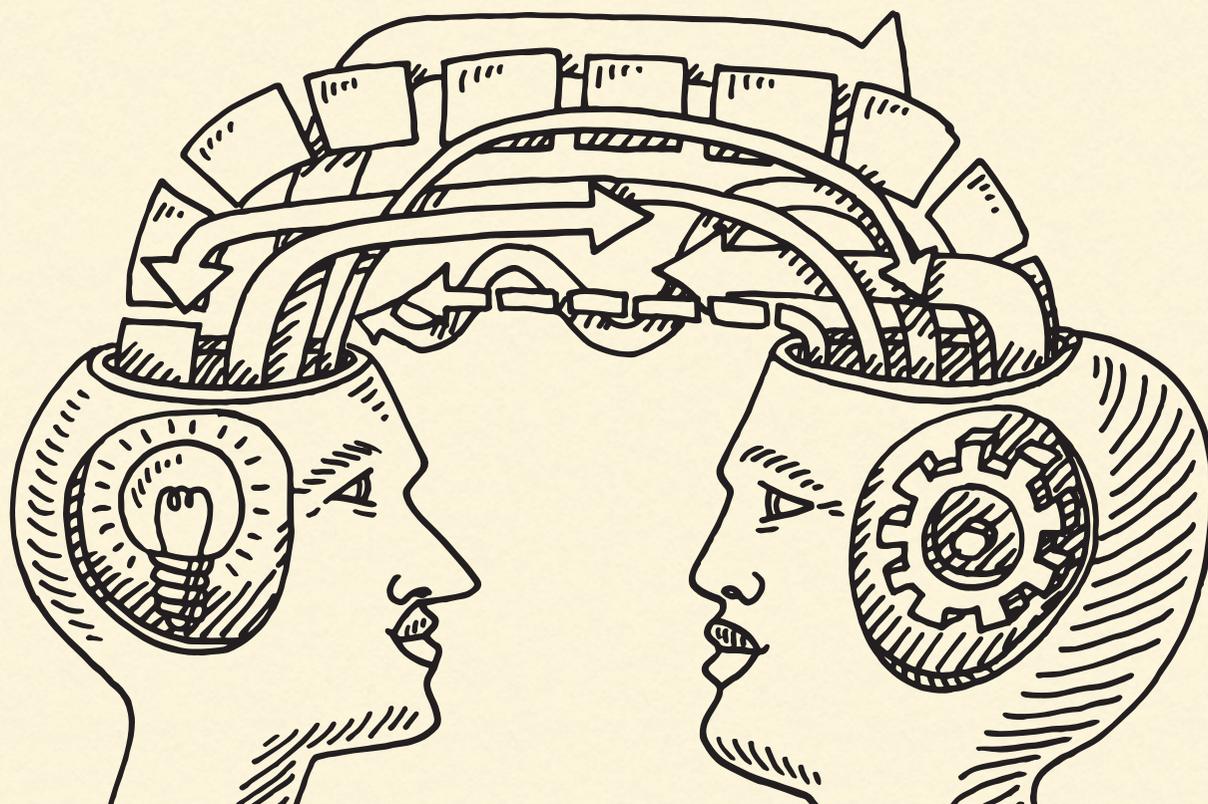

Curiosity Vs. Judgment

USING NEUROSCIENCE TO BUILD AND
POWER OUR PEOPLE



by Frank Keck

Curiosity Vs. Judgment



excellerant

PEOPLE. CLARITY. PROSPERITY.

