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PRESS ARTICLES

Left-handers: are prejudices having a hard time?

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by Marie Dagman on 13 August 2014

Are left-handers better at sports? More intelligent? Are they really bad-tempered? We talk to a laterality specialist.

What do Leonardo da Vinci, Barack Obama and Rafael Nadal have in common? All three are left-handed! On International Left-Handers' Day, Wednesday 13 August 2014, Joëlle Morice Mugnier, a psychopractitioner and laterality specialist, explains.



1. To be left-sided means writing with your left hand

False. We commonly say that a left-sided person writes with their left hand, but a person's laterality can be determined at three levels: eye, hand and foot. A person may claim to be right-handed but can actually be left-eyed. Here's how it works: their leading eye, the one who incites the other to move laterally (to read and write, for instance) is their left eye. This crossover – left-eyed, right-handed – may trigger difficulties when learning to read and write, and may even lead to dyslexia.

2. Left-handers are more intelligent

They are often more creative. Left-handers live in a right-handed world, which, by definition, is not suited to them. To function in this system, they have to develop both hemispheres of their brains, the right and the left, whereas the right-handers tend to use the left hemisphere only. Left-handers use their left hemisphere more, which is also the side of creativity.

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3. Left-handedness is hereditary

Usually, yes. Work has been carried out to try and find a gene for a left laterality. Nevertheless, the heredity factor is distorted by our environment where everything is designed by and for right-handers.

4. Left-handers are better at sports

True, in tennis and fencing, for example. Left-handers may perform better in sports than right-handers. For left-handers, the same hemisphere deals with visual-space information and the motion response. This shorter circuit means that they save a precious fraction of time and can better anticipate their opponent's moves.

5. Left-handers are no longer corrected

Partly true. Left-handers are no longer corrected in the traditional sense of the term. The time of their hands being hit with a ruler or their left hand being tied up behind their back or dipped in boiling water as punishment is definitely over! This abuse had a major psychological impact on children. But in the West, left-handers are still struggling with the left-to-right reading and writing direction. They read and write in a "closing direction".