

Without Friends or Family, even Extraordinary Experiences are Disappointing

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Scientific American:

Imagine you are with some friends at a concert, and the bouncer approaches the group and says that, because you are all looking so ravishing tonight, he's been instructed to offer one of you—just one!—a backstage pass to meet the artist. Do you raise your hand? For most people, this would be a no-brainer: who wouldn't leap at the chance to meet a famous singer or secure a long-sought autograph? The results of a recent study, published in *Psychological Science* by Gus Cooney, Daniel Gilbert, and Timothy Wilson, however, suggest taking a second's pause before snapping up that backstage pass.

Cooney, Gilbert, and Wilson suspected that *extraordinary experiences*—like meeting a musical idol—carry hidden costs. They hypothesized that, while such occurrences undoubtedly make us happier in the moment, they also risk separating us from our peers, leading to a sense of isolation so unpleasant as to outweigh whatever enjoyment they initially confer.

To test this idea, the researchers recruited subjects in groups of four and had them watch a video clip. Of the group, three were told that they would watch a clip that previous viewers had given a 2-star rating; the remaining subject, by contrast, was granted the opportunity to view a special 4-star clip. After watching the videos, all four subjects were given some time to talk amongst themselves, and then each reported on their general happiness.

Read the whole story: [*Scientific American*](#)