Processing Speed

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
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When my children were pre-teens, there was talk about the idea that someday we might all have personal computers and that computers would enter the workplace to save us time and money. This information seems to date me but It really wasn't that long ago that this happened.

I remember when we purchased our first home computer. There wasn't any packaged software and so my son bought a magazine and asked me to type code that he promised would do amazing things. I sat for about a half hour typing numbers into the keyboard until we were finally able to hit "Run". We were using a small television set as our monitor and suddenly a very simple-looking fly appeared in the bottom left-hand corner of the screen. It only took a couple of seconds for it to soar across the screen and immediately disappear. We were so impressed!

After watching that fly a few times I indicated that I really didn't want to have to do all that typing in the future so my son explained that we could save it in what he called a data-cassette. That was a wonderful suggestion! Every time that we wanted to watch that little fly we would have to wait for about fifteen minutes while the data-cassette loaded the numbers into our computer again.

Well, we've made a lot of progress in the world of technology since that fly and our Commodore 64. Now I can type three letters into the keyboard and my computer seems to be able to read my mind, taking me to an internet and software heaven that has all the answers to almost any problem!

It would probably be very difficult and frustrating to go back to a time when we had to depend on a Commodore 64 because the processing speed was so very slow.

Today people have many different kinds of computers and the processors work at a wide range of speeds. Some locations still have dial-up services that seem to take forever. Others have super high speed capabilities.

The same thing applies to the way that individuals process information in their brains. Depending on their past experiences, skills, intelligence and present situation, they will understand and make decisions in a variety of ways and in differing timeframes. Some people think and act very quickly whereas others need much more time to gather, understand and process the same information. The slow thinkers may appear to be uncaring or negligent if they walk away or tell you that they don't want to talk about it right now. What they often mean, however, is that they need time for their brain to work!

Now that certainly doesn't imply that they are stupid or negligent.

In his book "Blink", Malcolm Gladwell describes situations where some people can view things and within seconds make an accurate assessment or decision. Those same people, however, might be in a different situation in which they think very slowly or perhaps might never be able to come to a conclusion about what is happening or what needs to be done.

Different people have different strengths and different weaknesses.

Unfortunately, we often tend to think that everyone operates the same way as we do and therefore make assumptions that are not accurate. If someone needs time to process information, flooding them with more information will likely not help. Becoming angry and demanding will not help. Throwing out accusations or threats will not help.

There are times that people are similar to computers. You click the mouse and everything freezes. Clicking it repeatedly will NOT speed up the processing. Programs working in the background that you cannot see need to finish working before your request will be dealt with. Same thing with people.

The next time that you are waiting for another person to talk with you about a topic, do not assume that they are ignoring you. Perhaps they just need a little time to process information.

Practice showing a little patience with them because the day will come when that person might replicate a super high speed processing system while you are more like a Commodore 64!