

Volume 1

October, 2023

# Svā



ALLIANCE SCHOOL  
OF LIBERAL ARTS

## WELCOME NOTE

from

Mr. Abhay G. Chebbi, Pro-Chancellor

Meaning 'One's Own' in Sanskrit, I am humbled and excited with the prospect of a bi-monthly newsletter from students of psychology at the Alliance School of Liberal Arts.

'One's Own' is quite an interesting and a broad spectrum to reflect upon. It's the innate ability of being human to question, to ponder, to reflect in seeking who truly after all is 'One's Own'. While at the periphery, we are stuck with labels and identities, it is may be time to definitively reflect upon this fundamental question of what is it that qualifies as 'Mine', and in this pursuit, knowledge, ideas, opinions, and thoughts will be put out in the open. It is therefore critical, that man in this exploration of self, should first move away from the rights and wrongs, judgements, fears, and live to the fullest. Perhaps, in living life to the fullest, based on each individual's disposition, lies one perspective to 'Sva' - One's Own...

I see One's Own as also the choices that each one of us make. It is these choices that make life a unique journey for the self. In every choice lies a decision, and in each decision, lies impact. And, the impact when closely observed, is interconnected, for each one of us belong to one another. So, in this paradox of belongingness, the definitions of One's Own will get redefined, and it is up to us at the end of it, to finally qualify what we take with us, and what we leave behind as 'Our Own'. In creating a legacy, or in leaving behind a better world, where creativity meets excellence; passion surpasses protocols; and choices result in development, perhaps yet another dimension to what can qualify as One's Own lingers..

May Sva become a repository of human exploration into realms where boundaries don't remain, and where the self can rejoice in totality- for we are all complete already, and may be that is the One's Own that we need to reach at...

## FACULTY NOTE

from

Dr. Apoorva Adhikari

Svā

Our own

Hello and welcome to the first edition of Svā!

Svā is a bimonthly newsletter, an initiative of the psychology students of the Alliance School of Liberal Arts. Psychology is one of the most fascinating fields of study. It engages our sense of self and our relationships with others. The psychology division of the Alliance School of Liberal Arts hopes to make the discipline more relevant, relatable, and reachable.

Svā, in Sanskrit, means one's own. The essence encapsulated within the word "Svā" itself is a reflection of the human soul. The premise of Svā, a student-led initiative, is based on self-exploration and discovering the self or the soul in this tumultuous yet beautiful world. This collaborative newsletter project ensures that each individual plays a crucial role in making it truly their own.

Team Svā aims to captivate its readers through compelling written pieces, the intersection of pop culture and psychology, the latest news and updates in the discipline, research insights, interviews, and vibrant illustrations. The content of the newsletter would gauge, interpret, understand, and report current trends in and around the discipline of psychology.

The Alliance School of Liberal Arts is an emerging institution of excellence in research, academics, and skill development. It has always been at the forefront of bringing creativity and innovation from the academic world to the wider community. We offer students an opportunity to engage in critical thinking and creative endeavors. Svā is the outcome of such an opportunity rightly utilized by our very first cohort of psychology students of Alliance School of Liberal Arts. It gives me immense pleasure and pride to welcome you all to read the inaugural issue of this student-led, psychology-based initiative. I congratulate all the students for joining hands and putting together such an insightful and aesthetically pleasing project, which we can proudly call *our own*.



# WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

10th October 2023



Your Pain Is My Pain by Paula Scotter

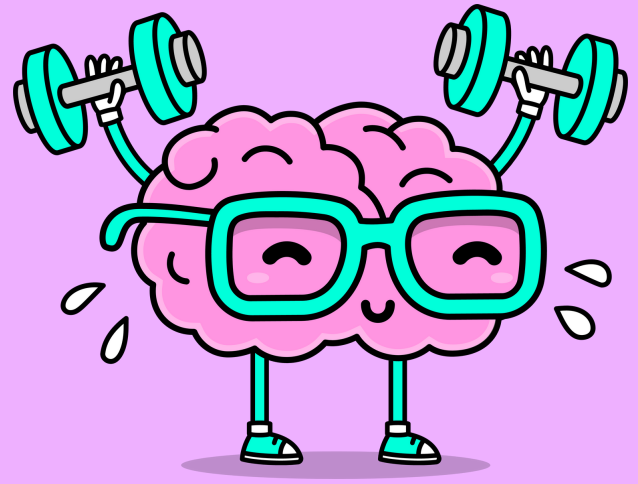
This year's theme for World Mental Health Day is *'Mental health is a universal human right'*.



