

# Money makes the heart grow less fond... but more hardworking

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Money is a necessity: it provides us with material objects that are important for survival and for entertainment, and it is often used as a reward. But recent studies have shown that money is not only a device for gaining wealth, but a factor in personal performance, interpersonal relations and helping behavior, as well.

In a recent set of experiments, psychologists Kathleen D. Vohs of the University of Minnesota, Nicole L. Mead of Florida State University and Miranda R. Goode of the University of British Columbia found that participants' personal performance improved, and interpersonal relationships and sensitivity towards others declined, when they were reminded of money.

To set up one of the experiments, the researchers used four different types of reminders about money. One reminder involved participants playing a game of Monopoly and then being given either four thousand or two hundred dollars worth of play money before moving onto another task. In another, participants were asked to think about life with many or few financial resources. Participants in other experiments were reminded of money via organizing phrases that either were or were not related to money, and, in a final scenario, participants were exposed to computer screensavers of either cash or neutral items.

The results, recently published in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, show remarkably clear conclusions. In each of the conditions, all participants

who were reminded of money demonstrated behaviors consistent with decreased interpersonal skills and increased personal performance.

Specifically, those participants who were exposed to money spent less time helping a person who needed it, sat farther away from another person and preferred solitary activities. In addition, they showed preferences for working alone and asked for help less frequently. On the other hand, participants also revealed an increased desire to take on more work and showed greater persistence in difficult tasks.

The authors argue that, desirable or undesirable, money obviously plays a large role in human behavior and there is not enough experimental research on its psychological influence: "We encourage scientists to turn their attention toward the cognitive, motivational and behavioral consequences of money because the centrality of money in people's lives shows no sign of waning," they concluded.

Source: Association for Psychological Science

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