

Insider – The Female Brain

By Ivory E. Welcome, MBA Candidate December 2009

Dr. Louann Brizendine provides the technical perspective on the obvious physical differences between the minds of men and women in her appropriately titled book, *The Female Brain*. She describes how the differing structures of the male and female brains and the makeup of our hormones work together to produce two very different perceptions of one's environment and our interactions with others that we encounter within that environment. "More than 99% of male and female genetic coding is exactly the same...but that [1%] percentage difference influences every single cell in our bodies – from the nerves that register pleasure and pain to the neurons that transmit perception, thoughts, feelings, and emotions" (Bridenzendine).

Think Point #1: While the male brain is larger than the female brain by 9%, this has nothing to do with a man's mental capacity over a woman's. The cells in a woman's brain are merely more compact than those of a man's. In fact, several critical parts of the brain are larger in women than in men, such as the Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC), the Prefrontal Cortex (PFC), and the Insula. The larger size of these sections of the female brain can provide important cues to an agent attempting to sell to a female buyer. The ACC, for example, is responsible for weighing options and making decisions; it often leads one to worry before making any important decision. When dealing with a female buyer, speak to this need for absolute certainty in decision-making by giving adequate attention to ensure her comfort with her decision to buy. The female brain structure prompts this buyer to "have" to carefully weigh all options before reaching the "best decision." Implication for the real estate agent is clear; you must offer her several options that cater to her individual desires and allow her to take the time necessary to be comfortable with her final decision.

Think Point #2: Sincerity and honesty go a long way with a female buyer as she can often see right through ulterior motives. The Insula controls one's gut feelings; women are often accused of being "psychic", but in fact the female brain's larger Insula makes women more equipped to read faces, interpret the tone of voice and the emotions of individuals with which they are engaged in conversation. Thus, the woman's hormones and brain structure work together to allow the woman to receive emotional signals with a stronger and clearer signal. "This information is sent through her brain circuits to search her emotional memory banks for a match" (Bridenzendine). From the relaxation or tension within the face, to the way one breathes or postures oneself, the female is able to interpret these non-verbal behaviors to make her own interpretations of an individual's intentions. When verbal cues enter, the female brain searches what an individual is saying to see if it is a match to the tone of voice of that individual. The takeaway here: be genuine when approaching a female buyer. She can spot motives that are not within her best interest a mile away!

Think Point #3: Women’s emotions are so deeply affected by the daily hormonal changes that occur within the brain. The female brain is said to change a little bit every day with some parts of the brain changing as much as 25% within a month. These changes are said to create a different reality for the woman, where her values and desires could change from one day to the next. As Dr. Brizendine put it, “A woman’s neurological reality is not as constant as a man’s. His is like a mountain that is worn away imperceptibly over [time] by glaciers, weather and the deep tectonic movements of the earth. Hers is more like the weather itself – constantly changing and hard to predict.” At times, things may be rocky when working with a female client but don’t take offense – remember that much of this is due to the changes occurring within her brain from day to day. One practical tip: consider keeping a “running log” of what she says are important criteria to her. Open up each sales call by reminding her of what you heard the last time you connected with her.



Female Buyer Wants to	Real Estate Agent Needs to
Weigh all options	Help her make the “best” decision
Deal with sincerely helpful people	Focus on her needs not your sales stats
Anchor and adjust due to hormonal changes	Remind her of what she said is important
Connect with the agent	Engage in emotional mirroring to build rapport (while natural for female agents, male agents may have to work harder)
Remember emotional events	Use contact notes to remind you of important emotional triggers

Think Point #4: From the perspective of a female agent, remember that this extreme ability to receive emotional signals also allows you to engage in emotional mirroring, or the activation of similar emotional responses by merely observing or imagining another individual in a particular emotional state. Research conducted at California State University of the success of psychotherapists showed that those therapists who had the best results had the most emotional connection with their clients. This allowed the therapists to comfortably settle into the climate of the clients’ worlds by establishing good rapport. It so happened that all of these therapists were also women. As a female agent, this aids you in the ability to sympathize with the desires and emotions of your buyer, thus provide a more genuine buying experience.

Think Point #5: There is much more to learn about the male brain in order to aid in interactions with a male buyer or as a male seller interacting with buyers. It is known, however, that the larger Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) in women controls the wild emotions that result from the Amygdala, which is naturally larger in men. Whereas a woman is more likely to bite her tongue due to her aversion to conflict fueled by her larger PFC, the larger Amygdala in men cues a man to stay alert for any indication of threatening emotional responses. While a woman’s emotions may be unstable from day to day due to changing hormonal levels, a female client is less likely

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to aversely respond to any conflict that could occur during the buying process. The male buyer, on the other hand, is likely to pounce at any sign of threat or disagreement; maintain calm in any touchy situation which may guarantee the future of this buying relationship. As a male agent, the emotion centers within the brain are less active than in that of a woman. Women typically remember emotional events, occurrences, and facts of a situation better than men. As a male agent, take notes on potential buyers after each interaction. Review before interacting again to aid in the memory of critical facts about the potential buyer to strengthen the buying relationship.

Recommended Reading

Brizendine, M.D., Louann (2006), *The Female Brain*, Broadway Publishers.

About The Author

Ivory Welcome, M.B.A. Candidate, December 2009, Baylor University Graduate Assistant, Keller Center for Research. Completing her degree in December 2009, Ivory is completing a specialized MBA degree in Healthcare.