

MONITOR ON PSYCHOLOGY

In Brief

March 2017

Partial truths

More than 50 percent of business managers admit to "paltering" in negotiations, according to research in the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#). Paltering is making truthful statements that nonetheless deceive the listener by creating a mistaken impression—for example a car seller who says, "this car drives very well, just last week it started up in 5 degree weather," but neglects to mention that the car failed to start two other times in cold weather. In a series of two pilot studies and four experiments with a total of 1,750 participants, the researchers found that palterers believe that their actions are more ethically acceptable than making factually untrue statements, but that people who are deceived by paltering judge it just as harshly as any other deception.

Bashful kids



Shy children can face loneliness, depression and difficulties in school, but a good teacher-child relationship may provide some protection, suggests a study of Chinese schoolchildren in [School Psychology Quarterly](#).

Researchers studied 1,275 third- through seventh-grade students in Shanghai. They looked at self-reports from the children, peer reports, teacher ratings and school records to measure the children's shyness, popularity with peers,

teacher-child relationship quality, and aspects of school adjustment including depression and loneliness. Shy children were less likely to rate highly on peers' popularity ratings, and this association predicted poorer academic achievement, loneliness and depression. But shy children with a better relationship with their teachers had fewer negative outcomes.

Ungrateful



People who value autonomy and independence may be less likely to feel gratitude in response to a gift or favor, which could interfere with their bonds with others, suggests

research in [Cognition and Emotion](#). In a study with more than 500 participants, researchers found that people who self-reported a higher level of autonomy (not wanting to depend on others or be depended on) reported feeling less gratitude after receiving a hypothetical gift from a friend. In a follow-up study, they found that people higher in autonomy focused more on presenting themselves well and less on supporting others in their relationships, and that the lower value they attached to gratitude was linked to their goals in relationships.

Abortion and mental health

Having an abortion does not harm women's mental health, but being denied access to abortion does cause temporary psychological distress, finds a study in [JAMA Psychiatry](#). For five years, researchers followed 956 women who sought abortions at 21 clinics. They then compared the women who had the abortions with those who were denied them because they were past the clinics' gestational limit. Women who had abortions did not experience more depression, anxiety, low self-esteem or life dissatisfaction than those who were denied them. In fact, women who were denied the abortion initially experienced more anxiety and lower self-esteem, but the differences evened out by six months later, regardless of whether the women eventually received an abortion elsewhere or had the baby.

Staying well



Most people will experience a diagnosable mental health disorder at some point in their lives, while those with lifelong mental health are actually a minority of the population. That's the finding of a review in the [Journal of Abnormal Psychology](#) that examined data from national health registries, epidemiological retrospective studies and prospective cohort studies. In follow-up work, the researchers examined data from a cohort study in New Zealand to investigate factors that helped predict enduring mental health. They found that people with lifelong mental health did not tend to be born particularly wealthy or have unusually good physical health or unusually high intelligence. However, they did have certain helpful temperament/personality styles and less family history of mental disorder.

Sleeping in



When high schools start later in the morning, teens get more sleep—a change with potential safety benefits, finds a meta-analysis in the [Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine](#). Researchers analyzed 18 studies and found that when comparing students at schools with different start times, students at schools that started up to an hour later got an average of 19 minutes more sleep per night than their peers at earlier-starting schools. When schools started more than

60 minutes later, students' average sleep duration increased by 53 minutes. Later start times were also associated with fewer car accidents and less daytime sleepiness.

Pilot depression



More than one in 10 airline pilots report symptoms of depression and 4 percent have had recent suicidal thoughts, finds a study in [Environmental Health](#). In an anonymous survey, researchers asked more than 1,848 airline pilots to complete a depression self-assessment. They found that 233 (12.6 percent) met the depression threshold and 75 (4.1 percent) reported suicidal thoughts. Those who used sleep-aid medication and those who had experienced harassment were more likely to be depressed. The researchers suggest that pilot depression is underreported and that many pilots go without treatment because airline rules require them to be "grounded" if they report symptoms and they fear it will hurt their careers.

Alcohol and teens



Heavy drinking during adolescence is associated with changes in brain structure, even in teens without a diagnosed alcohol use disorder, suggests research in [Addiction](#). Researchers used MRI to image the brains of 65 participants—35 heavy drinkers and 27 controls—three times over 10 years. Participants were ages 13 to 18 when the study began, and none had a diagnosed alcohol use disorder. All were academically successful. However, among the heavy-drinking participants, gray matter volume was decreased in the anterior cingulate cortex and in the right insula, suggesting that heavy drinking could disrupt maturation in the teen brain.

Pregnancy brain



Pregnancy can cause long-lasting changes in women's brain structure that may enhance the mothers' parenting skills, suggests a study in [Nature Neuroscience](#). Researchers used MRI to scan the brains of 25 first-time moms before their pregnancies and again soon after they gave birth. In the post-pregnancy scan, the researchers found significant reductions in gray matter volume in cortical regions associated with social cognition. Scans done two years later found the changes remained. The researchers did not find any changes related to the women's memory or other cognitive skills. They hypothesize the brain changes may reflect synaptic

"pruning" that increases the efficiency of mothers' brains at, for example, detecting their baby's emotional state and assessing threats to the baby from others.

Healthy values

Affluent teens fare better when their parents emphasize kindness and other prosocial values at least as much as academic achievement, finds a study in the [*Journal of Youth and Adolescence*](#). Researchers studied 506 teens at a predominantly white, upper-middle-class middle school, asking them about their perceptions of what their parents value most, as well as about parental criticism, psychological symptoms and self-esteem. The researchers also gathered data on grade-point averages and teacher-reported classroom behavior. Children whose parents placed greater or the same level of emphasis on prosocial behavior as on achievement had higher school performance, higher self-esteem and fewer psychological symptoms than children whose parents placed greater emphasis on achievement.

Cause of death

The death rate from drugs, alcohol and mental disorders in the United States nearly tripled from 1980 to 2014, but there were substantial variations by geographic area, finds a county-level analysis of death registration data from the National Vital Statistics System, published in [*JAMA*](#). A total of 3,110 counties or clusters of counties were examined. More than 2,000 counties saw increases of 200 percent or more, and some clusters of counties in Kentucky, West Virginia and Ohio saw increases greater than 1,000 percent, the researchers found.