

# New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

December 04, 2015

Read about the latest research published in *Clinical Psychological Science*:

[The Price of Perspective Taking: Child Depressive Symptoms Interact With Parental Empathy to Predict Immune Functioning in Parents](#)

*Erika M. Manczak, Devika Basu, and Edith Chen*

People vary in the amount of empathy — the tendency to affectively experience and adopt the perspective of others — they experience. Empathy is generally considered to be a positive and desirable trait, but are there circumstances in which empathy is harmful? The researchers examined parents and their adolescent children, assessing parents for their levels of dispositional empathy and positive parenting behaviors and adolescents for their levels of depressive symptoms. One year later, parents' blood was drawn and exposed to a bacterial stimulus to assess inflammatory response. Empathetic parents' immune response was positively related to their adolescent's level of depressive symptoms. In parents with low levels of empathy, this relationship was reversed. The researchers suggest that empathetic parents may be more sensitive to, and physiologically affected by, the mental health of their children.

[Spontaneous Eye-Blink Rate as an Index of Reward Responsivity: Validation and Links to Bipolar Disorder](#)

*Andrew D. Peckham and Sheri L. Johnson*

Dopamine in the striatum — an area of the brain involved in reward perception — influences reward pursuit and response. Eye-blink rate has been found to be an indicator of striatal dopamine, leading researchers to ask whether eye-blink rate is also a marker for reward behavior. The eye-blink rate of participants with and without bipolar disorder was recorded while they anticipated, completed, and then were rewarded for their performance on an anagram task. Participants also completed measures of ambitious goal setting, reward-induced mania, mood state, and confidence. Eye-blink rate increased from baseline through receipt of reward for participants with and without bipolar disorder. Measures of confidence, ambitious goal setting, and reward-triggered mania were correlated with blink responses in people with bipolar disorder but not in those without it. The findings indicate that eye-blink rate can be used as an indicator of reward sensitivity.

[How Mindfulness Training May Help to Reduce Vulnerability for Recurrent Depression: A Neuroscientific Perspective](#)

*Thorsten Barnhofer, Julia M. Huntenburg, Michael Lifshitz, Jennifer Wild, Elena Antonova, and Daniel S. Margulies*

Mindfulness meditation is a practice that encourages moment-to-moment monitoring of whatever experiences arise, be they bodily sensations, emotions, memories, or other thoughts. Studies have suggested that the practice of mindfulness meditation is associated with beneficial health outcomes. One specific treatment, called mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) — an intervention that combines aspects of cognitive therapy with intensive mindfulness-meditation training — has produced promising results as a treatment for depression and the prevention of depression relapse. Specifically, research has indicated that mindfulness meditation is effective at altering the imbalanced connectivity and activation in the default-mode network (DMN) seen in those with depression and at risk for depression. Its action on the DMN is just one way in which MBCT has shown promise in helping people recognize, disengage from, and reappraise maladaptive thought patterns.