



## *The three brains: The reptilian always wins* by Dr. G. Clotaire Rapaille

I would like to share with you my proven theory concerning the three brains.

The **Three Brain Theory** is something absolutely fantastic. It is a new way to look at why people do what they do, how they do it, why they do it, at different levels of interpretation of their behavior, and what they're going to say about it. Once you understand the 3 brain theory it will change your life and the way you look at advertising and product management, leadership, reward, recognition, loyalty.

The **three brains** are:

- The 1st brain is the REPTILIAN brain. We are born with it. It is not influenced by culture or personal history. It deals with survival and reproduction (growth). The Reptilian represents the center for instinctive reflexes, primitive impulses, sex and violence. We know from history that the Reptilian brain always wins. In order to be successful, one needs a reptilian hot button that will trigger the survival and reproduction response inside of the customer.
- The 2nd brain is the LIMBIC brain, acquired during the beginning of human life (0-5) and is in relationship with the mother. This is the center of emotion, representing tensions, emotions, feelings and contradictions. Emotions are complex. We love and hate at the same time. This brain controls our logic of emotions.
- The 3rd brain is the CORTEX, usually in place around 7, and the center of rational logical thinking. The Cortex is the logic tool that we use to look at the world. Science, logic, control, numbers, statistics, money, and intellectual alibi are examples of the cortex.

Of course, to function and be happy we need harmony between the three brains. Some one who would be very intelligent, but with a very disturbed emotional life, would not be able to function or be happy.

### *The Reptilian Brain*

The most important part of the brain is the Reptilian, meaning like "reptile." Why do we call it the reptilian brain?

First of all, it looks like a reptile. Within the embryo, even before actual flesh and blood, it already has a serpentine-like quality to it.

Second, we might have this in common with a reptile. If evolution can be believed, it appears that we were all once reptiles. And, because of this evolution, we still have this part - this reptilian - aspect of the brain. We were born with it - it is not acquired, it is something inherited, congenital.

Because we have this reptilian brain, we are programmed for two major things:

- Survival
- Reproduction

These key elements are absolutely crucial and fundamental in understanding the survival of the species. If we can not survive and reproduce, it would be the end of our species.

What does reproduction mean? It means that instinctively, we know what to do. The word "instinct" is crucial here. There is a reptilian intelligence and it is a program for survival. We know what to do, we

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know what the priority is. The second element is, reproduction. It might sound very surprising, but beauty is a reptilian dimension.

Let me explain: Beautiful means that my genes, combined with the genes of someone from the opposite sex, have a better chance to survive. If I am in a country populated by Eskimos, a beautiful woman is going to be very round and overweight and tough. Why? Because she has a better chance at surviving through the harsh winters and brutal living conditions. So, if I combine my genes with hers, my children will have a better chance at survival. This notion of beauty can be understood with the reptilian brain. Unconsciously, we are programmed to be attracted to people that permit our genes to survive.

### *The Limbic Brain*

The second brain is the limbic brain. The limbic is the emotional brain. Emotions have dimension that we have a hard time understanding. According to the American culture, as we know, men have more difficulties with emotions than women. In many ways, there is a feminine and masculine approach to emotions. What is this brain?

Emotions are never simple - they are always contradictory.

It's the same between husbands and wives, friends, this dimension is very complex. When customers tell you they love you, is it good? Well, we think it is. We want people to love us. What if they love your products and never buy them, is it good? Would you rather have them hate your products and buy them all the time? This is not simple or logical, it is emotional. Even if it is emotional, there is logic. I call this the "Logic of Emotion." One step at a time, a bit like seduction, you follow a critical path. You have to do one thing at a time. This order of things varies from culture to culture. What is fascinating is that all of this is imprinted, acquired.

If I go back to the Reptilian brain - in which we are born with it - the Limbic brain is acquired. It is merely the relationship with the mother that creates a shape, a structure from 0 to around 5 for this brain. Because of this relationship with the mother, this emotional dimension is very feminine. In most cultures, the father is outside seeking food and providing for his family. The mother, however, is a continuum of the womb in some ways. Going back to biology, we all have one thing in common: We all come from a woman. Our first experience of "inside" is inside a woman. Then we're still attached to the mother. Then we still have her hugging us, we might go a bit further but we come back to be breast fed, so it's like being inside a circle, we went outside but we're trying to get in contact with the circle again. Through that, we have warmth love roundness which are absolutely key. It's very rare to experience that with the father. The father is always absent, outside, doing other things. That's why this emotional brain has a strong feminine side.

### *The Cortex Brain*

The third brain is the Cortex and it is mainly intellectual.

This part of the brain is not in place before we are seven. Before seven, children do not have the conservation of quantity. Take two identical balls of clay and ask the child: "Are they same?" The child will say: "Yes." Now, turn one into a snake and ask the child: "Is there more quantity now?" If the child is less than seven, he does not have the mental tools needed in understanding that the shape of the clay did not change in quantity, but rather in shape. Ask the same question to a child older than seven and they will ask you: "Do you think I'm dumb or something?"

Everything imprinted at an early age is imprinted before the intellectual dimension, and is a lot more powerful. Hence, the message, "the reptilian always wins." What is the cortex all about? The cortex is about trying to understand and make rational choices and also deals with numbers, verification, and order (which is not very natural).

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If we now try to understand the *connection between the 3 brains*:

- The reptilian is very quick, reflex
- The limbic is energy, a lot of energy, emotions (we know there is no imprint in the brain without emotions)
- The cortex is control

I would like to go back to the notion of imprinting. It is a key element during the creation in our minds - the cultural mental structures we are going to use again and again. I call those mental highways. We create connections in the brain that we will use for the rest of our lives.

Your very first experiences as a child are strongly imprinted in the reptilian brain as it is the only part of the brain that is really active at the time. Our program is already there. We know that "inside" means "mother;" we know that warmth is important to survive; that we have to breathe at the reptilian level. If the program doesn't work, we are dead.

The cortex, is supposed to bring you the rational dimension to help you have more chances to survive and to reproduce. The problem is that it goes too far into the control of the reptilian, so we lose out on spontaneity. When people say "give me a good reason to love you," do mothers have a good reason to love their children? They just do.

This is reptilian, and you don't need a reason.

When the reptilian is up against the cortex, the reptilian always wins. Reality and numbers don't matter. If you do not have a reptilian dimension you'll never win. Understanding the reptilian dimension is absolutely crucial. Every communication strategy should have a reptilian, limbic and a cortex aspect.

*Dr. G. Clotilde Rapaille* is an internationally known expert in Archetype Discoveries and Creativity. His unique approach to marketing combines a psychiatrist's depth of analysis with a businessman's attention to practical concerns. He has written more than ten books on these topics. One of his books, *Creative Communication*, has become the standard reference for the French advertising industry. He is a sought-after lecturer on creativity and communication.

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