Mental Well-being

# WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Komal



The world joins hands together to celebrate World Mental Health Day on October 10 every year. This day gives a platform to promote better mental health support and services, raise awareness about mental concerns, and reduce stigma. It acts as a reminder of how crucial mental health is. It was first observed on October 10, 1992, thanks to the proposal of Deputy Secretary General Richard Hunter. "Improving the Quality of Mental Health Services Throughout the World" was chosen as the day's theme in 1994 and is still relevant today. In order to support World Mental Health Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) has developed technical and communication tools for the issue. It aims to de-stigmatize mental health issues, more common than ever in today's fast-paced culture owing to professional demands, social media influences, and daily living conflicts. It emphasizes treating mental health issues delicately, calling for efficient policies and services, supportive research, and education. The initiative aims to enhance public understanding of mental health by encouraging open discussions and facilitating assistance without the fear of judgment. Awareness initiatives not only encourage early intervention by assisting people in identifying the warning signs and symptoms of mental health issues but also signify the need for proper financing, and better access to mental health care through laws that place a priority on mental health, as emphasized by advocacy.

Today, anxiety disorders are more common than depression and are the main contributors to disability globally. Youth mental health problems are on the rise, with 10–20% of children and adolescents globally experiencing mental health illnesses.



Lockdowns, social isolation, and economic uncertainty have all aggravated mental health issues as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, leading to higher rates of anxiety and sadness. Mental Health Day emphasizes self-care and self-compassion, urging individuals to prioritize their mental health and engage in positive activities.

As many are discouraged from seeking therapy due to financial and stigma barriers. Rethinking the importance of mental health and taking necessary measures to bridge this gap, can create a healthier society. Every World Mental Health Day serves as a vital platform to address the challenges, misconceptions, and inequalities surrounding mental health. The day reminds our society that mental health is as important as physical health. Despite advancements, there is still much to be done to guarantee that mental health support is available, inexpensive, and stigma-free everywhere. A person's right to mental health should be recognized.



## Pop-Culture and Psychology

**BARBIE'S  
COGNITIVE  
DISSONANCE**

Riya

Anyone living under a rock too would know of Barbie (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig. It is a fabulous, glorious comedy tale that manages to cover a myriad of notions with ease (and of course glamour). In the span of an hour and fifty-four minutes, it grosses over ideas like imperfections of the world, patriarchy, consumerism, implications of capitalism, feminism, femineity, inclusivity, self-acceptance, limitations caused by stereotypes, and various others.

The film has received appreciation for its examination of cognitive dissonance, a scientific (psychological) phrase coined by the American social psychologist Leon Festinger for the discomfort or tension that results from having opposing beliefs, attitudes, values, or experiences. In this article, I will try (as a psych student and a film lover) to assess this application.

Barbie is a princess (not to be taken literally, Disney fans) in Barbieland. Barbieland is a matriarchal utopia where everyone is attractive, prosperous, and content (and for the first time, everyone stands for the women population). Barbieland is a picture-perfect place where nothing can go wrong. But (the spoiler warning starts here for anyone who has not watched the movie yet), due to certain events, Barbie starts to doubt her own identity and purpose, when she realizes that neither herself nor the outside world as perfect as she had previously believed they were.







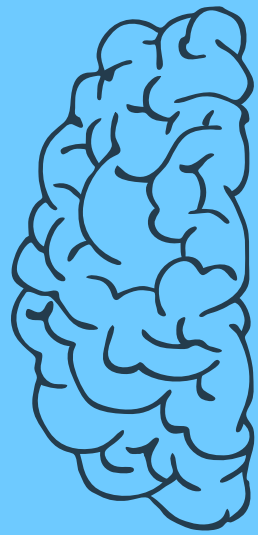
Barbie's cognitive dissonance takes the front seat when she enters the real world. On no longer being the protagonist and having the world revolve around her, she battles to find her place in society. She learns the horrors of sexism and chauvinists, the negative connotation her name carries for some due to the expectations, the body standards set by a doll. Due to her experience in the real world, Barbie is forced to face her own fears and reevaluate her opinion of herself and the world.

