

# Robert Provine, 1943 – 2019

October 21, 2019



APS Fellow Robert R. Provine, who studied the development and evolutionary basis of laughter, hiccupping, yawning, and other social behaviors, died October 17. Provine was a professor emeritus at the University of Maryland at Baltimore County, where he studied and taught for over 40 years after earning his Ph D in psychology at Washington University in St. Louis in 1971.

In his social neuroscience research, Provine explored how behavior builds bonds in pursuit of universal underlying processes not only through work with humans, but through comparative studies of dozens of species ranging from chimpanzees to penguins, insects, and snakes. His interdisciplinary approach to psychological science contributed significantly to the field's understanding of social contagion, empathy, and prenatal behavior, among many other topics.

Provine authored two books, *Curious Behavior: Yawning, Laughing, Hiccupping, and Beyond* and *Laughter: A Scientific Investigation*, in addition to over 50 book chapters, essays, and research articles.

[Read \*Observer\* coverage of Provine's research on social contagion and laughter here.](#)