

The Ongoing Marshmallow Test



Philip K. Peake
Professor of Psychology

CURRENT RESEARCH

How the ability to wait for rewards at a young age is connected to outcomes later in life

The scene is familiar: a child is given a marshmallow, and a choice to eat it immediately or wait approximately 15 minutes to earn an extra marshmallow. Some children, though struggling to resist, successfully wait to claim their reward until the tester returns, while others surrender to temptation and gulp down the marshmallow. This was the famous Marshmallow Test, conducted at Stanford Bing Nursery School back in the late 1960s and early 1970s by psychologist Walter Mischel, to study self-control and delayed gratification in preschool children. Dr. Philip Peake, Professor of Psychology at Smith College, continues this work on preschool waiting by following the cohort of 550 children who participated in these studies, now approaching 50 years of age. The long-term linkages demonstrate that children who were able to wait and exercise self-control yielded positive later life outcomes. Currently, Dr. Peake and his colleagues examine different life trajectories and explore the strategies people use in order to deal with waiting situations. The interventions they develop may help children improve their ability to wait and thus propel them to live successful lives.

As a doctoral student working with Dr. Mischel a decade after the original Marshmallow Experiment was conducted, Dr. Peake organized the first longitudinal assessments of the participants in the early 1980's and then again in the mid-1990's. Since then, this pioneering investigation has grown to include interdisciplinary collaborations with cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, economists and health researchers all attempting to understand the components of self control. This effort has been guided by Dr. Mischel, Dr. Peake, Dr. Yuichi Shoda at...

AFFILIATION



Smith College

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in Psychology 1982, Stanford University

RESEARCH AREAS

Humanities, Psychology, Neurological / Cognitive

FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions support Dr. Philip Peake and his colleagues as they identify the life outcomes that are connected to preschool waiting. Donations will help fund \$60K-100K/year required to support personnel, tracking, data maintenance, and analysis. Larger donations will allow expansion of cost intensive procedures (e.g., fMRI brain imaging), and allow travels for individual interviews with participants. Partner with Dr. Peake and this team to uncover the mysteries of self-control!

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