

New Research From Psychological Science

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

[Conceptual Conditioning: Mechanisms Mediating Conditioning Effects on Pain](#)

Marieke Jepma and Tor D. Wager

Although researchers know that classical conditioning can modify pain responses, the underlying mechanisms are not well understood. Participants were conditioned to pair specific shapes with symbolic indicators of a high or low temperature. Participants' skin conductance responses were then measured as they completed a test phase in which the shapes preceded contact heat treatments. Skin-conductance changes in response to heat treatments, and participants' perceived rating of the painfulness of heat treatments, were greater when preceded by shapes indicating a higher temperature. The effect of the shapes on pain ratings and on skin-conductance responses was mediated by participants' self-reported pain expectancies and by their skin-conductance responses in anticipation of the treatment, providing new insight into the ways conditioned modulation of pain can be acquired.

[When Threat Is Near, Get Out of Here: Dynamics of Defensive Behavior During Freezing and Active Avoidance](#)

Andreas Löw, Mathias Weymar, and Alfons O. Hamm

The authors examined the physiological and biological adjustments people make in response to threat by showing participants one of two shapes. The shapes indicated whether the participant would receive a painful electric shock or not. The color of the frame surrounding the shape indicated whether the shock could be avoided by quickly pressing a button. The researchers found that participants who were exposed to unavoidable threat experienced increased bradycardia, skin conductance, and potentiation of the startle reflex — all indicative of augmentation of attentive freezing. However, participants who were exposed to avoidable threat turned their attention to response preparation. These findings suggest that defensive behavior is dynamically organized and depends on threat imminence and behavioral repertoire.

[Is She Angry? \(Sexually Desirable\) Women “See” Anger on Female Faces](#)

Jaimie Arona Krems, Steven L. Neuberg, Gabrielle Filip-Crawford, and Douglas T. Kenrick

Women often conceal their anger, leading the researchers to investigate how women anticipate and detect anger-based aggression in other women. In several studies, participants viewed a series of photographs and were told that each picture displayed someone trying to hide a specific emotion, such as sadness. Participants rated each picture on the extent to which they perceived the possible emotions in

the picture. In actuality, all the pictures showed a person displaying a neutral expression. Women inferred more anger from the neutral female faces than did men — a bias that was exaggerated in women who rated themselves as sexually desirable or available. According to the authors, these findings suggest that women may manage the costs of covert intersexual aggression by being biased to see anger in more neutral contexts.