Barbie returns to Barbieland for the climax but changed. She discovers that she has flaws and learns to embrace them. She learned that the world is a beautiful place not because (as she previously believed) of the lack of flaws, or despite them but because of them. She is not afraid of them. This examination of cognitive dissonance is significant as it aids in comprehending how occasionally beliefs and experiences can collide.

The movie also explores the development of coping mechanisms for cognitive dissonance. The investigation of cognitive dissonance in the Barbie movie is a crucial lesson that can aid in self-understanding and enable us to lead more genuine and satisfying lives.

What's up in Psychology

# CHATBOTS AND MENTAL HEALTH: REVOLUTIONIZING SUPPORT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

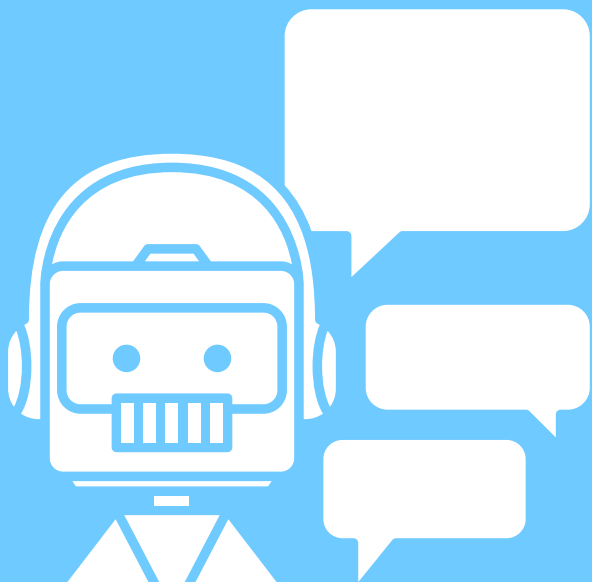


Nehal

In today's digital age, chatbots are emerging as a revolutionary tool in the realm of mental health support. These AI-powered virtual companions offer a new way to provide accessible and immediate assistance to individuals struggling with their mental well-being.

Mental health issues are a growing concern worldwide, and the traditional support systems often face limitations in terms of accessibility and affordability. Many people hesitate to seek help due to the stigma associated with mental health problems. This is where chatbots come into play. Chatbots, through various digital platforms and apps, offer an alternative approach to mental health support. They provide a safe and judgment-free environment for individuals to express their thoughts and emotions. Users can interact with these bots at their convenience, without the fear of social judgment.

These AI-driven chatbots are designed to engage users in conversations that simulate human interaction. They can ask relevant questions, provide coping strategies, and offer resources such as articles, exercises, or relaxation techniques tailored to the user's needs. Some advanced chatbots can even detect changes in a user's emotional state based on their responses and adjust their support accordingly. While chatbots are not a replacement for professional therapy, they serve as valuable complements to traditional mental health services. They can bridge the gap between the initial recognition of mental health issues and seeking professional help. Users can gain insights into their mental well-being, develop coping skills, and access helpful information before deciding to consult a therapist or counselor.



