

Mindful individuals less affected by immediate rewards

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Ph.D. candidate Rimma Teper administers a test on a study participant. Credit: Ken Jones

A new study from the University of Toronto Scarborough shows that people who are aware of and their own thoughts and emotions are less affected by positive feedback from others.

The study, authored by UTSC PhD candidate Rimma Teper, finds that individuals high in trait mindfulness show less [neural response](#) to [positive feedback](#) than their less mindful peers.

"These findings suggest that mindful individuals may be less affected by

immediate rewards and fits well with the idea that mindful individuals are typically less impulsive" says Teper.

Trait mindfulness is characterized by an ability to recognize and accept one's thoughts and emotions without judgment. Mindful individuals are much better at letting their feelings and thoughts go rather than getting carried away.

Using electroencephalography (EEG) the brain activity of participants was recorded while they completed a reaction time task on a computer. The authors were interested in participants' [brain activity](#) in response to receiving performance [feedback](#) that was rewarding, neutral or negative in nature. Not only were mindful individuals less responsive to rewarding feedback compared to others, they also showed less difference in their neural response to neutral versus rewarding feedback.

The findings also reflect further clinical research that supports the notion of accepting one's emotions is an important indicator of mental well-being.

"Individuals who are [problem gamblers](#) for instance show more brain reactivity to immediate rewards, because they are typically more impulsive," says Teper.

"Many studies, including our own past work, have shown that people who meditate, and mindful individuals exhibit improved self-control. If mindful individuals are also less affected by immediate rewards, as our study suggests, this may help explain why," says Teper's PhD supervisor and UTSC psychology professor Michael Inzlicht.

The research was published this week in the journal *Emotion*.

Provided by University of Toronto

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