

New Research From Clinical Psychological Science

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[Evidence-Based Practice Comes to the Field of Neuropsychology: A Review of Neuropsychological Assessment in the Age of Evidence-Based Practice](#)

Suzanne Penna

This book review discusses *Neuropsychological Assessment in the Age of Evidence-Based Practice*, edited by Stephen Bowden and published by the National Academy of Neuropsychology. As background, Penna describes neuropsychology's status as a leader in psychological assessment and suggests that neuropsychologists may find this book useful to keep up to date on methodological advancements in the field. The book is divided into three sections that describe the evidence behind neuropsychology practice, successful application of practice, and clinical application of evidence-based criteria. Penna cites the chapters covering psychometrics and statistics as the strongest of the book, and she concludes that neuropsychologists should find this book valuable in ensuring that the work they do is supported by the strongest available science.

[Sex Differences in the Cortisol Response to the Trier Social Stress Test in Depressed and Nondepressed Adolescents](#)

Raegan Mazurka, Katherine E. Wynne-Edwards, and Kate L. Harkness

Clinical scientists have observed that depression is twice as likely to occur in women as it is in men, identifying reactivity to stress as one possible explanation for this pattern. To better understand the interaction between stress, depression, and biological sex, the researchers had depressed and nondepressed adolescent participants undergo the Trier Social Stress Test, which required them to prepare and deliver a speech and perform a difficult math task in front of strangers on short notice. Participants' levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, were measured via saliva throughout the experiment.

Using two types of statistical analysis, the researchers found that the results converged on opposite patterns of cortisol response for girls and boys. Depressed girls showed reduced cortisol output during the stress test relative to nondepressed girls, whereas depressed boys showed a greater cortisol output under stress relative to nondepressed boys. The authors attribute this discrepancy to differences in hormones and cumulative stress exposure between girls and boys. They suggest that researchers should take sex into account when examining the relationship between stress and depression.

[A Unique Safety Signal: Social-Support Figures Enhance Rather Than Protect from Fear Extinction](#)

Erica A. Hornstein, Kate E. B. Haltom, Kanika Shirole, and Naomi I. Eisenberger

Clinical scientists often treat fear using *exposure therapy*, exposing the patient to fear-inducing cues without the aversive outcome, a process that ultimately extinguishes the fear response. Although some have theorized that the presence of a safety signal interferes with attempts to extinguish fear responses, the authors of this study hypothesized that a specific type of safety signal—an image of a social-support figure—might aid fear extinction. To study this, the authors measured participants' skin conductance responses (SCR) as they viewed images, some of which were paired or not paired with uncomfortable shocks. The participants learned to respond with fear when images paired with the shocks appeared; later, the images appeared again, accompanied by a picture of a personal social-support figure, a picture of a stranger, or no picture. The picture of a social-support figure inhibited participants' learned fear response, but the photo of the stranger did not, a pattern that appeared to hold up to 24 hours later. The authors discuss possible biological and social explanations for the findings and encourage additional work investigating the effects of social support.