

Mind

Dishabituation: How to trick your brain to find more joy in life

Learning a psychological trick to overcome your brain's tendency to stop noticing things could help you love your old clothes, notice the effects of climate change and fix gender biases, says neuroscientist Tali Sharot

By [Alison Flood](#)

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IMAGINE jumping into a swimming pool. It's cold, right? But then, a few minutes later, you are used to the temperature. Or how about walking into a room filled with cigarette smoke. It stinks, but give it a while and you don't notice it any more.

This is habituation – the brain's ability to stop paying attention to certain things. It doesn't only apply to sensory perceptions. It is also why new clothes or a new home lose their shine over time. And it doesn't only apply to good things: it can explain why

people stay in bad relationships, why we don't raise an eyebrow at the fact that most CEOs are male and why we stop noticing the smog engulfing our cities.

Habituation is a fundamental neurological process vital to our evolution, helping us to quickly adapt to our environments so we are ready for the stuff that is new and potentially beneficial or the hazards that may be threatening. But there are benefits to seeing the things we are used to in a fresh light or – as [Tali Sharot](#) 
https://affectivebrain.com/?page_id=161 and [Cass R. Sunstein](#) 
<https://hls.harvard.edu/faculty/cass-r-sunstein/> put it in their book *Look Again: The power of noticing what was always there* – “dishabituating”.

Sharot, a professor of cognitive neuroscience at University College London, tells *New Scientist* why learning how to dishabituate can improve our happiness, increase our