

If the Shoe Fits...



To really get to know a person, you might have to look down at the shoes they're wearing. In a new study, scientists have discovered that people can judge a person's age, agreeableness and income by taking a peek at his or her footwear. Interestingly, study participants could also accurately spot how clingy people were just by glancing at their shoes. "We were interested in how people are able to form quick first impressions," according to Dr. Angela Bahns, an assistant professor at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. For the study, which was published in the August issue of the *Journal of Research and Personality*, 63 college students from the University of Kansas were asked to judge the person's personality, attachment style, political

stance and demographic measures, like age, gender, family and income, based on the picture. The subjects chose a person's correct demographic characteristics at a 90 percent rate. "Age, gender, and income are usually pretty visible" characteristics (from shoes), so it's not surprising that observers picked up on them," states Bahns. Scientists were also able to draw some connections between shoes and the wearer including the fact that high earners wore more expensive shoes and extroverts liked flashy and colorful footwear. People who were more careful wore spotless shoes. Liberals tended to wear more worn-down, less expensive footwear. While aggressive people liked to wear ankle boots, people who were more agreeable liked

to wear practical functional shoes. And, calm people liked to wear footwear that looked uncomfortable. The subjects were also able to pick up on how clingy—a trait known as attachment anxiety—a person was. If a shoe was freshly polished and kept very clean, it alerted the subject that the person might be concerned about their appearance, which was an indicator of high attachment anxiety. Laid back people who had low attachment anxiety were less preoccupied with these things. "Shoes convey a thin but useful slice of information about their wearers," the researchers wrote in the study.

Source: HealthPop by Michelle Castillo. CBS News/June 14, 2012

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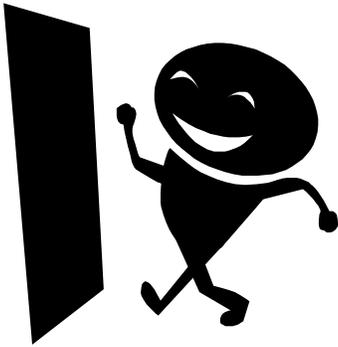
Take the Garbage Out, You'll Feel Better!

A recent study published in *Psychological Science*, described an easy technique to rid oneself of negative thoughts: write them down and throw them away. Participants in the study who wrote down and

then ripped up the paper and threw it away appeared to mentally discard the thoughts as well. That held true for dragging computer document into the recycle bin. "At some level it can sound silly," said Rich-

ard Petty, Ph.D., co-author of the study and a professor at Ohio State University. "But we found that it really works."

Source: Esperanza. Winter 2013 Volume 5 Issue 2. HOPETOCOPE.COM



...it turned out that disclosed sexual minorities had fewer symptoms of depression.



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Coming Out Can Lower Stress, Ease Depression

A study released in the journal of Psychosomatic Medicine by a team of psychologists and neurologists from McGill University and the University of Montreal has found that leading a “double life” can affect physical and mental health. Gays, bisexuals and lesbians who disclosed their sexuality to family, friends and co-workers were psychologically healthier and had lower levels of a key stress-related hormone than those who were still “in the closet.” Lead author of the study, Robert-Paul Juster, a PhD student at the Centre for Studies on Human Stress at the University of Montreal, said “it seems to be that if you’re using more avoidance coping, and wishful thinking, and you aren’t dealing with the problem, it affects health in a negative way.” On the other hand, dealing with the problem by transitioning from “in” to “out” can instill a great sense of accomplishment. “A rebirth happens that makes them feel much more

empowered and conscientious” for having taken what many see as a risky action. That sense of empowerment can have ripple effects benefiting overall health and well-being. Juster’s study was complex. It included 87 people with a mean age of 25,46 of whom were lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and 41 of whom were heterosexual. There were slightly more men than women. All participants completed a battery of psychological testing to gauge traits like depressive symptoms, chronic stress, burnout, anxiety and conscientiousness. Blood samples were taken by the researchers, and the participants collected their own urine and saliva at five time points each day for two consecutive days. These were tested for a series of 21 biomarkers related to immune function, metabolism, inflammation, the cardiovascular system, and the endocrine system. When all the numbers were sifted, and differences like social and eco-

nomic status were controlled for, it turned out that disclosed sexual minorities had fewer symptoms of depression. They also had lower cortisol levels 30 minutes after waking. That’s important because cortisol, a key stress hormone, spikes about half an hour after we wake up, like an ignition spark getting us ready to face the day. But you don’t want too much or too little. Disclosed gay men and lesbians were just right. In fact, disclosed gay men had lower cortisol levels than straight men. Juster isn’t sure why exactly. It could be because the gay men were in better physical shape. It could also be that because heterosexual men have never had to go through the stress of living life undercover, they’re less practiced at coping and so less resilient to life’s stress.

