

## Conference

# Pleasure's Power: Harnessing Focus with Mindfulness

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The ability to remain focused on a task is vital for any coherent cognitive function, especially when there might be potential interference from irrelevant distractors. However, people are often distracted by task-irrelevant stimuli.

Daily life provides numerous examples: a fly hovering about might distract you while reading this proposal, just as an attractive or graphic billboard can dangerously distract a driver. Laboratory research on how to prevent distraction is theoretical and practical in importance.

In the present talk, I will discuss some experiments from my lab on how irrelevant emotional information (positive vs. negative) modulates our performance on visual search, response inhibition, etc. We found that images with pleasure have a unique capacity to distract us and reduce our cognitive control. However, we also found that mindfulness meditation may reduce distraction from pleasure. These results have theoretical implications for understanding the nature of emotions and their interaction with cognitive control functions. It also has a clinical impact on understanding mechanisms underlying addiction behaviour (social media, obesity, video games, etc.).

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