

43rd APS Annual Conference



Media Release

23 – 27 September 2008: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart Tasmania

Psychology conference key media opportunities

Men's self-esteem, romantic relationship education, online therapy and environmental psychology – these are some of the research topics being explored at this week's Australian Psychological Society annual conference in Hobart.

Study finds romantic relationships boost men's self-esteem

A preliminary study of 300 Australians aged 18 to 25 has found men who are in romantic relationships have higher levels of self-esteem than those without a partner.

The quantitative study into opposite-sex friendships also found having a romantic partner is more important for boosting self-esteem in men than women.

Study author, Simon Rice, said romantic relationships have a positive impact on men's feelings of self-worth.

"We know that men tend to feel better about themselves when their place in the social hierarchy is bolstered. Men are naturally more competitive and being in a relationship comes with a sense of social achievement," said Mr Rice.

"A romantic partnership for men may also fulfill unmet intimacy needs. Women tend to provide more encouragement and emotional validation in their relationships."

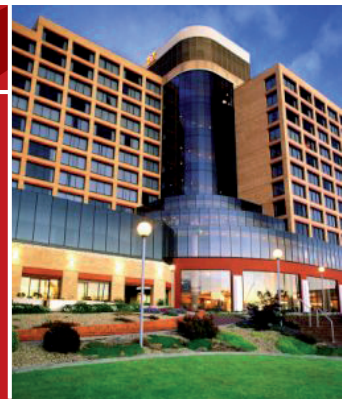
Online therapy beneficial in treating mental health problems

Online therapy can be just as effective as face-to-face treatment for treating mental health problems such as social phobia, panic disorder and depression, and takes a third of the therapist's time, a new clinical trial has found.

Dr Nickolai Titov, clinical psychologist and University of New South Wales senior lecturer, said online therapy is effective for treating some mental health conditions, because of its convenience, anonymity and flexibility.

"Results from recent trials indicate that Internet programs, supplemented with three hours or less of email or telephone contact with a psychologist, can result in clinically significant improvements in patients with depression, social phobia and panic disorder," Dr Titov said.

"Online therapy also allows us to reach more Australians living with mental illness, particularly those who are living in remote and regional areas, who may have limited access to psychologists," Dr Titov said.



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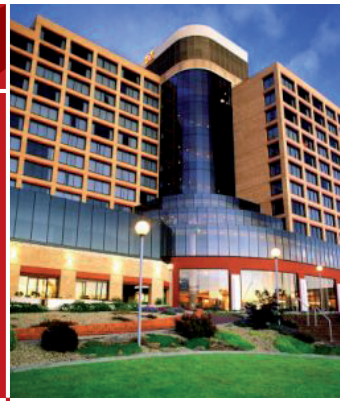
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Other psychology conference media opportunities

Psychology of climate change: denial and responsibility

Eighty per cent of people across the world are concerned about climate change, but most see it as 'someone else's problem' and are reluctant to take practical action at a local level, according to an international environmental psychologist.

Professor David Uzzell from the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom will present the findings in his keynote address at the Australian Psychological Society's 43rd annual conference in Hobart this week.

"People consider environmental problems at the global level more serious than at local levels, yet they feel powerless to influence or act on them," said Professor Uzzell.

"Psychologists have an important role to play in undertaking research to help slow down global warming and assist individuals and communities adapt to a changing environment and climate. It's not just about changing people's behaviour. We need to encourage public thinking to create a mobilising sense of urgency, not a paralysing one."

Humans really are like monkeys, research shows

The human brain is more similar to the brains of monkeys than previously thought, according to a leading psychology and medical science expert.

Professor George Paxinos from the Prince of Wales Medical Research Institute and The University of New South Wales will present the findings in his keynote address at the Australian Psychological Society's 43rd annual conference, 'Psychology Leading Change' in Hobart this week.

"Our research has identified 87 previously unknown brain regions in humans and these are also found in monkeys. Scientists are now able to pin-point the exact region of the brain responsible for memory, speech, smell, sadness and pain," said Professor Paxinos.

"Understanding the functions, relationships and similarities between the brains of humans and monkeys means we are able to better understand the causes of mental illness and other brain diseases."

Professor Paxinos has been creating 'brain atlases' for 26 years and has authored 35 books. His first book, 'The Rat Brain in Stereotaxic Coordinates,' is the most cited Australian scientific publication.

<more>

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Practice makes perfect for long-lasting relationships

The strongest predictors for maintaining a healthy, long-lasting relationship are shared, realistic expectations, effective communication, working at the relationship as a life priority, and the ability to manage stress, according to a leading psychologist.

Professor Kim Halford from Griffith University will present the findings in his keynote address at the Australian Psychological Society's 43rd annual conference, 'Psychology Leading Change,' in Hobart this week.

"Lasting and rewarding relationships require hard work, commitment and dedication. Our research tells us that couples who have shared and realistic expectations experience higher relationship satisfaction," said Professor Kim Halford from Griffith University.

"There are many ways for couples to learn key skills that help maintain high levels of relationship satisfaction and prevent future difficulties. Face-to-face workshops, self-directed learning programs, and web-based relationship assessment and learning programs have each been shown to help couples learn these key skills."

Parenting styles affect childhood development

Healthy family relationships and positive parenting can reduce the risk of future long-term unemployment and alcoholism, according to an international study.

Professor Lea Pulkkinen from the University of Jyväskylä in Finland will present her findings in her keynote address at the Australian Psychological Society's 43rd annual conference, 'Psychology Leading Change,' in Hobart this week.

The 40-year longitudinal study followed 196 boys and 173 girls, from ages eight to 42.

"Parents can encourage healthy development by creating a safe atmosphere for their children, taking an interest in their activities, being trusting, warm, and considerate of their opinions. Respecting children as individuals, avoiding unjust discipline and physical punishment, are also very important," she said.

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To coordinate an interview, please contact Elaine Grant on: 0412 683 068.