

The effects of Stress and hemispheric lateralization on managerial decisions

Yori Gidron, PhD

There is a large accumulation of scientific research on the models, processes, underlying biology, health consequences and management of job stress. Studies have shown that stress influences decision making in interesting ways, by not simply affecting it quantitatively but rather qualitatively. Under stress, people make different types of decisions and consider fewer options. Furthermore, during stress, people shift to use more the right hemisphere, which is more global and “intuitive”, relatively abandoning the more analytic and “logical” left hemisphere. People can also be classified as having relatively more left versus right hemispheric lateralization (HL). Would may be the consequences of the HL especially during stress? I will present a series of findings we recently discovered in business students and managers, showing that both stress and HL interact in surprising ways. These findings theoretically may be manifested in physicians as well, and could have important implications for decision making at critical times. In some studies, we show that it is the left HL people who may “pay a price” and become less analytic, while in other times, it is the right HL people who seem less immune to effects of stress. This of course also raises the question whether analytic or intuitive thinking are correct at all times? These issues will be presented and discussed in my talk, and will be applied to medical scenarios.