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Preface

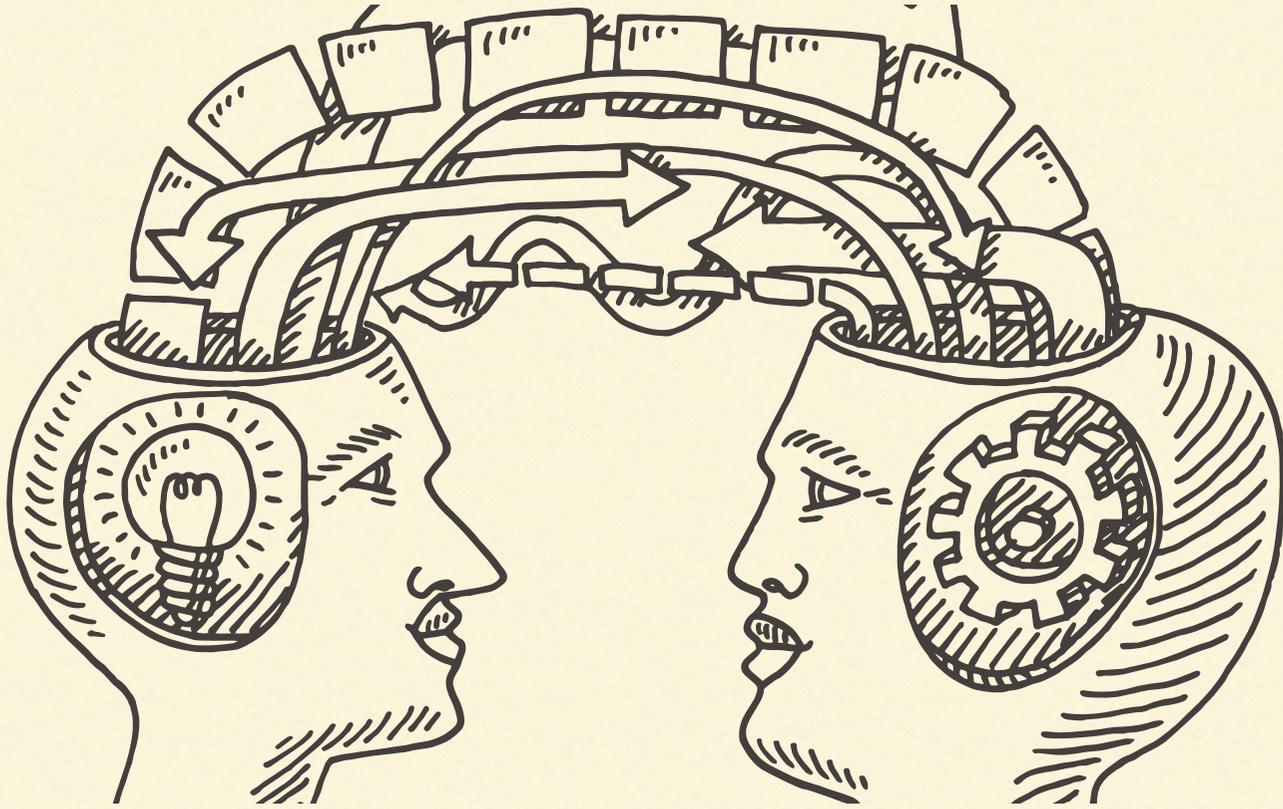
For more details on any of these ideas, please feel free to contact me at frank@yourexcellerant.com. I truly believe that you can change your life, and help other people change their lives, by changing how you think. This eBook is just the beginning.

Our company, Excellerant, is dedicated to helping you and your people create and reach your Idealness, your ideal state in life.

Now, go and change the world!

A handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed in a thin black rectangular border. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Frank'.

Frank



1

Judgmental Leadership

wrong [*rawng, rong*]

adjective

1. not in accordance with what is morally right or good:
a wrong deed.
2. deviating from truth or fact; erroneous:
a wrong answer.
3. not correct in action, judgment, opinion, method, etc., as a person; in error:
You are wrong to blame him.
4. not proper or usual; not in accordance with requirements or recommended practice:
the wrong way to hold a golf club.
5. out of order; awry; amiss:
Something is wrong with the machine.
6. not suitable or appropriate:
He always says the wrong thing.

Rachel and I were having a conversation the other day about relationships. Not just between couples, but relationships of all types, business relationships, relationships between coworkers, bosses and subordinates, etc. Here's what I noticed during our conversation: when we see someone else do something, specifically something on the job, we categorize as right and WRONG. What makes it wrong? Really. Think about that. What does make it wrong?

When someone makes a mistake, i.e. they do it wrong, how often is it not morally right or good? Almost never.

How often is it not appropriate? Again, almost never.

How often is it that they are treating someone else unfairly or unjustly? Once again, not often.

Not correct in action, judgement, opinion or method? Ding, ding, ding. We have a winner!

