Developing a well-rounded graduate student with brain-based support strategies

INTRODUCTION

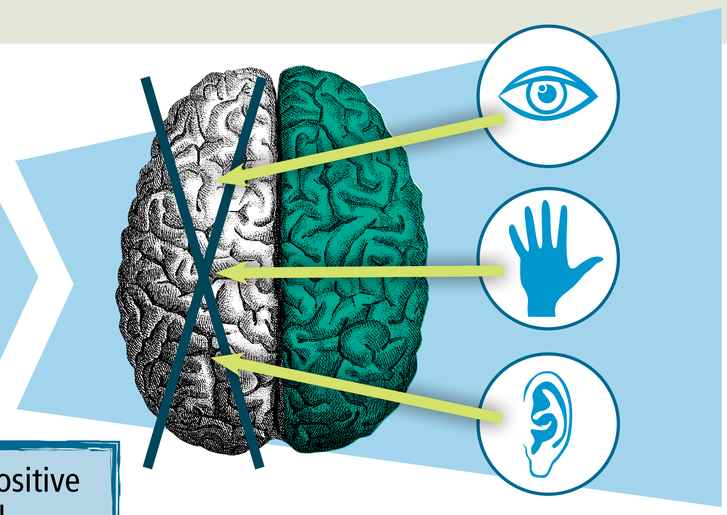
Brain based support strategies focus on the brain's natural design for information processing and learning. Providing students with this knowledge, they can transform their learning environment in such a manner that learning occurs more naturally.

CASE BACKGROUND

The Client performed well at school and was accepted to study BSc in Physiotherapy. In her second year the workload escalated and she started to experience various academic challenges. By the end of her third year she did not obtain enough credits to continue with her studies in Physiotherapy. The University offered her the opportunity to continue with studies in BSc Human Life Sciences, so that she can improve her marks to re-apply for Physiotherapy. The Client also presented with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Predominantly Inattentive Type (ADHD). She was prescribed Ritalin to address her attention challenges, but she discontinued it due to the side effects that she experienced. Arriving at her first appointment at the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD), she presented high levels of stress and low self-esteem.

BRAIN PROFILING

A sensory blocked profile causes difficulty in processing information when the client is highly stressed, as she is subjected to processing the information with her non-dominant hemisphere, thus leading to difficulty in most academic functions.



Maintain integration – cross-lateral movements.

Integration exercises improve neuroplasticity, helping her to have better and quicker learning experiences.

