How Your Mind Shapes Reality

Warm up

- Have you ever argued with a partner, friend, or parent about something you both remember differently? Do you usually insist you're right or immediately start to doubt yourself?
- If your brain could be upgraded (memory, focus, creativity), what would you choose, or nothing?
- Do you think you always control your thoughts, or do they sometimes just happen?
- At work, is it better when people think similarly or differently? Why?
- Do you think your attention is better or worse than it was a few years ago? Why?

1. Read the statements and mark ✓ (true) or ✗ (false).

🧠 How much do you know about the brain?	✓	✗
You only use 10% of your brain in everyday life.		✗
Your brain is about 60% fat. The fattiest organ in your body.	✓	
Multitasking allows you to do multiple tasks at the same time efficiently.		✗
The bigger your brain is, the more intelligent you are.		✗
On average people have over 6,000 thoughts per day.	✓	
Your brain cannot feel pain.	✓	
People remember emotional events more accurately than normal ones.		✗
Your brain uses about 20% of your body's energy, even at rest.	✓	
When you multitask, you can make up to 50% more mistakes.	✓	
Your brain makes decisions before you feel like you chose them.	✓	
You can train your brain to remember everything perfectly.		✗
Information in your brain can travel up to 350 km/h.	✓	
A piece of human brain tissue the size of a grain of sand contains around 100,000 neurons.	✓	

2. Work in pairs or small groups. Choose one of the three stories, read it, and explain it to the class in your own words.

THE GLASS DELUSION

Between the 15th and 17th centuries, some people in Europe developed a very unusual belief. They thought their bodies were made of glass and could shatter at any moment.

They were completely convinced. As a result, they avoided physical contact and moved very carefully. Some refused to sit down because they were afraid they might break, while others wore reinforced clothing to protect themselves.

One of the most famous cases was King Charles VI of France. He believed his body was made of glass and ordered special clothes with iron rods to prevent himself from "breaking." He also refused to let people come too close to him.

At the time, glass was a new and valuable material, seen as delicate and almost magical. Some historians believe this influenced how people saw themselves, especially wealthy and educated individuals.

What makes this case even more interesting is that it did not happen to just one person. Similar beliefs appeared across Europe, suggesting that ideas, like

THE "SOAP OPERA VIRUS"

In 2006, something unusual happened in Portugal. After watching an episode of a popular teen TV show, hundreds of students suddenly became ill.

They reported symptoms such as rashes, dizziness, and difficulty breathing. Within just a few days, more than 300 students across 14 different schools were affected. Some schools even had to close because so many students were unwell.

The strange part was that the illness they described was exactly the same as a fictional disease shown in the TV series.

Doctors quickly investigated the situation. However, they found no virus, no infection, and no clear medical cause. The symptoms were real, but the illness itself was not.

Experts later explained that this was a case of mass psychogenic illness. This means that people can develop real physical symptoms simply because they believe something is happening to their body.

THE HUMAN CAMERA

Stephen Wiltshire, a British artist, was diagnosed with autism at the age of three. As a child, he did not speak and found it difficult to communicate with others. Instead, he began to draw.

Over time, people noticed something extraordinary about his ability.

After seeing a city just once, even from a short helicopter ride, he could draw it in incredible detail from memory. His drawings included thousands of accurate features, such as buildings, windows, and street layouts, all in the correct position and perspective.

He later created large panoramic drawings of cities like London, New York, and Tokyo. Some of these artworks took days to complete and were several metres long.

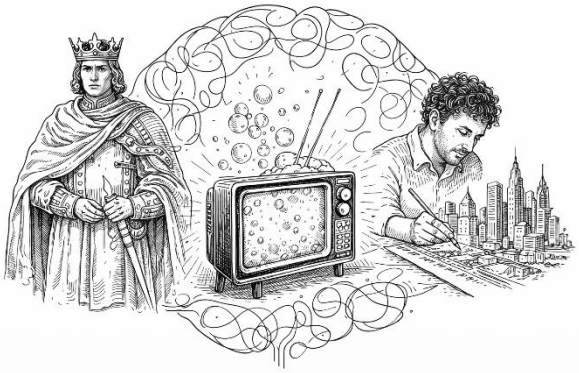
What makes this case so fascinating is how differently his brain processes information. While many people focus on general impressions, he is able to notice and remember extremely small visual details.

3. Discuss the questions below in your group. Be ready to share your ideas with the class.

a. Which story surprised you the most? Why?

b. In which story do you think the *mind had the strongest effect on reality*? Explain your choice.

c. Look at the *Glass Delusion* or the *Soap Opera Virus*. Why do you think people believed these things so strongly? Give 2 possible reasons.



d. Think about work or school: Can beliefs or assumptions lead to wrong decisions? Give a real or imagined example.

e. The "Human Camera" shows a very different way of thinking. In a team, would this be more helpful or difficult? Why? (Give one advantage and one challenge.)

f. Has anything (a video, experience, conversation) ever changed how you see the world? What changed?

