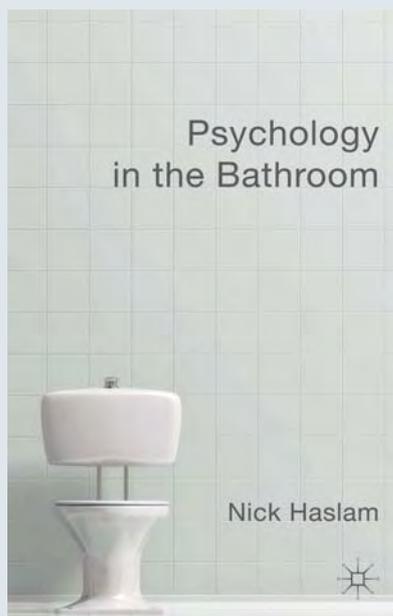


# Lifting the lid on the psychology of the bathroom

Why is it that the psychological study of eating and sex enjoy so much attention from contemporary psychologists and the general public, while a no-less universal feature of human experience is largely ignored?



Psychology in the Bathroom  
Nick Haslam

While excretion famously captured the interest of the great psychoanalysts, today it suffers from an 'embarrassed disregard', according to University of Melbourne psychologist Nick Haslam. This is unfortunate since, as Haslam points out in his new book *Psychology in the Bathroom*, the current 'neglect of excretion cannot be excused by a lack of real world relevance or need'. For instance, sexual and eating disorders rightly attract the attention of psychologists, and even enjoy their own dedicated scientific journals. Yet even though disorders that involve lower gastrointestinal or urinary symptoms may be vastly more common, and extremely distressing, their significant psychological components are these days generally overlooked. Moreover, the psychology of excretion offers an unusual and compelling window to the human psyche, as Haslam unerringly demonstrates in this glorious and witty book.

With a scope far grander than its subject matter, this meticulously researched and wide-ranging study of excretion and related phenomena, both typical and pathological, integrates fascinating and often surprising insights from intersections with psychoanalytic theory, clinical research, the study of emotion, the intimacy of body and mind, language, gender, and more. The first half of the book travels from bowel to bladder. Here, Haslam explores such topics as the psychological components of irritable bowel syndrome and the psychological complexities and vulnerabilities of urination, to 'the surprisingly rich psychology of flatulence' (a claim that surely requires no further vindication than the existence of a section entitled 'Defensive flatulence').

The second half tackles topics indirectly associated with elimination. These latter chapters begin by taking the reader through the history and evidence of the psychoanalytic notion of the 'anal character', and its reappearance (in new guises) in modern personality research. Haslam then turns to the role of excretion in language and the extensive study of bathroom graffiti (or 'latrinalia'). Many of the chapters yield insights into gendered behaviours – from males' greater relishing of the joys of flatulence, to the greater use and offensiveness of taboo animal terms targeted at women, to what is scribbled on the walls of female versus male public toilets. However, the final chapter addresses face-on one 'small but enduring' battle in the gender wars – whether or not he should put down the seat after urination. The conclusion Haslam draws in this chapter is, to this reader, a satisfying one.

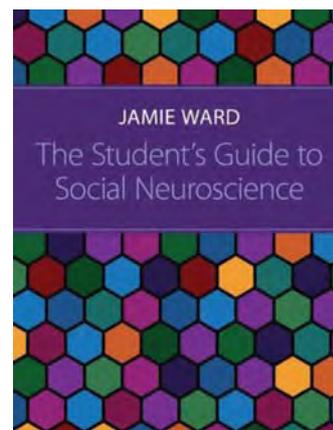
Haslam is a very highly esteemed academic psychologist whose background and research straddles the fields of social psychology, clinical psychology and personality theory, and these combined fields of expertise are in evidence on every page. More surprising, perhaps, is the remarkable quality of the writing. As Haslam himself notes, excretion and associated phenomena can trigger emotions that range from crass humour to intense shame and misery. Navigating around these different evocations is no easy task, but the tone is pitch-perfect throughout.

Beautifully written with unflinching clarity, sensitivity and truly enviable humour, this important, captivating and charming exploration of the psychology of a universal phenomenon is a must-read for researchers, clinicians and general readers alike.

| Palgrave Macmillan; June 2012; Hb £55.00

Reviewed by Cordelia Fine who is an author and Associate Professor, Centre for Ethical Leadership, Melbourne Business School

More 'psychology in the bathroom' next month...



## A first for social neuroscience

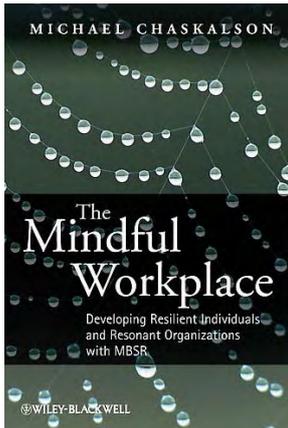
The Student's Guide to Social Neuroscience  
Jamie Ward

The Student's Guide to Social Neuroscience is one of the first books of its kind to explore the brain mechanisms involved in creating and interacting with our social environment, such as relationship formation, morality development, and face perception, to name a few. This book is timely given the recent rapid growth of social networking sites, whereby understanding the neural underpinnings of our complex social world is becoming increasingly more important.