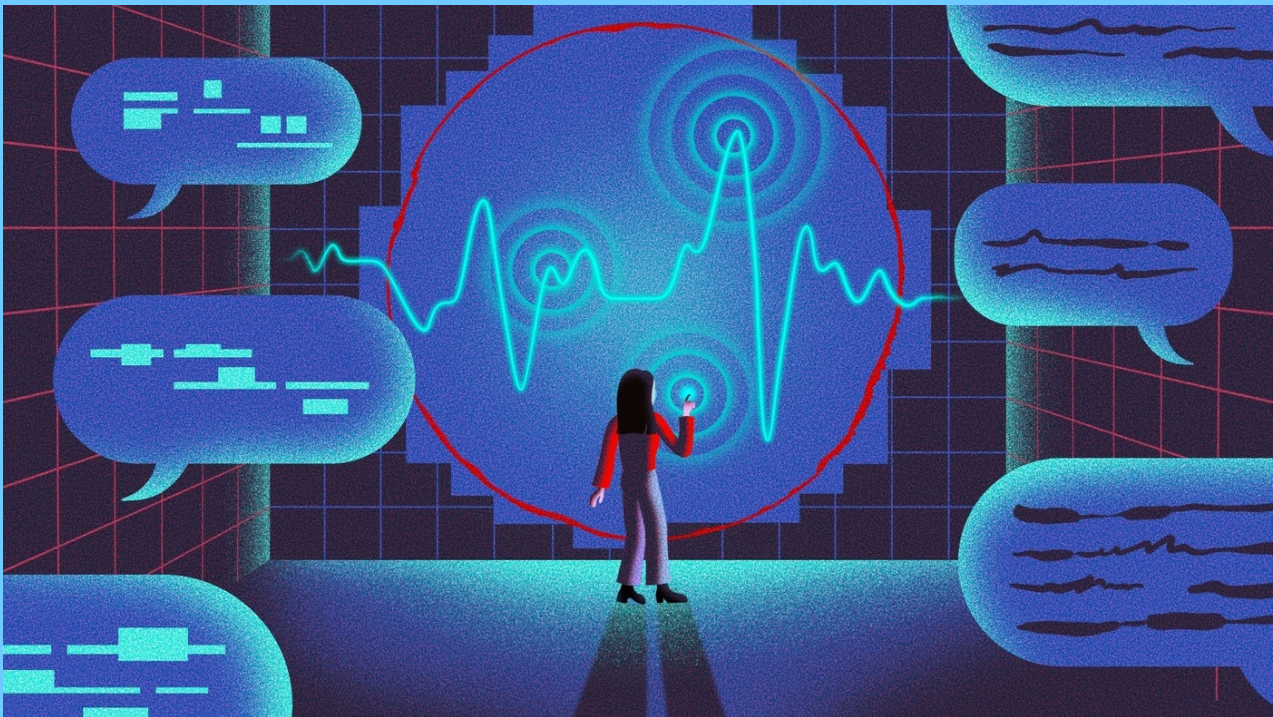
The advantages of chatbots in mental health support are clear. They are available 24/7, ensuring round-the-clock assistance for those in need. They can reach a broader audience, including individuals in remote or underserved areas. Moreover, chatbots can help reduce the burden on mental health professionals by offering preliminary support, allowing therapists to focus on more critical cases. However, the use of chatbots in mental health is not without challenges. Ensuring the privacy and security of user data is paramount, as sensitive information is often shared during these interactions. Ethical concerns





regarding the capabilities of AI to understand and respond to complex emotional states also need careful consideration.

In conclusion, chatbots represent a promising advancement in the field of mental health support. They offer accessible, stigma-free, and immediate assistance to individuals struggling with their mental well-being. While they are not a substitute for traditional therapy, they complement existing services and provide valuable resources to those in need. As technology continues to evolve, the potential for chatbots to positively impact mental health is vast. Continued research, development, and responsible implementation of these tools are crucial to harness their full potential in supporting mental well-being.

