Many of you may have seen the Ted video by Jill Bolte Taylor, the neuroanatomist and spokesperson for the Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center who survived a stroke in 1996, at age 37, to describe the shifts in her brain that took place as part of her recovery. Fascinating stuff. And very useful and inspiring to not only those recovering from neurological disorders, but also psychological ones.

I had the privilege of meeting Taylor and attending her workshop at the NAMI National Convention in DC. This woman knows her stuff and is a powerful communicator. I couldn't scribble fast enough to get it all down on paper.

First she described the right brain (the buddha):

- Nonverbal
- Thinks in pictures
- Kinesthetic
- Present moment
- Holistic thinking
- Seek similarities
- Perceives energy
- Compassionate
- Noncontroversial
- Time lost in the flow
- Joy

Then she explains the left brain (corporate America):

- Thinks in language
- Details
- Linear/sequential
- Past/future
- Seeks differences
- Critical analysis
- Judges right/wrong
- Competitive
- Confrontational
- On the clock
- Stress
- Sense of urgency

"The left brain," Taylor explained, "would rather be right than happy. The right would much rather be happy than right."
Where this gets interesting for a person such as myself, living with bipolar disorder, is that there are significant differences in the brain of people with serious mental illness and those without. We process information differently.

In the first days after her stroke, the scientist could only use the right brain, which is how she discovered all the gifts of that part of our information-processing center. During her recovery, she tenaciously kept the faculties of her right brain to be more serene and at peace in a left-brain kind of world.

Here are her **10 Recommendations for Recovery**:

1. Honor the healing power of sleep.
2. Treat me like I will recover completely.
3. Challenge my brain systems immediately.
4. Love me for who I am now.
5. Help me define my priorities for energy use.
6. Focus on my ability, not on my diability.
7. Give my brain years to recover.
8. Divide every task into smaller action steps.
9. I am NOT stupid. I am wounded. Repeat that for me!
10. Come close to me, do not be afraid of me.

Among her final "strokes of insight" were these:

- You can choose to observe and interact with your "peanut gallery" (what I would refer to as "the little man" or the annoying storyteller in my brain).
- Tend the garden of your mind. I can take total responsibility for what thoughts and emotions grow in my mind.
- Be your own cheerleader. You are your own life force. You are comprised of 50 trillion molecular geniuses. You can chose to focus your mind with a conscious intention to cheer on your 50 trillion molecular geniuses or energy centers.
- You are in charge of your brain and your recovery, in command of all the reconnections.