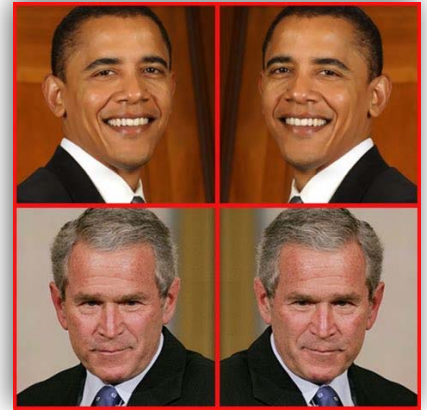


Five Minutes to Thrive: 10-14 Dec 18

Mere Exposure

The concept of **mere-exposure** is simple, but its impacts are ubiquitous and profound. Mere-exposure is the phenomenon whereby people develop preferences for things *merely* because they are familiar with them. Researchers have successfully demonstrated this effect with all kinds of things – from preferences for nonsense words, paintings, and faces, to geometric figures, and even sounds. Smartphone manufacturers made rapid changes in their camera software when sales dipped due to complaints from selfie takers who didn't like seeing reversed images of themselves – we prefer images of ourselves that look like the one we see in the mirror.

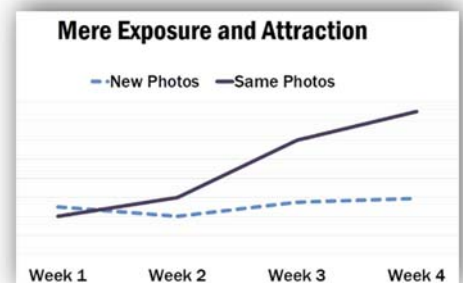
A basic understanding of the mere-exposure principle applied to a variety of contexts helps us to be savvier, less exploitable agents.



Be wary of others' intentions. Advertisers, political strategists, recruiters, and our targeteers understand the principle of mere-exposure – employing it with great effect in both commerce, election campaigns, and on the battlefield, shaping attitudes toward products, people, and institutions. The trick is finding the balance between sufficient favorable exposure and over-saturation.

Be a savvy consumer. Many people repeatedly consume products and services, from smartphones to coffee, *merely* because they are familiar with them. Admittedly, I buy more expensive coffee products from a well-known coffee conglomerate simply because I like how my barista says my name and winks at me when handing me my drinks – not because less expensive and equally tasty alternatives aren't readily available.

When it comes to love, make your own luck. Studies of interpersonal attraction show that the more you see people, the more attractive they become. Mere physical proximity between persons is a strong predictor of likeability and romantic interest. Though we generally frown on stalking, your chances of attracting a particular mate improve dramatically the more you run into each other – it worked for my wife!



Be open to change. When cherished attitudes and beliefs collide dramatically with new information and experiences, opportunities for change abound. When your daughter announces her engagement to an attractive and charming individual with ridiculous political views– you learn quickly to focus on the positives because you love your daughter and aren't eager to be estranged from future grandchildren. Before you know it, you feel proud of yourself for finding common ground and encouraged by the fact that you are capable of accepting and even loving less sentient beings.

Teamwork makes the dream work. For many, the military provides opportunities to unite in a common cause with people from vastly different backgrounds and experiences, and our teams are arguably better for it. Veterans share a bond that favorably disposes them toward each other for years after their service. Taking time to know your co-workers, and learning to manage differences in healthy and productive ways not only impacts team performance, but pays dividends in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and quality of life for years to come.

Have a comment you want to share? Drop us a line, we'd love to hear from you!

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