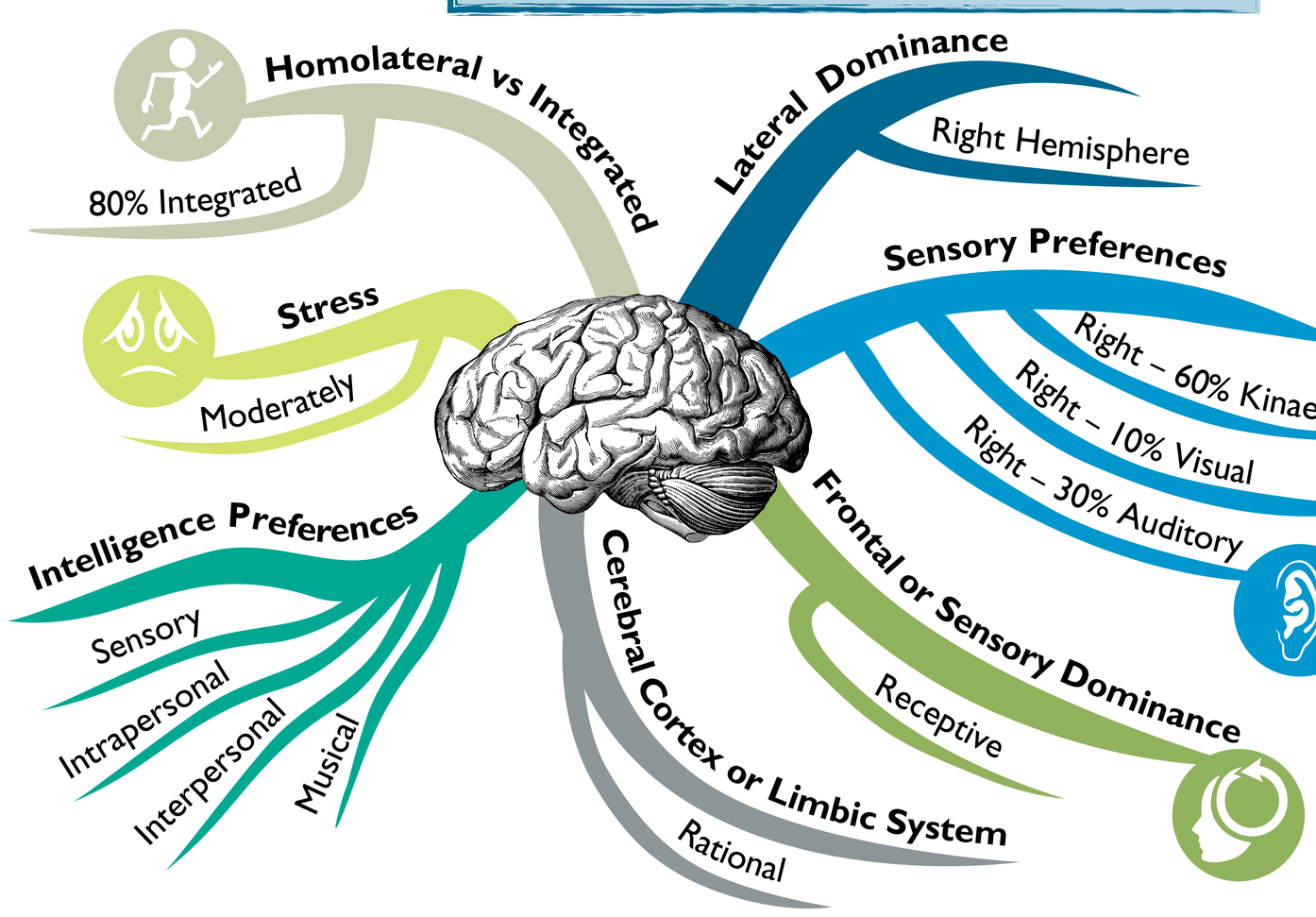
Encouraged L-frontal hemisphere thinking; leads to positive emotions, due to thoughts and feelings being labelled.

Using mind maps as class preparation methods, in order to understand detail presented in lecture.

Colourful learning techniques.

Movement whilst learning greatly improved concentration.

Taking notes in lectures is also very important in order to incorporate movement.



Strategies in stress management played important role in intervention process. Focused on sleep hygiene, regular exercise and eating healthily.

Sensory preference – made notes more colourful. Added taste and smell senses by eating a mint when she feels confident and eating a mint again right before a test/ exam to feel more relaxed.

Intra & Interpersonal – studying with a small group of friends as well as studying by herself.

Musical – studying with music or using music as a stress relieving activity.

Client wants to reason things out and can be perceived as a thinker. CBT therapeutic approach was effective as it offered her the opportunity to reason/evaluate automatic thoughts and reach a realistic conclusion about experiences.

Stress management skills (e.g. breathing exercises). Simulating the test/exam situation improved the student's ability to express herself comfortably in tests.

Expressing emotions and dealing with her stress prevented isolating behaviour.

SUCCESSES

- The client's aggregate increased with 13%. The Physiotherapy subject that she failed (40%) in 2012, she now achieved 68% for in 2014.
- She was accepted back into BSc in Physiotherapy.
- Improved academic performances as well as a healthier lifestyle lead to gaining more self-confidence.
- Client had proficient skills to manage her attention difficulties and stress.
- She became a well-rounded individual, taking responsibility for her own development and making informed and well-thought-out decisions while keeping her brain's learning preferences in mind.

FEEDBACK FROM CLIENT

"The brain profile meant a lot to me. It helped me to get to know myself better and to find out how I deal with information and the understanding thereof. It was also interesting to find out how my brain prefers to store information and what memory techniques help me the most to recall information comfortably.
Having the knowledge of what works for me and applying it, helped me incredibly to succeed academically."