Overview
Core of Commonality

Herman Miller refers to the characteristics and capacities that people share—body, mind, and spirit—as the core of commonality. Recognizing and understanding this shared humanity can help bridge potential gaps between individuals. And it can have a positive impact on what goes on in office environments.

Within this core of commonality there are multiple aspects, such as ethnicity; education, aspirations, and beliefs. We can explore these aspects separately while acknowledging their systemic nature. Here, we explore the role of creativity (spirit), the impact of learning (mind), and the functioning of the brain (body).

Creativity. The capacity for creativity exists in everyone, not just so-called "creative types." The challenge for organizations lies in tapping into that shared capacity. Creativity is a learnable, rigorous process that can and should be learned. It involves recognizing the importance of left- and right-brain synergy and the effectiveness of divergent and convergent thinking. All are required to generate new ideas and to make sense and meaning out of ideas, observations, and insights.

Learning. People are all, to varying degrees, visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners; they all use both sides of their brains. They also share a three-layered brain, the structure of which helps us understand how learning takes place, why emotional involvement is essential to most learning, and the importance of creating meaning and context in learning situations. While each layer is geared toward separate functions, all three interact and respond to each other. Each is always present.

Brain Function and the Impact of Distractions. Although everyone needs time to concentrate, frequent distractions and interruptions often subvert that basic need, adversely affecting productivity and worker well-being. The main reasons? Ever-present technology, multitasking, and the socializing and sharing that knowledge work often involves. Many of these distractions are unavoidable and even desirable within the context of today's collaborative work environments. But they can take a toll.