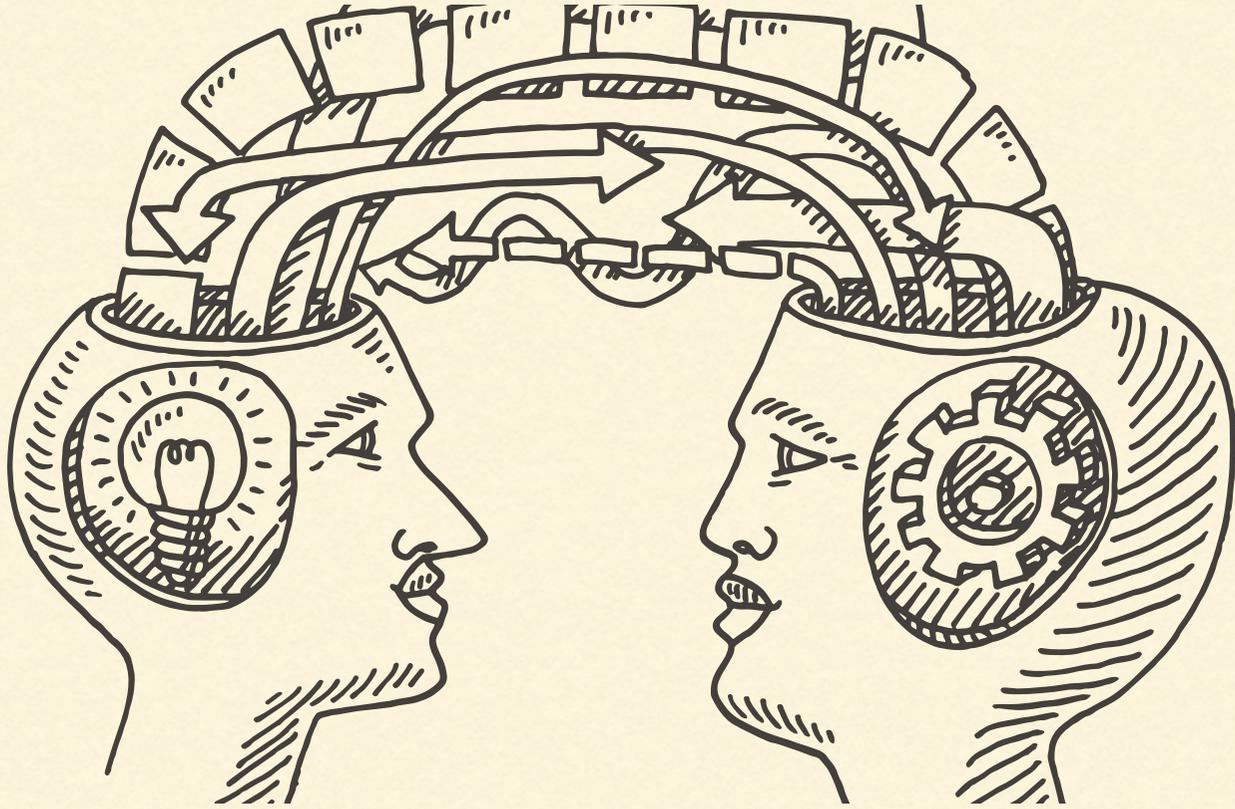
Consider this for a moment: You make an error in judgment. You give it some thought and determine a BETTER way of doing it. Next time you can do it better. Isn't that what we want from ALL of our employees?

Imagine yourself making a mistake, an error in judgement. You did it honestly, with no forethought of malice. In other words, you made the best decision you could make based on the information you had . . . and this was the result. What would you think if someone told you that you were WRONG? If you're like most of us, you'd get defensive. None of us like to be told we are wrong. Now, not only are you wrong, but there is a chasm starting to form.

Instead of being judgmental (categorizing by right and wrong), what if you were curious? Curious as to WHY it was done the way it was done. Get them thinking of why they did what they did and what would improve it next time. Connection building instead of chasm building.

WHY is the element that causes us to buy . . . and to change our behavior.

Judgmental leadership, while it may be RIGHT, does not necessarily persuade us to CHANGE our behavior.



2

Understanding

I began a recent session with the *Body Parts Quiz*:

There are ten body parts that have ONLY 3 letters, please write them down. You have one minute to complete this quiz. GO!

