

Script

Part 1.

Polyglots have different brains. New research has shown that people with a gift for other languages could actually have different types of brains from other people. Neuroscientists at University College London say that polyglots have more white brain matter in a part of the brain which processes sound. It is hoped that the research published in a medical journal could be used to help identify reasons for language difficulties. During a trial involving native French speakers, people were asked to distinguish between two similar sounds from different languages. The first was the D sound in French. The second was a D found in Hindi, which is pronounced in a different way. Researchers tested the speed at which participants could process the information about the different sounds. People who were successful on this task were asked to listen to other similar sounds. Some of the fastest learners were able to tell the sounds apart within a few minutes. While the slowest learners were only able to make random guesses after 20 minutes of training. Dr. Nali Golestani from UCL's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience said the brain's white matter was involved in the efficient processing of sound information. Its fibers are involved in connecting brain regions together. Fast language learners had a greater volume of white matter and that may mean that they have more or perhaps thicker fibers. We are starting to understand that brain shape and structure can be informative about people's abilities. Why people are good at some things and not others is evident from these scans, she said. White brain matter is involved in connecting different parts of the brain together and greater amounts of this could indicate an increased ability to process sound. Previous research suggested that having a talent for music was linked to the structure of grey matter in the brain. This latest research could be used in other ways, Dr. Nali said. We can start to make predictions regarding whether people will be good at something or not based on their brain structure or even to diagnose clinical problems.

Part 2.

You go to school, you get trained in something, then you get a job in that, and then you do that job and that's your career, and then you die. But then you got into this thing and realized they don't actually want to do this with the life. Or nobody wants this particular trade anymore. You make 8-track players. People aren't buying 8-tracks anymore. There's this weird thing about the market where if you go in with, well, this is a thing that I do, there may be forces beyond you that no one wants to pay for that anymore. And so over the years, I kept meeting people who had this very single track, this is what I'm supposed to do thing, and then it disappointed them for reasons out of their control, or simply I got trained to do this thing that I don't like to do. Then I stumbled on this Japanese word, a kigai. And a kigai essentially is that which gets you out of bed in the morning. And sometimes it's translated your reason for being. And in Japanese culture, they have this very well thought through idea of a kigai that you never stop working out you're a kigai, what it is that gets you out of bed in the morning. And so in this season of life, this is what you're doing, but that may change, it may shift. Somebody you love may get sick and so you need to care for them. You used to do this, and now that industry is sort of dried up, but now you need to go back to school because you need to now go do this. And they had this really interesting idea that when you no longer have something that gets you out of bed in the morning, then you're kind of dead, even if you're still alive. And the reason why I find that fascinating is you can be successful, you can have a nice job, you can have a nice house, you can do all the stuff that everybody says, hey, you've made it, and yet wake up in the morning with a profound sense of dread, like, ugh, another day. And despair, despair is a spiritual disease. Despair is when you believe that tomorrow will simply be a repeat of today. Despair is when you look ahead into the future and each day is just another version of this. What we really want, no matter how educated, sophisticated, accomplished we are, we want to wake up in the morning with this sense of anticipation. Anticipation, like, look what I get to do today. The great Abraham Joshua Heschel said, I didn't ask for success, I asked for wonder. And I love that because for many of us, we were trained for success. We were trained, here's how you work hard and multitask and network and get stuff done and climb the ladder. What we weren't taught oftentimes was to ask, is this ladder even leaned up against the right building? Which is a different set of questions. It's like, it exerts a different set of muscles. Now, listen again.