unique source of guidance.

Meditation creates new pathways in our brain by calming the nervous system and reducing inner noise and interference so we can hear the "still small voice." New studies demonstrate that consistent contemplation integrates the left and right brain hemispheres, supporting both wise and compassionate choices.

As a life and spiritual coach, as well as brain style consultant, I've received multiple opportunities to practice what I preach during my illness and recovery. One discernment tool I developed is called NARN (Notice, Accept, Reflect and Nurture). It uses a four-step process to deepen the process of listening.

NARN encouraged me to learn from my physical sensations, feelings, thoughts and behaviors. These same steps can be used for both individual and group discernment.

The first step in the NARN process is to notice without judgment what's happening. Physical cues, such as a clenched jaw, a tense neck or butterflies in the stomach, provide information.

Gay Hendricks, author of "Conscious Living: Finding Joy in the Real World" (HarperOne, 2001), suggests that specific parts of the body are linked to our emotions.

For example, tightness in the neck and shoulders could be unexpressed anger. A heaviness or constriction around the throat and chest may indicate sadness. By contrast, peace is often felt expressed through relaxed muscles.

The second step of NARN is to accept whatever information comes to our awareness. Be thankful for any information that surfaces and compassionately examine it.

I was tempted at times to distract myself from accepting particular feelings by performing a "spiritual bypass." I wanted to sweep uncomfortable feelings under the rug by misusing Scripture or minimizing feedback to defend my position.

The third step is to reflect on what we can learn from any situation. Practicing discernment assumes we're open to discovering God's call in our life, rather than blindly following what someone else says we should do.

It's been challenging to live and wait in the unknown. At times it felt like I was experiencing the dark night of the soul when there seemed to be no clear answers to my prayers.

I'm invited to remain open to the wonder of the questions. Practicing discernment helped me to distinguish my wise inner voice from the noisy, critical voice often fueled by fear.

The purpose of discernment is to increase peace with our decision. When reviewing a possible result – especially when it wasn't an easy one – I considered if it would lead to a greater sense of balance, calmness or vibrancy.

The last step is to nurture ourselves and take actions that support our purpose in the world. Rather than feel like a victim and curse my illness, each day I focused on what I was thankful for. I appreciated support from family, friends, co-workers and medical staff.

Cancer became my initiation into wisdom. I'm learning to trust God, even when things aren't going well. Outward signs of grace and confirmation are certainly encouraging, but I'm not making them a requirement for God's guidance.

Recovering from cancer is teaching me to shift from fear to accepting what I don't have control over. From expecting God to be the Santa Claus in the sky who'll heal me because I've been a good girl, I'm developing a more mature faith. I'm discovering God's grace is sufficient, no matter what.

Practicing discernment brings greater contentment. I'm trusting at a deeper level that my decisions will lead to my highest good.

Susie Leonard Weller is a life and spiritual coach with a Master of Pastoral Ministry and a Certificate in Spiritual Direction. She's the author of "Why Don't You Understand? Improve Family Communication by Using the 4 Thinking Styles" (Parenting Press). They're also available through www.susieweller.com. Contact Susie at sweller@att.net

Katie, please let me know if there are other resources I can send you and Gay to support your vital work.

Warmly,

Susie Leonard Weller

(509) 255-6676