Swearing can increase self-confidence, physical strength and risky behavior

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The humorous quality of swearing was also found to be an important psychological route for boosting physical strength, akin to "letting go."

The researchers hope that this evidence can benefit society by helping individuals to improve personal performance, for example gaining increased self-confidence by using swear words as preparation for performing in front of large public audiences.

Dr. Stephens said: "Swearing appears to produce a state of 'hot cognitions,' helping us downplay everyday fears and concerns. This can lead to benefits in some situations, such as physical strength, shown by our participants being able to hold the chair push-up for a longer time after swearing.

"We provided evidence of several possible psychological routes by which this may come about, all related to lowering self-control or 'letting go'—but humor, the funny side of swearing, turned out to be the most important of the factors we assessed. Comedians have long known the link between laughter and a well-placed swear word. Our study suggests generating humor may be one element by which swearing can help people in everyday situations, by just 'going for it' a little more."


Provided by Keele University