

# Swearing aloud can make you stronger

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In the research, Dr Stephens and his team conducted two experiments. In the first, 29 participants completed a test of anaerobic power—a short, intense period on an exercise bike—after both swearing and not swearing. In the second, 52 participants completed an isometric handgrip test, again after both swearing and not swearing.

The results showed that the [participants](#) produced more power if they had sworn in the first experiment and a stronger handgrip if they had sworn in the second. Dr Stephens said:

"We know from our earlier research that [swearing](#) makes people more able to tolerate pain. A possible reason for this is that it stimulates the body's sympathetic nervous system—that's the system that makes your heart pound when you are in danger.

"If that is the reason, we would expect swearing to make people stronger too—and that is just what we found in these experiments.

"But when we measured [heart rate](#) and some other things you would expect to be affected if the sympathetic nervous system was responsible for this increase in strength, we did not find significant changes.

"So quite why it is that swearing has these effects on strength and [pain tolerance](#) remains to be discovered. We have yet to understand the power of swearing fully."

**More information:** Paper title: 'Effect of swearing on strength and power performance' [www.bps.org.uk/ac2017](http://www.bps.org.uk/ac2017)

Provided by British Psychological Society

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