

the psychologist A to Z

Y ...is for Yerkes–Dodson law



Suggested by
Nick Hoyle,
Open University
psychology student
and HCPC-
registered Operating
Department

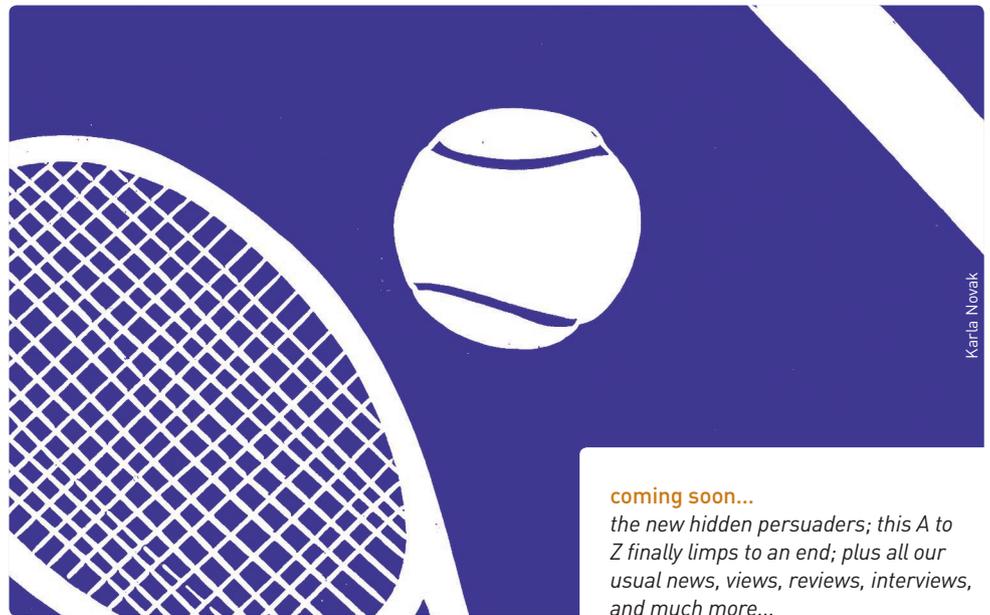
Practitioner @NickFromDudley

'According to the Yerkes–Dodson law, optimal/peak performance occurs at an intermediate level of arousal. Too little or too much pressure, and performance declines. Think of the coolness of Roger Federer, who seems to know where his optimal level is. It's an interesting model and one I plan to explore further both within sport and the workplace.'

In his 2016 British Academy/British Psychological Society lecture, Ian Robertson spoke of the 'sweet spot' in terms of the Yerkes–Dodson law: 'thoughts, perceptions, actions, are beautifully represented because there's just the right amount of background noise.'

If you're low on the curve, stress or challenge pushes you into the sweet spot. If you're already there, it's only downhill.

Writing in June 2015,
leading neurosurgeon



coming soon...

the new hidden persuaders; this A to Z finally limps to an end; plus all our usual news, views, reviews, interviews, and much more...

A to Z

Tweet your suggestions for any letter to @psychmag using the hashtag #PsychAtoZ or email the editor on jon.sutton@bps.org.uk

Entries so far are collated at <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/psychology-z>

contribute...

reach 50,000 colleagues, with something to suit all. See www.thepsychologist.org.uk/contribute or talk to the editor, Dr Jon Sutton, jon.sutton@bps.org.uk, +44 116 252 9573

comment...

email the editor, the Leicester office, or tweet @psychmag

to advertise...

reach a large and professional audience at bargain rates: see details on inside front cover

Henry Marsh said: 'Can one teach wisdom, empathy and judgement? Can you force surgeons to look down? Will they just develop severe vertigo and learn nothing (just as the dancing mice in the Yerkes–Dodson experiments failed to learn if the electric shock was very strong)?'

In our May 2014 feature on 'psychologists who rock', Ian Deary – front man with 'Dancing Mice (coincidentally!)' – warned of the dangers of over-arousal: 'In the band we all notice that, when we start recording, even things that we have played flawlessly several times will suddenly go awry: the red light pushes us to the wrong part of the Yerkes–Dodson curve.'

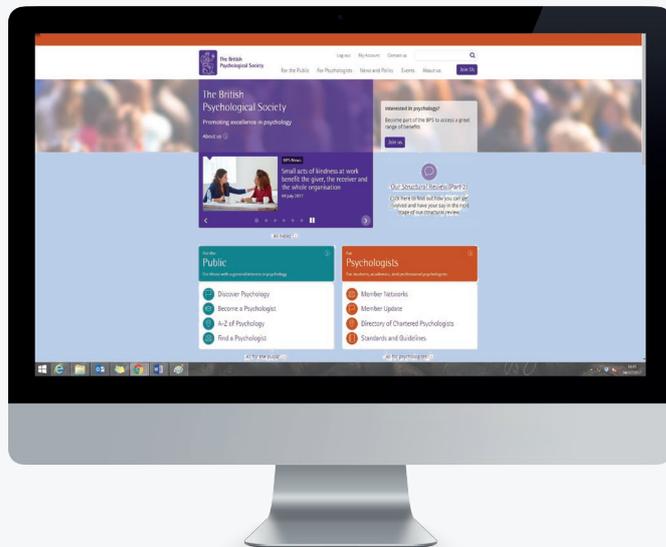
Search for more on this topic

and any other via www.bps.org.uk/thepsychologist and www.bps.org.uk/digest



The British
Psychological Society
Promoting excellence in psychology

Find out more online at www.bps.org.uk



society notices

- Division of Clinical Psychology Annual Conference**
Manchester, 23–24 January 2019 *See p.8*
- BPS Annual Conference** Harrogate, 1–2 May 2019
See p.22
- Division of Educational & Child Psychology day conference 'Educational Psychology Services involvement in delivering therapeutic interventions'**
London, 8 February 2019 *See p.28*
- CPD workshops 2019** *See p.36*
- BPS conferences and events** *See p.43*
- Scottish Division of Educational Psychology/Division of Educational & Child Psychology joint day conference 'Wellbeing: Crossing Borders: The work of educational psychologists in the UK'** Glasgow, 22 March *See p.47*
- Special Group in Coaching Psychology CPD programme 2019** *See p.65*
- Early Career Conference Bursary Scheme** *See p.79*

society vacancies

- Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing of Children and Young People Expert Reference Group**
– Members *See p.16*
- Memory Based Evidence Task and Finish Group**
– Chair and Members *See p.41*
- Public Policy Board**
– Chair *See p.51*
- Education and Training Board**
– Chair *See p.51*

President

Professor Kate Bullen

President Elect

David Murphy

Vice President

Nicola Gale

Honorary General Secretary

Dr Carole Allan

Honorary Treasurer

Professor Ray Miller

Chair, Membership and Standards Board

Dr Mark Forshaw

Chair, Education and Public Engagement Board

Professor Carol McGuinness

Chair, Research Board

Professor Daryl O'Connor

Chair, Professional Practice Board

Alison Clarke

Chief Executive Sarb Bajwa

Director of Policy Kathryn Scott

Director of Corporate Services

Mike Laffan

Director of Member Services

Annjanette Wells (Acting)

Director of Communications

Rachel Dufton (Interim)

The Society has offices in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and London, as well as the main office in Leicester. All enquiries should be addressed to the Leicester office (see inside front cover for address).

The British Psychological Society was founded in 1901, and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1965. Its object is 'to promote the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of Members of the Society by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge'.

Extract from The Charter