

Module 10: Social Psychology



Topic 3 Content: Aggression

Introduction

Aggression

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Click the **NEXT** button to examine types of aggression, and factors that influence aggression.



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Impulsive Aggression

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Instrumental Aggression

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Instrumental aggression is a planned and harmful behavior that leads to a larger goal. For example, a politician may create a slanderous advertisement about an opposing politician. It still constitutes instrumental aggression even if someone else actually makes the advertisement.



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Genetic Factors Influencing Aggression

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Although evidence exists that there is a genetic predisposition toward aggression, no one gene corresponds to heightened aggression. For example, identical twins are more likely to report sharing a “short temper” than fraternal twins.



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Biochemical Factors Influencing Aggression

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A person's level of testosterone is a strong predictor of aggression, crime, and violence. In addition, a lack of certain neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, correlates with increased frustration and aggression. Alcohol also plays a role in aggressive behavior, crimes, and domestic abuse.



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Neural Factors Influencing Aggression

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Damage to certain regions of the brain can make aggressive behaviors more or less likely. For example, damage to the amygdala might heighten aggression, and damage to the frontal lobe might lower one's ability to control aggressive impulses.



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Environmental Factors Influencing Aggression

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Changes in one's environment or recent negative events can increase arousal and cause aggression. Working in hotter temperatures, or being provoked or annoyed can spark an aggressive response, called the **frustration-aggression principle**.



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Learning and Modeling

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Aggressive behaviors can be learned through reinforcement, like if classmates laugh when a bully taunts someone, opposed to classmates frowning or walking away. Social learning and observation can also increase the chances of aggressive behavior, like when children start punching or kicking after watching a cartoon about superheroes.



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