

Lefties more likely to look before they leap

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(Medical Xpress) -- New research from the University of Abertay Dundee has found evidence that left-handed people may be better decision makers than their right-handed counterparts.

The new behavioural research, published in the journal *Laterality*, found that due to an increased 'state anxiety' when faced with a new task, left-handers are more likely to take their time and think about the consequences of a task before tackling it.

Dr Scott Hardie said: "Previously it has been believed that left-handed people are more anxious in general. What we believe is that it is the 'state anxiety' as opposed to 'trait anxiety' that differs between left-handers and right-handers. This means that it's the reaction to the here and now, a current situation rather than an individual's general disposition.

"What we don't know is whether the increased state anxiety is caused by the motivation of trying to get it right, or the fear of getting it wrong?"

Dr Lynn Wright said: "There are a number of factors that could affect this. For example up until recent years when a left-handed person was learning to write they were discouraged from using their left hand and forced to switch to their right,

often to their detriment. There are also a great number of objects or activities in daily life that are designed for right-handed people, which can be disconcerting for left-handers such as can openers, scissors, notepads, right sided writing desks, guitars and other musical instruments. Because of this many left-handers are used to having to think before they act and perhaps to second guess what feels natural."

"What we're not talking about is personality inhibition. Nor are we saying that left-handed individuals live in a constant state of anxiety, far from it actually. The ability to plan and think things out is advantageous in most situations."

"State anxiety in this case, focuses attention on the task in hand and allows a proper evaluation of options and outcomes. We feel that left-handers' 'inhibition' is a manifestation of the old idiom 'look before you leap' and may in many cases be a better strategy than the alternative 'fools rush in'."

1 in 10 people are thought to be left-handed and famous 'south paws' include US President Barack Obama. In fact, five out of the last seven US Presidents have been left-handed.

Dr Wright and Dr Hardie are behavioural psychologists specialising in biological and cognitive psychology including emotions and laterality, preferential use of either the left or the right side.

In order to take the research forward they are hoping to expand their work to looking at different age groups, different social pressures and other potential contributory factors.

More information: The published article can be viewed here: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1357650X.2011.615126

Provided by University of Abertay Dundee

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