

I am a human being, and I'm thankful to be able to say that – in language. The extraordinary story told by Dr Jill Bolte Taylor about what it felt like having her left brain stroke and then recovering from that is another source of my learning today. That she is able to tell this story is a remarkable achievement.

She did so in language – an ability that depends largely on the left side of our brain, although the right side contributes as well. Language is one of the truly great things about being human – it enables us to communicate with one another and to say 'I am . . . such and such.' Without that part of my brain I would not be able to write these Blogs.

Jill Bolte Taylor worked as a brain scientist. Before work one morning, as the bleeding spread in her left hemisphere, she found it more and more difficult to put words together or find a number, which almost prevented her from calling for help. But she also felt a 'deep inner peace' that she described as being 'at one with the universe,' as her right hemisphere took over more of her mind.

After surgeons removed the large blood clot from her brain, she began to recover, but could not speak or write words. She could not find the words that were required to explain who she was or anything she had ever done. But she said her 'heart was tranquil,' so she could let go of the task of trying to control her life and be content with the vague 'fluidity' of her present existence. She remembered this because she was not unconscious – she was conscious in a different kind of way.

And, as a brain scientist, she believed that her brain would adapt. Some skills returned fairly quickly, but it took eight years of determined effort to recover her former ability to use language. In her book, *My Stroke of Insight*, and her TED talks, she makes light of that achievement, but she emphasises the feeling of 'deep inner peace' and being present in the 'oneness' of everything as a valuable lesson she had learned and an awareness that is worth cultivating for all of us.

Our left brain uses language to organise the details it has perceived – it does so by keeping itself separate from our right brain for that task. The use of language fragments our reality – breaks it into small pieces and names them as well, which helps us to put that knowledge into effect. Language is also the process whereby we join everything up again into a sentence and a Story. To do this we have to fill in gaps, because we don't have every detail for every moment. The Story itself helps us to guess what might fill these gaps, so our Story is, at least partly, made up.

My Story is not set in stone – it can be changed – but it is a powerful shaping force that guides and directs everything I do. That's how important it is. So how do I know if my Story is true? Bigger questions arise from that, of course, such as 'what is truth, anyway.' It is here that we expect our Intelligence and **breadth** of mind to be leading our way.

As children we loved having Stories read to us – whether they were true or not was unimportant. As adults, with some concerns about left-brain misperception, do we need to worry about what is true and what is not in the Story we are living?