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1 | 6 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 8 |
| 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 10 |

After the quiz, I asked, “When I first said we were going to take a test on ten body parts with only three letters, what was your first thought?” More than likely, people think one of two things. First, some people think, “Ten body parts with three letters? That’s dumb. What does this have to do with leadership and personal development?” By nature, by habit, we judge things. It’s what we are taught as kids, our schooling confirms this thinking by having tests that

reward right and wrong. Labeling is part of teaching children. Then we go into the work world, and voila, more rewards for right and wrong.

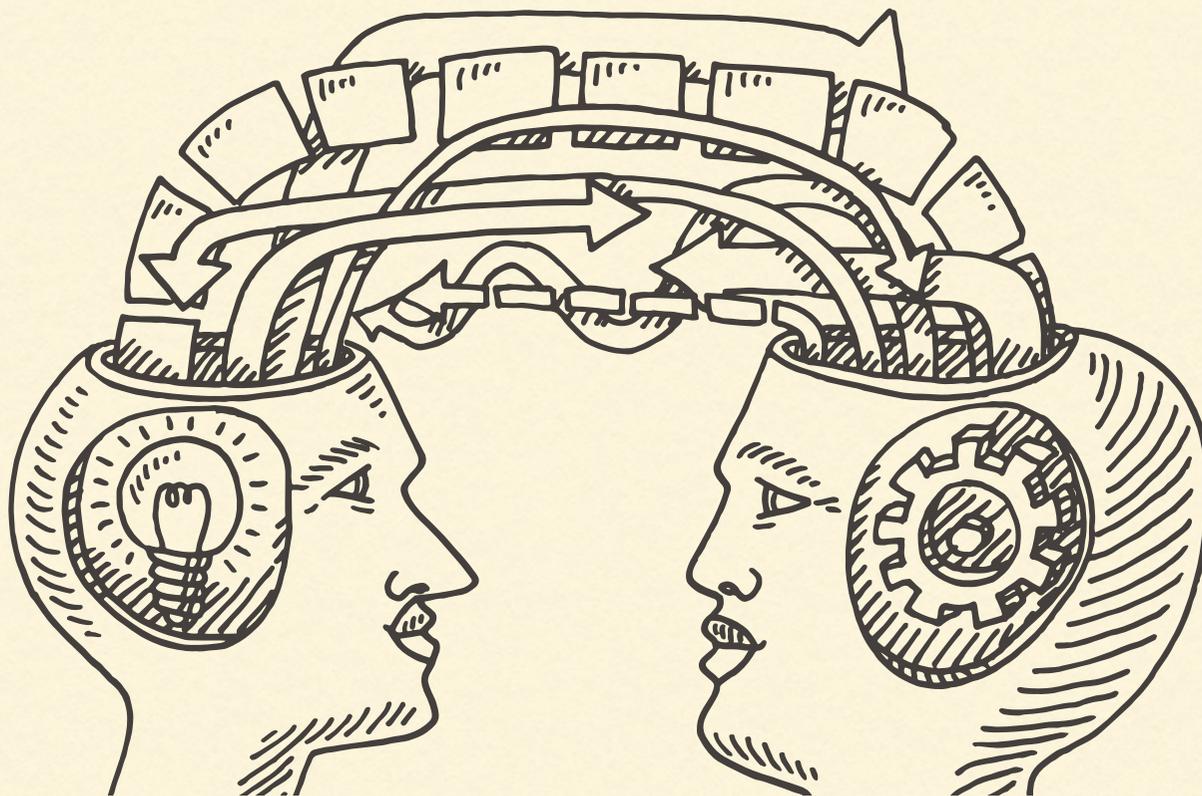
Other people have this line of thinking, “Ten body parts with only three letters, hmm. I wonder why we are doing this? What does this have to do with leadership? This could be interesting!” A completely different path of thinking. Not judging, instead being open to the possibilities. It is this line of thinking that I would like to pursue further.

