

Truthiness Explained

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Truthiness — it's what satirist [Stephen T. Colbert](#) calls “the truth that you feel in your gut, regardless of what the facts support.” Now APS Member Eryn J. Newman, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, is taking a closer look at what really happens when we “think with our guts.”

In [research published in the *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*](#), Newman and her coauthors showed that when a decorative photo appeared alongside statements, such as “The liquid metal inside a thermometer is magnesium,” people were more likely to agree with the statements, even when the statements were false.

Decorative photos accompany statements people must evaluate in real life, as is often the case in news stories, magazine infographics, and advertisements. The researchers believe that their study has important implications for understanding the way people understand facts. For Colbert, of course, the fact that the study included a photo of him was much more important than the findings or methods. Watch his take on Newman's study in this video.