

High blood pressure may lead to missed emotional cues

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Your ability to recognize emotional content in faces and texts is linked to your blood pressure, according to a Clemson University researcher.

A recently published study by Clemson University [psychology professor](#) James A. McCubbin and colleagues has shown that people with higher blood pressure have reduced ability to recognize angry, fearful, sad and [happy faces](#) and text passages.

"It's like living in a world of email without smiley faces," McCubbin said. "We put smiley faces in emails to show when we are just kidding. Otherwise some people may misinterpret our humor and get angry."

Some people have what McCubbin calls "emotional dampening" that may cause them to respond inappropriately to anger or other emotions in others.

"For example, if your work supervisor is angry, you may mistakenly believe that he or she is just kidding," McCubbin said. "This can lead to miscommunication, poor job performance and increased psychosocial distress."

In complex social situations like work settings, people rely on [facial expressions](#) and verbal [emotional cues](#) to interact with others.

"If you have emotional dampening, you may distrust others because you cannot read emotional meaning in their face or their verbal

communications," he said. "You may even take more risks because you cannot fully appraise threats in the environment."

McCubbin said the link between dampening of emotions and blood pressure is believed to be involved in the development of hypertension and risk for [coronary heart disease](#), the biggest killer of both men and women in the U.S. Emotional dampening also may be involved in disorders of [emotion regulation](#), such as bipolar disorders and depression.

His theory of emotional dampening also applies to positive emotions.

"Dampening of positive emotions may rob one of the restorative benefits of close personal relations, vacations and hobbies," he said.

Provided by Clemson University

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