I was in the 8th grade when I was first introduced to this concept. It was in College Algebra with Mr. Harvey. I don't remember much Algebra from Mr. Harvey, I just remember two things. First, we called him (not to his face of course) “Bulldog” Harvey, because he would bark like a dog on the last day of class. Second, he taught me this lesson:

I was taking a test and Mr. Harvey said that you could get points for showing your work. Well, I knew I wasn't going to do well, Algebra wasn't my thing. I mean, really, who mixes letters into math problems? Geesh. Sure enough, I passed...but barely. I don't think I got any

problems right, but I PASSED! How in the world did I pass the test? I asked him after class. “Mr. Harvey, first of all I am not complaining about my grade, I am grateful that I passed. I am curious as to HOW I passed. I didn't get any of the questions right, so how did I pass?” He turned to me and said, “Frank, my job is to help you change the way you think. When you write out your answers, I get to see inside your brain. I get to see how you think. That helps me see where you're making a mistake in the process. If I don't know how you think, I cannot help you change how you think.”

I've never forgotten that lesson. We as leaders are here to help others improve their performances, just like Mr. Harvey. We really need to understand them and how they think if we are to help them change the way they think, which then helps them to change the way they act and eventually change what they believe. **You cannot change what you don't understand.**



3

Let's take a look at what went on in the brain as I introduced the *Body Parts Quiz*.