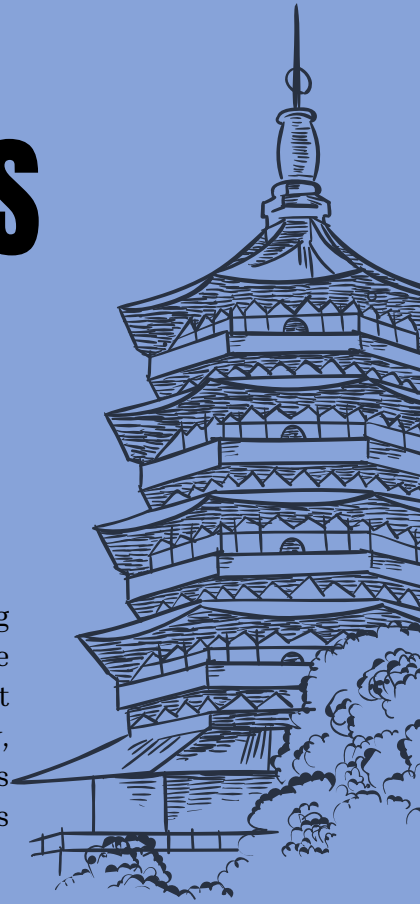


Psychology in Action

# WHY BEAUTY MAKES US HAPPY

Fazeeha

Beauty, an alluring idea, is all around us, in nature, people, and art. It is something that strikes. But what makes something truly beautiful? To what extent are we dictated by our subjective interpretations of the matter? Although it is true that beauty can provide happiness and fulfillment, research in psychology today, suggests that there are several factors that contribute to beauty's appeal-- its universality, emotional resonance, and psychological advantages, that make us happy.



Cross-cultural empirical studies on aesthetics show that there is a universality to aesthetic preferences of formal features like symmetry, proportion, contrast, etc. (Che et al.). The reason for this is the way few elements of visual perception have evolved universally in all humans and animals, serving as a discriminatory tool for the visual processing of objects that are most important for survival i.e., people, prey, and predators (Holló and Novák). Evolutionary biology today indicates that a symmetrical body in complex creatures is an adaptation for controlled movement and for superior internal organ structure. Creatures like stags with symmetrical antlers, have recurring patterns in the animal kingdom that enhance their chances of survival through easy recognition of different members of their species and for further propagation. But more than that, symmetry also contributes to their overall aesthetic appeal (Che et al.).

This is not surprising because asymmetry frequently denotes unfitness, whether from a birth abnormality or lifelong damage (Holló and Novák). Symmetry also affects how people rate other people's attractiveness. Symmetrical faces in both men and women are perceived to be more attractive and play a role in mate selection (Little et al.) They are also positively correlated to fecundity and survival. This means that despite changing beauty standards, an objective factor for aesthetic appreciation, part of our biological make-up, doesn't appear to change.

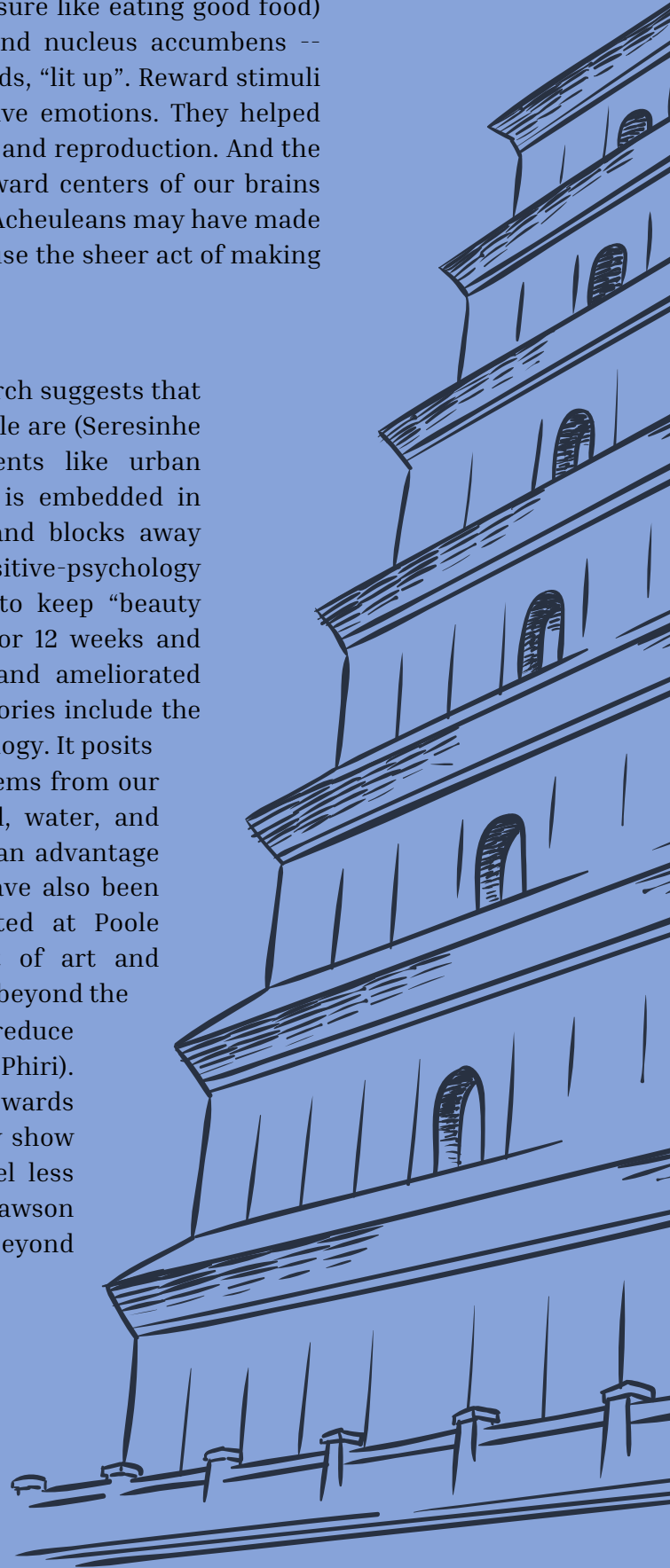
Drawing on Darwin's theory of sexual selection, many have argued that the construction of symmetrical hand axes in the Late Middle Pleistocene particularly in Acheulean tools, had a role in mate access through a display of strength, skill, and potential ally (White and Foulds). Although it is hard to determine precisely why such tools were created and what they reflect about people's cognitive systems, evolutionary psychology suggests that our ancestors recognized symmetry and were drawn to it (White and Foulds). It seems to be the case that our attraction towards beauty is not just because it is well-ordered, but also because it is familiar- the natural habitat we were adapted for.





