

The Science Of Smiles, Real And Fake

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The notion that you can smile your way to happiness is an enduring one.

Back in the 1800s, Charles Darwin was among the first to [come up with](#) what modern scientists further developed into the “facial feedback hypothesis.” That’s the idea that smiling can make you happier and frowning can make you sadder or angrier — that changing your facial expression can intensify or even transform your mood.

Dick Van Dyke [sang](#) about the phenomenon — and [so did](#) Nat King Cole. And it is still taught in psychology classes today.

But researchers are now finding that this phenomenon may be more complicated than they once thought. A recent [study](#) that reviewed around 50 years of data, including the results of nearly 300 experiments testing the facial feedback theory, has found that if smiling boosts happiness, it’s only by a tiny bit.

That debate over whether the simple act of moving one’s facial muscles into the shape of a smile can make one feel happier has grown especially heated in the past few years. In another study, published in 2016, 17 labs around the globe [failed to replicate](#) a seminal piece of research that had originally demonstrated a link between smiling and emotion.