Curiosity vs. Judgment

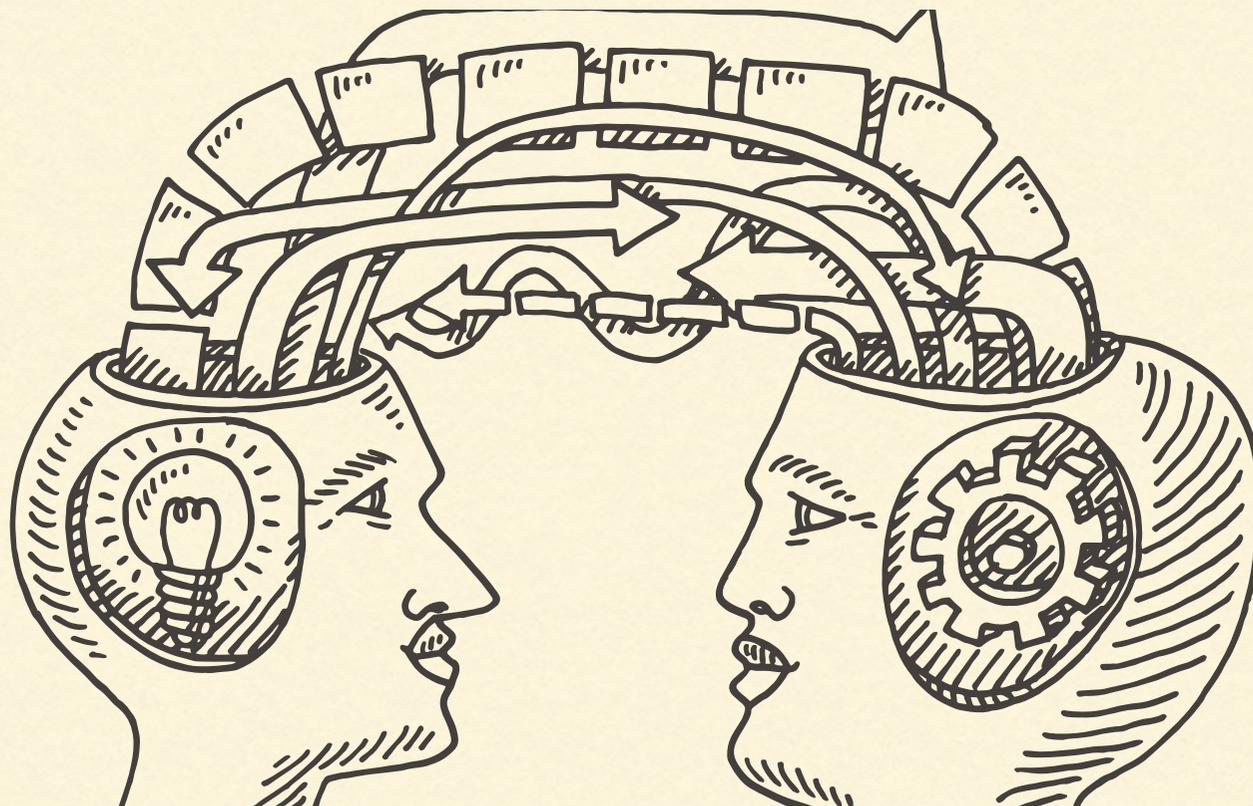
WHAT'S GOING ON

A near snapshot of what is going on in your brain

We know from research (Dr. Richard Boyatzis, Case Western Reserve University) that different types of information affect the brain in different ways. Not surprisingly, negative stimuli-judging, correcting, focusing on what is done wrong-impacts your brain in a negative way. It actually hinders your brain's ability to think creatively, to change and to grow. Positive stimuli-curiosity, focus on future goals-actually lights up your brain and stimulates it so that learning, growth and change can thrive.

With judgment of behavior comes negative stimuli: correcting, focusing on what was done wrong, negative impact of self esteem. Typically, we become defensive.

With curiosity comes positive mental stimulation. The part of the brain that fosters creative thinking and the desire to grow and change is stimulated, thus we want to think, grow and change. There is a cool video from Dr. Richard Boyatzis on this subject, *Coaching with Compassion Lights Up Human Thoughts* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oblQIKB4fV8>).



4

Five Hinderances

HOW WE HINDER

Top 5 ways we are actually hindering our people's brains to think, grow, change

I. Constructive Criticism

Constructive criticism isn't constructive. It is destructive. First of all, it is focusing on the past, on what went wrong, not the future, which is where we want them focused. It brings down self esteem and puts people on the defensive. If you want people to change, they have to first believe they CAN change (which ties directly to improving their self esteem), then they must WANT to change (which cannot happen when they are defending themselves). Use the COACH method, which is available at www.yourexcellerant.com/2013/06/60-second-coach-socratic-coaching/.

2. Information Overload

We overwhelm people with information. Data, data, and more data. They're sent back to work with all of this information. Go figure out what to do with all of your new found information. Some of us will actually ask, "Now that you have all of these great things I have taught you, are you clear? Do you understand?" And, of course, they say yes. Why? Two reasons. First of all, they have been taught to say yes, so this is just a habit. Secondly, they do NOT want to look dumb, so they'll just say yes and hope things go well, hope that they can figure it out or hope that you will forget about it later. None of those are a great strategy for success in getting better results or success in building a positive relationship.

3. What, What, What

Similar to #2 in that we are giving them tons of information. Here's how it's different. When we give people information on what to do, that information goes to their neo-cortex. Your neo-cortex is the part of your brain for higher learning. Lots of really great thoughts and information are stored here. The problem? This is NOT the part of your brain that makes decisions, nor is it the part of your brain that determines

