

What a Bad Decision Looks Like in the Brain

September 02, 2016

The Atlantic:

Humans often make bad decisions. If you like Snickers more than Milky Way, it seems obvious which candy bar you'd pick, given a choice of the two. Traditional economic models follow this logical intuition, suggesting that people assign a value to each choice — say, Snickers: 10, Milky Way: 5 — and select the top scorer. But our decision-making system is subject to glitches.

In one recent experiment, Paul Glimcher, a neuroscientist at New York University, and collaborators asked people to choose among a variety of candy bars, including their favorite — say, a Snickers. If offered a Snickers, a Milky Way and an Almond Joy, participants would always choose the Snickers. But if they were offered 20 candy bars, including a Snickers, the choice became less clear. They would sometimes pick something other than the Snickers, even though it was still their favorite. When Glimcher would remove all the choices except the Snickers and the selected candy, participants would wonder why they hadn't chosen their favorite.

Read the whole story: [The Atlantic](#)