

unfamiliar? If we fail to really understand ourselves, is it possible to somehow predict how we or others will behave when “out of our heads”—when we’re really angry, hungry, frightened, or sexually aroused? Is it possible to do something about this?

The answers to these questions are profound, for they indicate that we must be wary of situations in which our Mr. Hyde may take over. When the boss criticizes us publicly, we might be tempted to respond with a vehement e-mail. But wouldn’t we be better off putting our reply in the “draft” folder for a few days? When we are smitten by a sports car after a test-drive with the wind in our hair, shouldn’t we take a break—and discuss our spouse’s plan to buy a minivan—before signing a contract to buy the car?

Here are a few more examples of ways to protect ourselves from ourselves:

Safe Sex

Many parents and teenagers, while in a cold, rational, Dr. Jekyll state, tend to believe that the mere promise of abstinence—commonly known as “Just say no”—is sufficient protection against sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Assuming that this levelheaded thought will prevail even when emotions reach the boiling point, the advocates of “just saying no” see no reason to carry a condom with them. But as our study shows, in the heat of passion, we are all in danger of switching from “Just say no” to “Yes!” in a heartbeat; and if no condom is available, we are likely to say yes, regardless of the dangers.

What does this suggest? First, widespread availability of condoms is essential. We should not decide in a cool state