Source: Brian Alexander is co-author of “The Chemistry Between Us: Love, Sex and the Science of Attraction.”

Premarital Resource for Cold Feet

There is a new website designed to help decrease anxiety for those about to exchange vows. The website addresses two areas—engagement anxiety and can-

cellation of a wedding—and provides current research about the prevalence of pre-wedding jitters. While the site does present what some would consider to be reassur-

ing data, it does not discount that there may be legitimate reasons for hesitation. It also provides guidance on the logistics of calling off a wedding. coldfeetquestions.com

Mental Health Eating

The American Academy of Neurology (ANN) has issued the following news release: Hold the Diet Soda? Sweetened Drinks Linked to Depression, Coffee Tied to Lower Risk. “Sweetened beverages, coffee and tea are commonly consumed worldwide and have important physical—and may have important mental—health consequences,” said study author Honglei Chen, MD, PhD, with the National Institutes of Health in Research Triangle Park in North Carolina and a member of the ANN. The study involved 263,925 people between the ages of 50-71 at enrollment. From 1995 to 1996, consumption of drinks such as soda, tea, fruit punch and coffee was evaluated. About 10 years later, re-

searchers asked the participants whether they had been diagnosed with depression since the year 2000. A total of 11,311 depression diagnoses were made. People who drank more than four cans or cups per day of soda were 30 percent more likely to develop depression than those who drank no soda. Those who drank four cans of fruit punch per day were about 38 percent more likely to develop depression than those who did not drink sweetened drinks. People who drank four cups of coffee per day were about 10 percent less likely to develop depression than those who drank no coffee. The risk appeared to be greater for people who drank diet than regular soda, diet than regular fruit punches and

for diet than regular iced tea. “Our research suggests that cutting out or down on sweetened diet drinks or replacing them with unsweetened coffee may naturally help lower your depression risk,” said Chen. “More research is needed to confirm these findings, and people with depression should continue to take depression medications prescribed by their doctors.” The study was supported by the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the National Cancer Institute.

Source: Press Release, January 8, 2013 for The American Academy of Neurology’s 65th Annual Meeting in San Diego, March 16-23, 2013.



“...cutting out or down on sweetened diet drinks or replacing them with unsweetened coffee may naturally help lower your depression risk.”

Pets Help Us Achieve Goals and Reduce Stress

The companionship of our furry friends may seem best suited for leisure time, but new research found that having one’s dog or cat around—or even just in mind—helps people generate more goals, feel more confident about achieving those objectives and handle stress better. In two related experiments published in the July *Journal of*

Research in Personality, participants were assigned to one of three conditions. Either the subject had a pet nearby, simply thought about a pet or, in the control group, had no pet involvement. In the first experiment, participants were asked to come up with a list of goals and assess their confidence in attaining them. Those who had their pet in the room or on their mind identified

more goals and felt more self-confident about them than the control group. In the second experiment, subjects performed a distressing cognitive task while their blood pressure was assessed. Both pet groups had lower blood pressure during the task than the control group. Simply picturing that sweet, slobbery face may be all you need to soothe your mind and boost productivity. *Scientific American*: “*Pets Help Us Achieve Goals and Reduce Stress.*” By: Tori Rodriguez



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Exposure to Light at Night May Cause Depression, Learning Issues

For most of history, humans rose with the sun and slept when it set. Enter Thomas Edison, and with a flick of a switch, night became day, enabling us to work, play and post cat and kit photos on Facebook into the wee hours. However according to a new study led by a John Hopkins biologist, this typical 21st century scenario comes at a serious cost: When people routinely burn the midnight oil, they risk suffering depression and learning issues, and not only because of lack of sleep. The culprit could also be exposure to bright light at night from lamps, computers, and even iPads. "Basically what we found is that chronic exposure to bright light—even the kind of light you experience in your own living room at home or in the workplace at night if you

are a shift worker—elevates levels of a certain stress hormone (cortisol) in the body, which results in depression and lowers cognitive function," said Samer Hattar, a biology professor at John Hopkins Krieger School of Arts and Sciences. But the study involved mice, so why are we talking about humans? Hattar offers some insight: "Mice and humans are actually very much alike in many ways, and one is that they have these ipRGCs in their eyes, which affect them the same way," he said. "In addition, in this study, we make reference to previous studies on humans, which show that light does, indeed, impact the human brain's limbic system. And the same pathways are in place in mice." Hattar and his team exposed laboratory mice to a cycle of light

and darkness. They found that the animals developed depression-like behaviors. In addition, the animals had increased levels of cortisol, which has been linked to numerous previous studies related to learning issues. According to Hattar, the results indicate that humans should be wary of the kind of prolonged, regular exposure to bright light at night that is routine in most of our lives, because it may be having a negative effect on our mood and ability to learn.

For more information about Hattar and his lab: www.bio.jhu.edu/Faculty/Hattar/

