

Scientists prove even the thought of money spoils enjoyment

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The idea that money does not buy happiness has been around for centuries, but now scientists have proven for the first time that even the thought of money reduces satisfaction in the simple pleasures of life.

In the study led by Jordi Quoidbach of the University of Liege in Belgium, over 350 adult volunteers were recruited. The subjects were university workers with jobs ranging from cleaners to senior positions. They were given questionnaires asking them about how much they earned, how much they saved, their attitudes to [money](#), and measuring their savoring ability. Savoring is feeling positive emotions such as contentment, [gratitude](#), joy, awe or excitement during an experience.

The results showed that the subjects who were wealthier had a self-assessed lower level of savoring ability, and this undermined the positive effects of money on their [happiness](#), although they were overall slightly happier than the less well-off subjects.

The volunteers were then randomly assigned into one of two groups. The subjects in one group were shown a picture of a stack of money as a reminder of wealth, while the second group were shown the same picture but blurred beyond recognition.

After being shown the picture the subjects were given further psychological questionnaires designed to measure their ability to savor pleasant experiences. The results were that if the subjects were shown the clear picture of money first they scored lower in their ability to savor experiences.

In a second test 40 students were given a binder that included a questionnaire asking them about their attitudes to chocolate. The binder also contained a photograph, marked as being part of an unrelated study, of a stack of money or a neutral object. They were then given a piece of chocolate to eat.

Two observers, who had no knowledge of which picture the subject had viewed, used stopwatches to time how long the subject savored the chocolate, and gave them a rating on how much they appeared to be enjoying the chocolate. The results were that subjects who had viewed the picture of money spent an average of 32 seconds savoring the chocolate, while those who had viewed the neutral picture spent 45 seconds on average and appeared to derive more enjoyment from it.

The conclusion the authors reached was that access to money undermines a person's ability to savor the simple pleasures of life, and even looking at a photograph reminding them of wealth could reduce

their satisfaction levels.

The study adds to other research in psychology looking at why, once people have enough to cover their basic needs, having more money has little effect on the enjoyment of life.

The paper is published in the *Psychological Science* journal.

More information: Jordi Quoidbach et al., [Money Giveth, Money Taketh Away](#), *Psychological Science*, Published online before print May 18, 2010, [doi:10.1177/0956797610371963](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610371963)

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