Aesthetic experiences also arouse specific emotions in perceivers (White and Foulds). Whether the brain has a specialized 'beauty center' or an absolute coordination of special parts, is still debated. However, there is a consensus that aesthetically appealing things generally release positive emotions. A study asked men to rate female faces on an attractive scale through the keypress method and found through fMRI imaging that the pictures activated the reward circuitry (responsible for generating feelings of pleasure like eating good food) in the brain (Wargo). Regions like the amygdala and nucleus accumbens -- previously associated with drug and monetary rewards, "lit up". Reward stimuli in mammals produce dopamine that induces positive emotions. They helped human evolution serving as motivations for survival and reproduction. And the things that help us survive, further activate the reward centers of our brains (White and Foulds) (Wargo). Today, many argue that Acheuleans may have made symmetrical tools not just for survival but also because the sheer act of making them also made them happy.

Beauty in living spaces also makes us happier. Research suggests that the more scenic an environment is, the happier people are (Seresinhe et al.). This holds even for built-up environments like urban landscapes. It is so because beauty is plural and is embedded in different media. It holds our interest for longer and blocks away negative thoughts (Lawson and Phiri). A positive-psychology intervention for instance, asked college students to keep "beauty logs" of their observations of 9 'beautiful things' for 12 weeks and found this exercise showed increased happiness and ameliorated their depressive symptoms (Proyer et al.). Other theories include the 'biophilia hypothesis' popular in evolutionary psychology. It posits that our preference for a connection with nature stems from our evolutionary history of finding resources like food, water, and shelter. Those that spent more time in nature had an advantage over those that didn't. Environmental aesthetics have also been researched in medical settings. A study conducted at Poole Hospital in Brighton UK showed that placement of art and renewed architectural design in hospital wards went beyond the psychological effect in that they also seemed to reduce patients' treatment time by 14% (Lawson and Phiri). Furthermore, the usage of pain medication at these wards was reduced by a surprising 47%. Studies repeatedly show that patients are "psychologically calmer" and "feel less pain" in more aesthetically pleasing surroundings (Lawson and Phiri). This indicates that beauty goes beyond happiness in that it also has a healing effect on us.