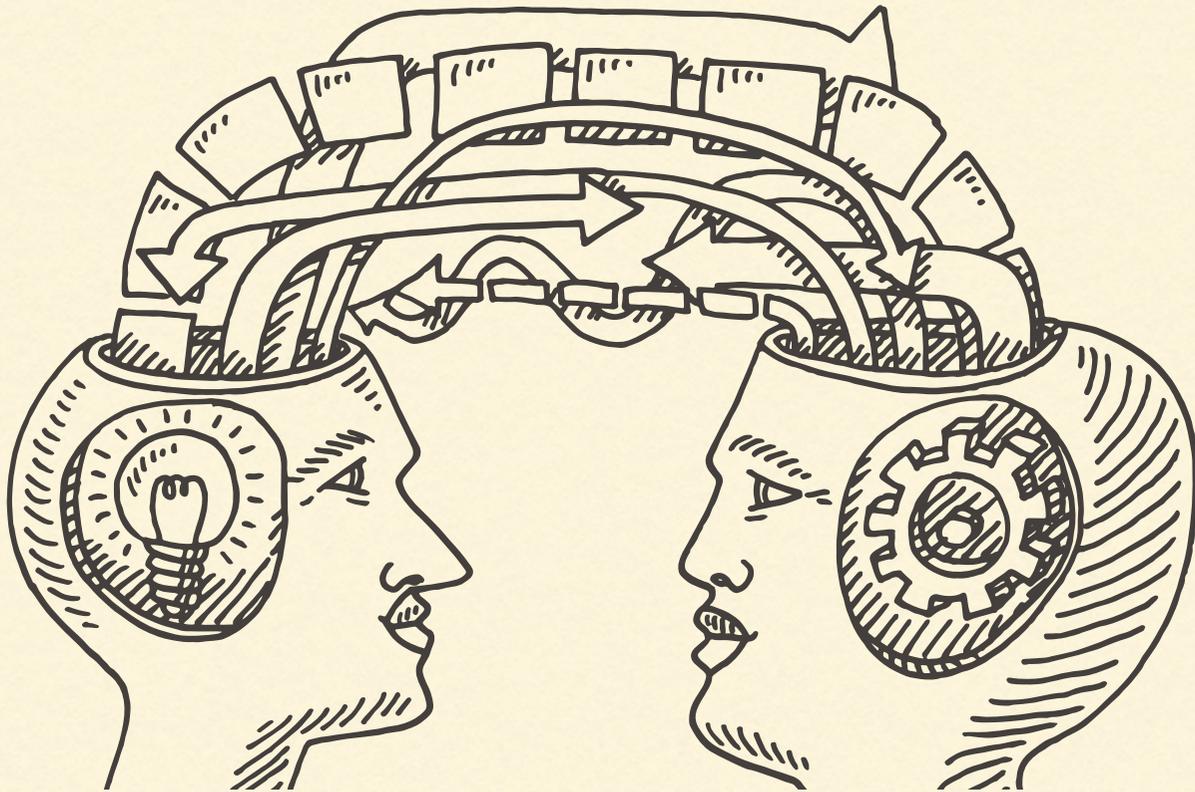
changes to happen. There is NO emotion and emotion is what drives behavior. The emotional part of the brain is the Limbic brain. We must make sure we are communicating with their limbic brains if we actually want them to change behavior, to be engaged, to have bought into what we are talking about. WHY questions, that stimulate curiosity, are what engage the limbic brain.

4. Stressful, Pressure-Packed Environment

When stress is introduced to our environment, we stimulate the reptilian brain, the center of our brain which just wants to survive. No higher learning, no positive change or emotions, just the will to survive. Fight or flight syndrome. We must try to help people feel like there is a light at the end of the stress tunnel. Help them combat stress, which produces adrenalin, with activities that will produce endorphins. Endorphins have been shown to increase oxygen flow to the brain, help dissipate the effects of the adrenalin, create a much better environment for the brain to think, and encourage people to grow and change. My suggestions on three activities to create endorphins: 1. Eat dark chocolate. 2. Exercise. 3. Laughter.

5. Shut Up and Color Syndrome

I had a client who had recently retired from the U.S. Navy. I was doing some leadership training and he introduced me to this phrase. Shut up and color. It basically means to just do what I tell you to do and NOT think about it. Just do it. How often do we do this to our people? Don't think, just do. Biggest problem? When they NEED to think, that is out of the norm and does not happen as often or as well. We need to stimulate thinking at all times! How? By being curious and asking questions.



5

PEA Brains

STIMULATE

What we can do to help stimulate their brains to think, grow, change

I was introduced to a new acronym recently by Dr. Boyatzis. The PEA Brain. I love that, PEA brain. Most of us were introduced to that term as a **NEGATIVE** thing. “Frank is just a pea brain, so don’t expect much from him.” PEA brains are actually really great, wonderful things!

