OUR 3 BRAINS: HEAD, HEART & GUT

These are notes from some articles/books on the subject. They are not meant to represent our views but more as food for thought and to pose some questions.

OUR 3 BRAINS

- head - cephalic or central nervous system
- heart - cardiac nervous system
- gut - enteric nervous system

GUT BRAIN

- core identity, deepest levels of self
- quick decision making (flight or fight, safety or risk)
- courage, fear, action and grit

HEART BRAIN

- mostly used for processing emotions (joy, jealousy, anger, hate, love, lust, compassion, empathy)
- helps discover what is most important to you in life, priorities and values
- connect / disconnect with others based on similarities/differences in those values

HEAD BRAIN

- used for cognitive perception and pattern recognition
- to reason, analyze and synthesize info
- one way is through language (verbal, written, body), telling stories, using metaphors

USING ALL THREE BRAINS

- Alignment of these three brains is a flow state where each is functioning best,
- Perhaps this is "wisdom" ....
- As a coach.. we need to listen with all three

example:

- client shares a work situation (context) involving a challenging assignment with a short deadline that may not be value added (situation)
  - coach has a hunch (gut) that there is more to the situation
  - coach feels compassion for exhaustion in client’s voice (heart)
  - coach notes elements of elements of short deadline for non-value added task (head)
- integrated 3 brain response from coach -
I hear exhaustion in your voice (heart) at the challenge of this assignment (head) and yet I sense there is more going on (gut).

**IMBALANCE POSSIBILITIES**

- Most of us have an overdrive of one brain over the others, either from habit or pressure.
- This results in partial leadership instead of complete leadership.

**GUT BRAIN OVERDRIVE**

- Reactive, impulsive, action orientated
- Useful in an emergency for survival or safety

**HEART BRAIN OVERDRIVE**

- Concern about self image
- Impact on others and lives of others
- May end up waiting, hoping and dreaming or may show emotions too obviously and readily

**HEAD BRAIN OVERDRIVE**

- Plan, prepare, focus on what could go wrong, too much visioning or try to do it all
- May be viewed by others as cold, impersonal, calculating

**GREAT QUESTIONS TO ASK**

- What does your gut tell you?
- What does your heart feel?
- What does your head say?
- In this situation, what is the right balance?

As a coach, look onto yourself and see if you have an automatic overreliance on one of your brains. It is important to remember that we need all three and different situations require a different balance.
## Overview of the Three Brains and Their Key Functions

### Head Leadership

- Rethinking the ways things are done
- Reframing boundaries when necessary
- Understanding the complexities of a global world
- Thinking strategically without losing sight of short term goals
- Looking for ideas inside and outside a company,
- Developing a point of view

### Heart Leadership

- Balancing people and business needs
- Creating trust
- Developing true compassion in a diverse workplace
- Creating environments in which people can be truly committed
- Knowing what is important
- Understanding and overcoming potential derailers

### Gut Leadership

- Taking risks with incomplete data
- Balancing risk and reward
- Acting with unyielding integrity in spite of the difficulty
- Tenacious pursuit of what's required for success
- Persevering in the face of adversity
- Not being afraid to make tough decisions

### A Few Challenges / Questions

- How can I use this to improve my relationships, leadership style and/or coaching skills?
- How do I clearly differentiate a gut response from a heart response?
- How do I balance consciously the three appropriately for a specific situation?
- When I respond (speak, ask questions) should I be more in the heart or gut mode or head mode for best success (manage my emotions)?
- How do I update my thinking on this model with the latest learning from neuroscience?

### Sources

- Choice, volume 12, number 4, The Triad, *How are our three brains impacted by coaching* by Vikki Brock, page 33-35
- *Head, heart and guts: how the world's best companies develop complete leaders* by David L- Dotich, Peter C Cairo, Stephen H. Rhinesmith