Beauty has long been linked to happiness. But for a long time, it was unclear why we gravitate toward beautiful things. Some of these questions have now been addressed through evolutionary biology and psychology. Our universal appeal to forms and shapes with striking symmetry makes them familial. Because of our evolved mechanisms that converge on what constitutes beauty, there exists a common ground for its perception and appreciation. Beauty is also associated with releasing positive emotions and reducing negative ones. One can increase their daily dose of happiness by perceiving the beauty deeply embedded in virtually all media.

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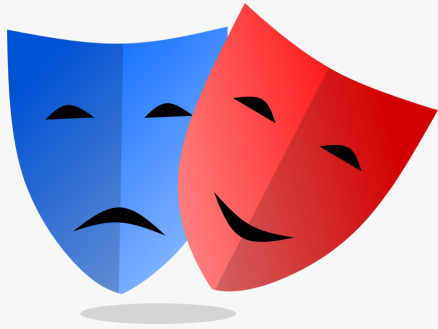




PSYCHOLOGIST OF THE MONTH

**RAYMOND J. DOLAN**

Ashmeet

**Research Focus**

How emotions influence our choices and decision-making processes and understanding the neural mechanisms underlying it.

**Neuroimaging techniques**

He used this to investigate the brain's emotion processing and regulation, shedding light on key neural regions like the amygdala, prefrontal cortex, and insula.

**Applications in marketing**

His work highlights the role of emotions in consumer decision-making, offering insights into how emotions impact purchasing choices, enabling marketers to develop emotion-driven strategies.

**Example**

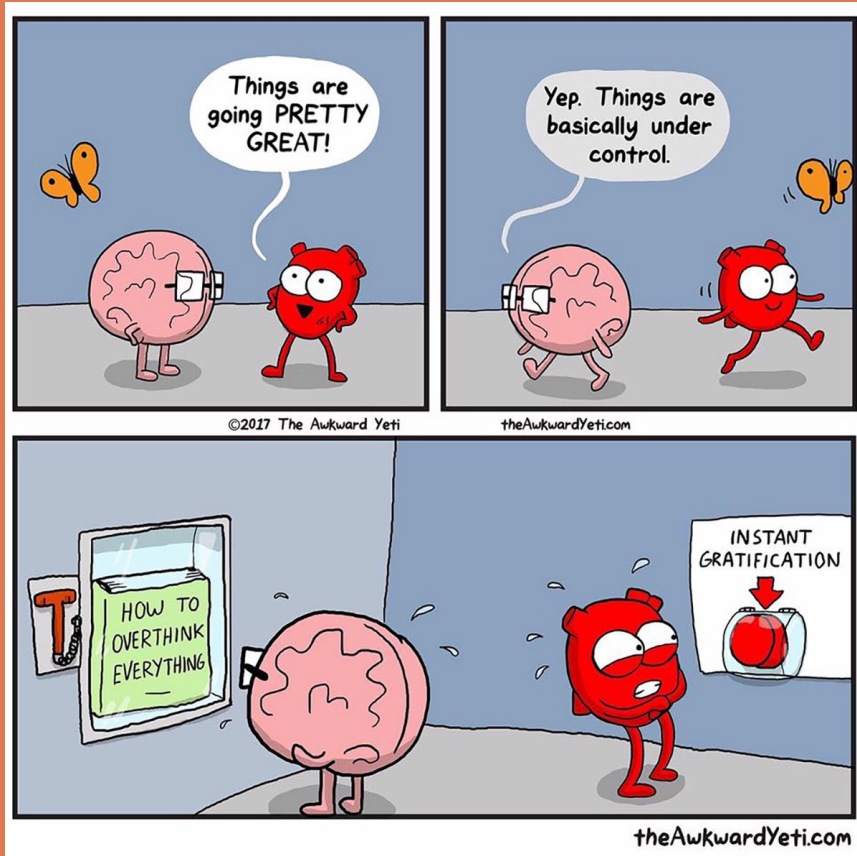
When shopping for a new smartphone, a person's excitement and anticipation can guide them to prioritize features like a vibrant design that matches their emotions.

**Contributions to psychology**

This insight contributes to the field of psychology by providing potential applications in personalized diagnosis and treatment.

# In-psych Jokes

Picked by Ishani





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