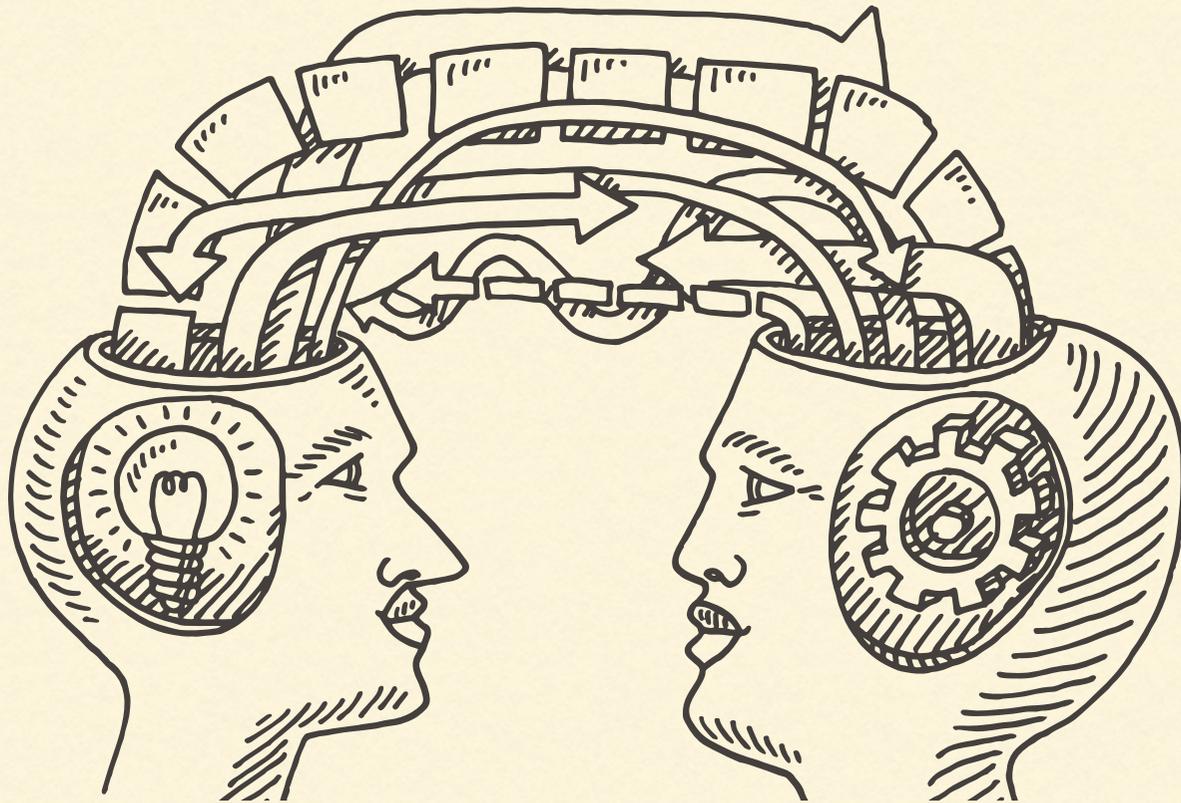
Dr. Boyatzis says, “Coaches should seek to arouse a Positive Emotional Attractor (PEA), which causes positive emotion and arouses neuroendocrine systems that stimulate better cognitive functioning and increased perceptual accuracy and openness in the person being coached, taught or advised.”

So in English, arouse and stimulate the PEA brain by getting them thinking about something that is, to them individually, a Positive Emotional Attractor. For instance, neuroscience for me is really interesting, so for me it is a PEA. PEAs are things that are of interest to that person, from a positive emotional standpoint. *The things we are naturally curious about.*

Another technique that can help stimulate a PEA brain is the Socratic Method. The Socratic method is this: Never tell them what you can ask them. Instead of giving people the answers, instead of doing all of the thinking on your own, ask questions. Most of the time, people know the answer, or can figure it out, if we encourage them to do so. The Socratic Method encourages them to think on their own, thus creating a culture of PEA brains!

A third way to help get more PEA brains is by having an Aligned CORE. An aligned CORE is when you have a Driving Force (your purpose statement) and Primary Values that are open to the public. All of your employees have access to what these are and your leadership and management teams talk about them ALL THE TIME! Then we find people on our team who are

aligned, in sync, in tune with, thinking along the same lines, valuing the same things, driven by similar forces. When people are aligned with the organization, PEA braining happens naturally and quite often.



6

Brain Parts

MOTIVATE

The Triune brain and mental stimulation (getting engagement and buy in)

Your brain has three parts: Reptilian, Limbic and Neo-Cortex. These three parts do very different things.

Reptilian brain is where your basic survival instincts live. Your gut.

Limbic brain is where your emotions and decision making live. Your heart.

Neo-Cortex is the outmost part of your brain and where higher learning and thought processes live. Your head.

Decision making happens in the limbic brain. Motivation happens in the limbic brain. In order to help people be motivated, we must help stimulate their limbic brains.

Asking questions, encouraging them with positive feedback, helping them, encouraging them to look to the future, to set goals, to have hope, all of these **stimulate the limbic brain and help them be more motivated.**