Describing and Interpreting What You See

What you see

- *It looks like...*
- *It could be...*
- *It might be...*

First impressions

- *At first glance,...*
- *At first, I thought...*
- *My first impression was that...*

What you think

- *I think...*
- *It seems to me that...*
- *I'm not completely sure, but...*
- *I would say that...*

Responding to others

- *I see what you mean, but...*
- *That's interesting, I see it differently.*
- *You might be right, but...*

4. In pairs or small groups, look at the images below and describe what you see. Do you agree with your partner, or do you see something different? Use the phrases from the language box.

Image 1: What do you see at first glance?	Image 2: What do you see at first glance?

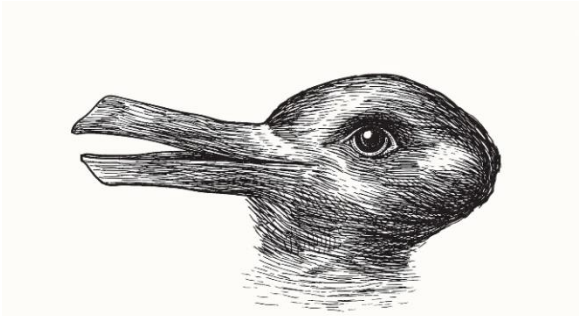
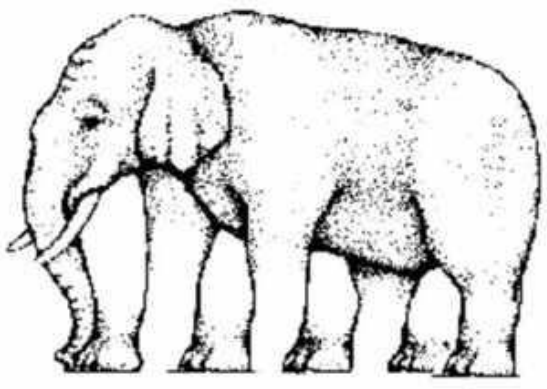
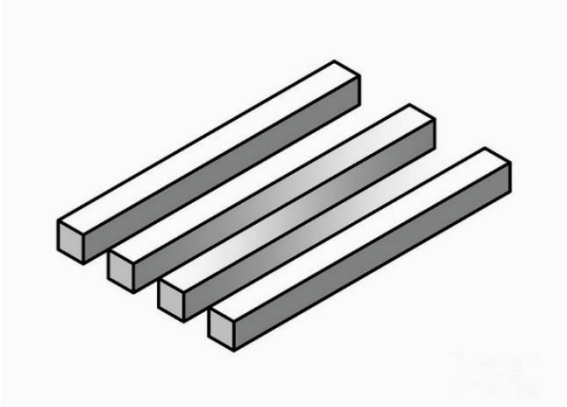



Image 3: How many legs can you see?	**Image 4: How many blocks are there?**
	

What are optical illusions?

Optical illusions happen when your brain tries to make sense of what you see quickly. Instead of analysing every detail, the brain uses patterns, past experience, and expectations. Sometimes, this leads to mistakes. Your eyes see the same image, but your brain interprets it differently. That's why people can look at the same picture and see different things.

5. Discuss in your groups.

a. Which image was the most confusing? Why?

b. Did anyone in your group see something different? What was it?

c. Why is it important to understand that people see things differently?

6. Before watching the video, match the key vocabulary you will hear to their meanings.

a. to perceive *3*	1. to look for something actively
b. to visualise *4*	2. having a brain that works differently
c. spectrum *5*	3. to see or understand something
d. to seek out *1*	4. to create a picture in your mind
e. to assume *6*	5. a range between different types or levels
f. neurodivergent (adj) / *2* neuro diversity (n)	6. to believe something is true without checking

7. Fill in the gaps with the vocabulary from exercise 6.

a. Many people *assume* that everyone experiences the world in the same way, but this is not true.

b. When planning a future goal, some people like to *visualise* the steps clearly in their mind before taking action.

c. Intelligence and ability are not fixed; they exist on a *spectrum* with many different strengths.

d. People can *perceive* the same event in completely different ways, even when they see exactly the same thing.

e. Some companies now actively *seek out* people with different ways of thinking to improve creativity and problem-solving.

f. People who are *neurodivergent* often bring unique strengths, such as strong pattern recognition or creative thinking.

8. Watch the video and complete the tasks below

1. What does the speaker say about how different our minds are?
   The speaker says that our minds are much more different than we think, and people can experience the same reality in completely different ways.

2. Think about the imagination task from the video. What did you picture? Was it clear, detailed, or difficult to imagine?[1]

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3. Why does the speaker think it is important to work with different kinds of thinkers?
   The speaker thinks it is important because different kinds of thinkers can bring new ideas and perspectives, leading to better creativity and problem-solving.

4. Note down 3 ideas from the talk that you found interesting or surprising:

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5. Which story from this lesson do you think connects most to the video? Why?

☐ The Glass Delusion
☐ The Soap Opera Virus
☐ The Human Camera
☐ The Optical Illusions

6. After the video and lesson, how do you feel about how the mind works?
   Choose 1-3 options.

☐ I understand my own thinking better now	☐ I feel more confused about how the mind works
☐ I trust my thoughts less than before	☐ I realise how easily the mind can be influenced
☐ I'm more aware that people think very differently	☐ I feel more curious about how the mind works
☐ I think we don't question our thinking enough	☐ I feel more open to different ways of thinking

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojttMNOW6zM