

*My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey* by Jill Bolte Taylor, PhD is a book that I would recommend for just about anyone. It is Taylor's story of having a serious stroke caused by a congenital defect at the age of 37. Even at the time the stroke was occurring, Taylor was aware of a certain irony that an academic who studies the brain was actually experiencing such trauma to the brain.

The book is organized so that we learn something about Taylor as she was before the stroke and the way she perceives herself since the stroke. It is fascinating to learn that Taylor, who sees herself as a decidedly left-brain scientist, became far more right-brained as her left hemisphere healed from the trauma. Because she is a brain anatomist and someone who teaches about the brain, she can't resist the opportunity to teach her readers about the brain and how it functions. Of particular interest to Taylor, especially after the stroke, is the separate functioning of the right and left hemispheres.

Something that surprised and made me wonder if this is the experience of others who have had strokes, Taylor relates that she felt a deep sense of peace and joy even at the time of the stroke when the left brain was no longer functioning as it should. Her explanation of this is that the right brain experiences life in the here and now without judgment and without words unlike the left hemisphere. Now that she is fully recovered she feels that she is more balanced and able to use her right brain and be attuned to feelings rather than being so completely a language-based left-brained person.

I found this book interesting not only because of Taylor's own story, but also because of the information she offers about assessing a person who might be having a

stroke. She offers, too, a list of things that she needed most after the stroke while she was unable to speak and make her wishes known. I think chief among those is being treated as a whole person with a problem rather than just a damaged person.

I found this a most worthwhile read, and I hope that we may be able to arrange to have her come and speak here in Shelbyville. *My Stroke of Insight* is published by Viking Press for \$24.95.