“Recent Neuroscience findings have uncovered that we have complex, adaptive and functional neural networks - or ‘brains’- in our heart and gut.

Called the cardiac and enteric nervous systems respectively, these adaptive neural networks display amazing levels of memory and ‘intelligence’ and there’s a growing array of evidence that these brains are deeply involved in the control and processing of numerous functions and core behavioural competencies.

By combining these Neuroscience findings with behavioural modelling research, a number of key insights have emerged that have profound implications for training, coaching and adaptive leadership.”
A conflict at head, heart and gut levels

As a coach, have you ever found clients who suffer from conflict between their thoughts, feelings and actions? Or clients who find themselves not acting upon or sabotaging their dreams, goals or plans? Do you ever see clients who experience difficulty in making decisions or stopping unwanted behaviours or habits and don’t really know why? Or they feel like something is missing and they’re not fully connected with their deepest inner self?

Then chances are your clients are not fully aligned and using the power and innate wisdom of their multiple brains – the brains in their head, heart and gut. You see, when coherently aligned, the head, heart and gut produce an incredible emergent wisdom that allows a person to deeply tap into intuitions and competencies that you simply can’t get from the head brain alone. This is the experience of mBIT Coaching (multiple Brain Integration Technique Coaching) and the process of mBraining – using your multiple brains in an integrated and deeply aligned way.

But before we explore these distinctions in more depth, we need to take a step back and explain how over the last decade or so, neuroscience researchers have uncovered a set of astounding facts…

We don’t just have one brain!

One of the more fascinating findings coming out of the field of Neuroscience is that we don’t just have a brain in our head. Recent Neuroscience findings have uncovered that we have complex and functional neural networks – or ‘brains’- in our heart and gut. Called the cardiac and enteric nervous systems respectively, these adaptive neural networks display amazing levels of memory and intelligence and there’s a growing array of evidence that these brains are deeply involved in the control and processing of numerous functions and core behavioural competencies.
By combining these Neuroscience findings with behavioural modelling research, a number of key insights have emerged that have profound implications for the field of coaching.

**Behavioural modelling research**

Over the last 3 years, informed by these Neuroscience findings, we’ve performed behavioural modelling action research on how the heart and gut brains function in the practical areas of decision-making, action-taking, intuition, relationships, leadership and personal development. Along with this action-research, analysis of evidence from a wide body of divergent sources has shown that the heart and gut brains are involved in representing and processing very specific forms of intelligence and intuitive functions.

For instance, the heart is optimised for processing emotions such as love, joy and connection, while the gut handles protection, self-preservation, core identity and mobilisation. What you can see from this is that each of the brains has a fundamentally different way of communicating and different concerns and domains of competence. And of course, this has direct connections with and implications for how we coach and align a client’s multiple brains.
These findings also support commonly held notions such as trusting one’s ‘gut instinct’ and being ‘true to your heart’, and they back up the assertions from many fields such as those of the Adaptive Leadership field, saying that whole leaders need to use not only their heads, but also the innate intelligence and wisdom of both their heart and gut.

**The prime functions**

Our findings indicate that there are three core Prime Functions for each of the three neural networks, or ‘brains’:

**HEART BRAIN PRIME FUNCTIONS**
- **Emoting** – emotional processing (e.g. anger, grief, hatred, joy, happiness etc.)
- **Values** – processing what’s important to you and your priorities (and its relationship to the emotional strength of your aspirations, dreams, desires, etc.)
- **Relational affect** – your felt connection with others (e.g. feelings of love/hate/indifference, compassion/uncaring, like/dislike, etc.)

**GUT BRAIN PRIME FUNCTIONS**
- **Core identity** – a deep and visceral sense of core self, and determining at the deepest levels what is ‘self’ versus ‘not-self’
- **Self-preservation** – protection of self, safety, boundaries, hungers and aversions
- **Mobilisation** – motility, impulse for action, gutsy courage and the will to act

**HEAD BRAIN PRIME FUNCTIONS**
- **Cognitive perception** – cognition, perception, pattern recognition, etc.
- **Thinking** – reasoning, abstraction, analysis, synthesis, meta-cognition etc.
- **Making meaning** – semantic processing, languaging, narrative, metaphor, etc.
The importance of this to the fields of coaching, training and leadership is two-fold. First, it's crucial whenever coaching and facilitating personal or group decisions that all three intelligences are accessed and incorporated into the decision-making process.