This book differs from its predecessors in that it offers a fully interactive e-textbook with online resources that can be read on mobile devices. It is also a good companion to Ward's popular *A Student's Guide to Cognitive Neuroscience*; both are recommended as introductory texts for undergraduate and postgraduate students because of their easy to read style, accompanying colour illustrations, definitions, as well as chapter summaries. Essay questions and further reading also provide additional resources for lecturers in the field (or related disciplines) to guide modules on social neuroscience, or classes focusing on particular topics, such as emotion, or theory of mind.

| Psychology Press; 2012; Pb £34.95

Reviewed by Karima Susi who is a PhD Student at Nottingham Trent University



### Pay attention!

The Mindful Workplace  
Michael Chaskalson

Resilience is a hot topic in organisations – how do employees remain productive in a world of constant change and 24/7 connectivity? Chaskalson, a professional mindfulness coach, presents the business case for mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) training.

Mindfulness training – learning to pay attention to one's own and others' thoughts and feelings – reduces stress symptoms. It increases well-being, emotional intelligence, job satisfaction and performance. Mindful leaders can create 'resonant organisations', in which people are 'cooperative and supportive'.

Based on Kabat-Zinn's original eight-week mindfulness course, Chaskalson provides a training plan, which is easily adjusted to organisational and individual needs. His style is engaging and quickly draws the reader in. He outlines classic mindfulness research, but goes beyond its traditional clinical application showing how employees at all levels will benefit. Skilfully integrated neuroscience research aims to convince the sceptical reader.

Although it isn't quite clear who this book is aimed at, simple exercises at the end of each chapter and numerous workplace examples make this a fascinating, highly relevant read for any employee.

Wiley-Blackwell, 2011; Pb £29.99  
Reviewed by Fran Wallott who is studying part-time for an MSc Occupational Psychology at Birkbeck, University of London



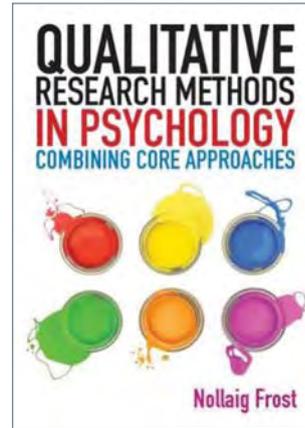
### Beyond trauma

5 Survivors: Personal Stories of Healing from PTSD and Traumatic Events  
Tracy Stecker

Be warned! This is not an easy book to read. Five, first-person accounts from survivors of PTSD are described. These include a victim of sexual abuse, a survivor of Hurricane Katrina and three war veterans. Although harrowing, the accounts give the reader an insight into the development of PTSD symptoms, which are presented in the context of the survivors' life histories. The author, who has worked with veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, weaves in short psychological explanations for the persistence and maintenance of PTSD symptoms to enable the reader to appreciate their saliency.

This is not a book for those looking for specific guidance relating to PTSD models or therapeutic intervention strategies as the author does not advocate any. Instead, these personal accounts allow one to enter the world of PTSD sufferers and get a sense of how symptoms affect their everyday lives and interactions. It is a book that will allow friends and families of PTSD sufferers to gain a greater understanding of their suffering.

Hazelden, 2011; Pb £12.50  
Reviewed by Sarah Saqi-Waseem who is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Barts and the London NHS Trust



### Escaping 'methodolatry'

Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology: Combining Core Approaches  
Nollaig Frost

This book provides an introduction to four widely used qualitative research methods (grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis, discourse analysis and narrative analysis), followed by a detailed discussion of a pluralistic approach to qualitative research. Throughout, the book emphasises the importance of being clear about what it is we want our data to tell us about. It reminds us that research methods are ways of interrogating data, and that they can be flexibly deployed and evolve during the course of the research. It is a welcome challenge to the idea that research methods must reflect ideologies constituting mutually exclusive, competing 'schools'.

The book makes excellent use of questions throughout, both in order to help the reader gain clarity regarding the

ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning different approaches to qualitative research, as well as to encourage reflexivity regarding the process of conducting qualitative research. The brevity of some of the discussions in Part 1 of the book means that as a teaching tool the book would benefit from being used alongside a series of seminars during which some issues could be further discussed and explored.

The discussion of pluralism in Part 2 of the book is detailed and helpful, providing both guidance as to how to work pluralistically as well as offering a welcome argument in favour of loosening the bonds of 'methodolatry' and to allow the research to be driven by questions and curiosity rather than by the researcher's commitment to a particular methodological approach.

McGraw Hill, 2011; Pb £26.99  
Reviewed by Carla Willig who is Professor of Psychology, City University London

just in

Sample titles just in:

- Language Development** Patricia J. Brooks & Vera Kempe
- The Psychology of Politicians** Ashley Weinberg (Ed.)
- Being Human: Psychological and Philosophical Perspectives** Richard Gross
- Psychology's Ghosts: The Crisis in the Profession and the Way Back** Jerome Kagan
- Adieu to God: Why Psychology Leads to Atheism** Mick Power
- Beyond Prejudice: Extending the Social Psychology of Conflict, Inequality and Social Change** John Dixon & Mark Levine (Eds.)

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