Science & Technology

Study Hall: Summer 2016

Research Briefs

By
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You’re not the boss of me

People tend to seek promotions at work not because they want to ascend the hierarchy but because they crave autonomy, according to researchers from Columbia, the University of Cologne, and the University of Groningen. The researchers, led by Columbia business professor Adam Galinsky, found that people are three times more likely to accept a new job in which they are promised greater freedom than a similar job in which they are promised increased authority over subordinates.

The science of happiness

Denmark is the world’s happiest country, according to the United Nations’ 2016 World Happiness Report, co-edited by Columbia economist Jeffrey Sachs. The US came in thirteenth, behind Austria and just ahead of Costa Rica. First published in 2012, the report ranks 156 countries, weighing factors such as life expectancy, mental health, per capita gross domestic product, and level of corruption.

Even geniuses have bad days

Learning about the struggles of famous scientists can inspire students to perform better in science classes. Columbia psychologists led by Xiaodong Lin-Siegler divided high-school students into two groups, one of which learned about the personal and

professional hardships of scientists like Albert Einstein and Marie Curie as well as their successes, and one of which learned about the successes alone. The results showed that after six weeks, students who had learned about the scientists' setbacks were earning better grades than those who had learned only of their triumphs.

High-prescribing docs brush off warnings

Telling doctors that they overprescribe opioids doesn't make them stop, according to a new study by Mailman School public-health expert Adam Sacarny '07CC and colleagues from MIT and the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team. The researchers used Medicare data to identify health-care providers who prescribed drugs like Vicodin and OxyContin at higher rates than their peers. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services then sent letters to the physicians informing them of their high prescription rates, but subsequent Medicare reports showed that the intervention had no impact on prescribing patterns.

Playing for grades

A new study suggests that playing video games may be good for kids' cognitive and social skills. In a study of 3,195 European children aged six to eleven, researchers from Columbia's Mailman School and Paris Descartes University found that children who played video games more than five hours per week were twice as likely to do well in school compared to those who infrequently played video games.

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