*Without the head intelligence*, the decision will not have been properly thought through and analysed.

*Without the heart intelligence*, there will not be sufficient values-driven emotional energy to care enough to act on or prioritise the decision against competing pressures.

*Without the gut intelligence* there will not be enough attention to managing risks nor enough willpower to mobilise and execute the decision once challenges arise.

The second implication is to ensure that the client is not using one brain to do the function of another. Each brain has its own domain of competence and by definition is not the most competent in the other Prime Functions.

This mistake can be typically seen in organisations where the head brain is used to define the corporate values that people’s heart brains don’t really care about, or the head brain is used to design action plans that people’s gut brains don’t really engage with. Numerous other examples abound in daily business life.
The consciousness of highest expression

One of the many powerful models emerging from our research work suggests that each of our brains has what is known as a ‘Highest Expression’. This is an emergent competency that represents the highest, most optimised and adaptive class of intelligence or competency of each brain. The Highest Expressions of each brain are:

- **Head brain** – Creativity
- **Heart brain** – Compassion
- **Enteric brain** – Courage

What’s crucially important is that these Highest Expressions are only accessed and activated when a person is in an optimal state of neurological balance, or what is defined as ‘autonomic coherence’. This is when the person is neither too stressed nor too relaxed, but is in a ‘flow state’. And it makes sense that unless someone is in a neurological flow state, their perceptions of any particular issue or situation along and their subsequent decision-making will be impaired by contrast.

For example, if a leader’s Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) is functioning in an overly sympathetic (e.g. stressed) state, their perceptions and decision-making will typically default to their reactive conditioning.

Conversely, if their ANS is functioning in an overly parasympathetic (e.g. apathetic or ‘freeze response’) state, they will exhibit an inability or lack of desire to act, or at best make timid decisions. Whereas in an optimum state of autonomic balance, leaders are able to bring a higher order of consciousness to their decision-making.
Organisational Evidence

There is also a growing body of evidence in the Organisational Leadership literature, along with backup from the Neuroscience of Leadership research, that competencies such as Compassion, Creativity and Courage are vital for organisational success. For example, a recent study by Christina Boedker from the Australian School of Business of more than 5600 people across 77 organisations, found that the single greatest influence on profitability and productivity was the ability of a leader to be compassionate.

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This is further backed up by Geoff Aigner, director of Social Leadership Australia in his thought-provoking book, ‘Leadership Beyond Good Intentions: What It Takes To Really Make a Difference’, in which he shows that good management is ultimately an act of compassion, and requires leaders to take responsibility for the growth and development of others.

Other studies such as those by Jonathan Haidt at New York University have found that when leaders are fair and self-sacrificing, their employees follow suit and increase their commitment to each other and the organisation.
mBIT – multiple Brain Integration Technique Coaching

Coaching the multiple brains into alignment and operation from their highest expressions of Creativity, Compassion and Courage requires a pragmatic ‘how’, and a suite of simple and powerful techniques that Coaches and Trainers can use in appropriate contexts.

As detailed in our book ‘mBraining’, these techniques and processes involve getting the client into communication with their three brains, getting them aligned around the particular issue and then getting the brains functioning at their highest expression.

When this is achieved, the person’s innate intuitive wisdom emerges and the quality of their decisions and actions becomes adaptively and generatively different. Ultimately, mBIT Coaching is about helping and facilitating clients to bring their human spirit alive and to operate in an emergent, adaptive, congruent and neurologically aligned way. Out in the field, both coaches and clients are reporting to us that the experience of mBIT Coaching is profound and transformative.

For more information, free articles, whitepapers, interviews, exercises and mp3’s, please visit www.mbraining.com

To purchase a copy of the book mBraining, please visit Amazon.com
http://www.amazon.com/mBraining-Using-multiple-brains-stuff/dp/1475238584

And for a short overview of a presentation by Grant Soosalu and Marvin Oka on mBIT Coaching at the recent World Business and Executive Coaching Summit (WBEC5) please see: http://vimeo.com/65558348

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Grant Soosalu is an international leadership consultant, trainer and writer with backgrounds and expertise in Leadership, Coaching, Psychology, NLP, Behavioral Modeling and Applied Physics.