



Creative Management

Can you increase intelligence by thinking less?

Narrator.

Guy Claxton a psychologist from the University of Bristol, believes that the complex workings of the unconscious have been neglected in favour of an over emphasis on rational thought. In fact he suggests intelligence can increase when we think less. He explains how the brain, another self organising system works, and the implications for managing our minds. Guy Claxton.

Guy Claxton.

Perhaps the most fundamental understanding is just a realisation of how much the brain does by itself without the intervention of conscious control or any ego or any rational intellect. The brain is built to be an incredibly powerful learning machine. It picks up patterns complex patterns, patterns that are embedded in a whole range of different experiences and will fish them out without the need for any supervision or any commentary from what we normally think of as our minds, so that the perhaps the biggest change in the way we've been thinking about our own minds is to appreciate just how much of our intelligence functions below the surface so to speak functions in the very activity of the brain itself.

Jane Henry.

Do you think there are parallels in this work on how the brain and mind works and the work on complexity and chaos.

Guy Claxton.

Yes I mean one of the points that emerges most strongly from this, is that this kind of brain learning what's come to be called in psychology implicit learning, is particularly powerful at as I say detecting subtle patterns, patterns often that are of a degree of complexity which are greater than those which can be captured in words or in explicit symbols or formulae. In situations particularly perceptual or emotional, moral situations where there's a great degree of complexity where the situation is hard to analyse or to articulate, then it turns out that a way of approaching those situations which is less analytical less logical less conscious, but simply allows the brain so to speak to fish for patterns on its own, that way of approaching of problem solving turns out to be preferable.

Jane Henry.

So this basically is a way of approaching problems where you're allowing the brain to self organise.

Guy Claxton.

Yes and indeed to shut up the conscious intellect, to quit trying to figure out the situation turns out to be beneficial. There are many examples in cognitive science now and indeed in every day life which demonstrate how we can think too much, how the thinking faculty gets in the way being too purposeful too positive trying to maintain a clear mental grasp on the situation is actually a deleterious to solving certain kinds of problems. The business guru Tom Peters as you may know often says "if you're not confused you're not thinking clearly", and in complex situations to be confused to give up that search for conscious control turns out to be the most intelligent form of problem solving to adopt. Whereas the fast articulator, people who are sometimes called in the business world the articulate incompetents, have won the day, because their argumentation is convincing persuasive, but maybe not creative not innovative and in some sense shallow or conventional.