

Study: Forcing a Smile Genuinely Decreases Stress

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The Atlantic:

PROBLEM: Happiness makes us smile, but can smiling make us happy? Even if it's a fake smile, because your mouth is propped open by chopsticks? There's the standard smile, which remains located in the muscles surrounding the mouth, and the genuine (or Duchenne) smile, which spreads to the eyes and, at least anecdotally, both looks and feels warmer and more natural. Does one work better than the other?

METHODOLOGY: In an experiment that was smile-worthy in its own right, researchers used chopsticks to manipulate the facial muscles of their 169 participants into a neutral expression, a standard smile, or a Duchenne smile. In addition to the chopstick placement, some were explicitly instructed to smile. Then, they were subjected to a series of stress-inducing, multitasking activities, which they struggled to perform while continuing to hold the chopsticks in their mouths. The subjects' heart rates and self-reported stress levels were monitored throughout.

Read the whole story: [The Atlantic](#)