Culture Affects Kids’ Ability to Delay Gratification

July 20, 2022

Overcoming impulses to enjoy immediate rewards in order to get later benefits is fundamental to achieving goals. Researchers often measure the delaying of gratification with well-known “marshmallow task,” in which children must resist the urge to eat one treat now in order to get more treats later.

Individual differences in this task predict important later life outcomes such as academic success, socioemotional competence, and health, many researchers agree.

As reported in the journal *Psychological Science*, researchers found that cultural habits around waiting to eat (emphasized in Japan) and waiting to open gifts (emphasized in the United States) shape distinct profiles of delaying gratification.

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