

Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind – Guy Claxton
Or *Why intelligence increases when you think less*
ISBN 1-85702-709-4

Why read it?

This is a fairly in-depth, academic work about the sub-conscious mind and how we should use it more than we do. It talks at length about intuition, where it comes from and when we do and should use it. The key descriptions Claxton uses are 'd-mode' thinking, standing for deliberation or default, and the 'sits and thinks' mode or 'undermind'.

Overall we had the view that some of the information we had already come across before, but there were still some very good insights. And, for the most part, we have no disagreements with the ideas he was putting forward.

Certainly, for an academic piece it is fairly well written. He does manage to present fairly complex psychological ideas in a day-to-day language. Claxton refers to 'you' and 'I' and 'we' quite a lot and he uses amusing examples. For example, when he's referring to using our subconscious instead of our reasoning mind he describes it as, "*pulling off the Super Highway and into the information Super Lay-by.*"

He talks about needing to be able to let some thoughts gestate and he uses the analogy of the 'back burner'. "*Uncreative people*", he said, "*do not know how to put something on the back burner without it falling down behind the cooker.*"

We all felt that the book was too long. He made good points and did that well in the first six to eight chapters. The final chapters became a long haul, even though one or two nice examples came out of them.

Content areas:

- Speed of thought
- Learning by osmosis
- How thinking gets in the way of learning
- Knowing more than we think
- Having an idea
- Reason and intuition – do we think too much?
- Perception without consciousness
- Self consciousness

And then it moves into chapters about how the brain functions.

Influences of the author:

Throughout the book he refers to studies done by other people in the fields of neurology, psychotherapy and other sciences. All of these inform the main premise that we have a mind that can do more than think logically and solve problems.

Benefits to:

Freelancer and our clients:

For ourselves, realising why we don't like working with, for example, graduates who only want to 'be told', and don't expect to have to reflect.

Recognising the joy of being able to listen to the body even if it seems to be behaving differently from the logical mind. Realising the links with other religious beliefs and cultural standpoints which work with the sub-conscious mind so much better than we do ourselves.

Spin-offs/Links

There are interesting links to some of the typical training techniques we may already use – TNA, NLP and so on.

Reviewed by LNG Book Club members
Antoinette Urwick, Sharon Langford and Lydia Everitt
October 2008