

“BRAIN SCIENCE”

Illinois Science Council's Spring 2012 Series

Get smarter. Science for the curious.



For Immediate Release

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(Chicago) - [Illinois Science Council](#) ("ISC") announces a 5-part series of engaging programs on Brain Science March 28 through April 18. These talks highlight current scientific understanding of how our brains work and showcase researchers from Chicago-area institutions. All programs are free and open to the public* but registration is required.

(*zombies not allowed)

Your Brain on Happiness

We all know how different it feels to be happy or otherwise, and it's all in your brain. Our gray matter is outrageously emotional – dizzying highs and gut-wrenching lows and everything in between. Sometimes the change in mindset happens surprisingly quickly. Given the incredible recent advancements in studying the brain, have researchers found how happiness arises in the brain? Can you actually change your brain to make yourself happier? How?!? [Robin Nusslock](#), Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology at Northwestern University, will explain how happiness affects physical health, what's happening when happiness goes awry and turns to depression or other disorders, and whether meditation can actually alter the brain.

Wednesday, March 28th 6:30 – 7:30pm
Sulzer Public Library, 4455 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago

We Are Our Memory

How can you have already forgotten the name of the person you just met but still remember all the words to a song from 6th grade? How can something as critical and compelling as eyewitness testimony for crimes be shown to be wrong? Memory is strange! Here's your chance to understand how your brain really works in remembering or forgetting. [Elizabeth Kensinger](#), Associate Professor, Cognitive Neuroscience Lab at Boston College, will explain the different kinds of memory, whether games and puzzles can make yours better, and what's happening when memory fails – whether it's a word on the 'tip of your tongue' or more serious condition like amnesia and dementia. She'll also provide an entertaining look at how poorly pop culture represents memory.

Monday, April 2nd 2012 6:30 – 7:30pm
Sulzer Public Library, 4455 N. Lincoln Avenue, Chicago

I had a brilliant idea! Where did it come from?

Sometimes terrific ideas or solutions occur to you out of nowhere, like in the shower or when you're falling asleep, when you're struck with a sudden insight. Other times, you can only build ideas slowly, piece by piece. What's going on in your head when "the light bulb goes on?" How can scientists actually research something as elusive as insight or "creativity?" Having an "Aha!" moment is so gratifying; the question is whether you can do anything to have more of those, and fewer "D'oh" moments. [Mark Beeman](#), Associate Professor of Cognitive Psychology at Northwestern University will explain what insight is, how the brain produces it, and ways we can improve our chances of shouting "Eureka!"

Monday, April 9th 2012 6:00 – 7:30pm
Stage 773, Black Box Theater, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago

Your Addicted Brain

People use the term “addicted” all the time – “I’m addicted to my morning coffee,” “You’re addicted to that TV show.” But when does a preference turn into a true addiction of the brain? Is there really any difference between a caffeine addiction and a cocaine one? What’s the difference between a drug addiction and a behavior addiction, like gambling or gaming?

[T. Celeste Napier](#), Professor of Pharmacology and Director of the Center for Compulsive Behavior and Addiction at Rush University, will explain the ins and outs, and ups and downs, of addiction, how scientists study it, and what can be done about it.

Wednesday, April 11th 2012 6:00 – 7:30pm

Dave & Busters, 1030 N. Clark Street, 1st floor, Chicago

Your Brain on Love, Sex and Oxytocin

Everyone from poets and novelists to Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber express their views on “love,” but what about the scientists? Turns out that scientists have studied love and uncovered amazing things! [Sue Carter](#), Professor of Psychiatry and Co-Director of the Brain-Body Center at UIC, studies the brain biology of social bonding and parenting behavior, and her work has laid the foundation for research on the biology of monogamy. She will explain what people can learn about monogamy and ‘philandering’ from prairie voles (cute little rodents native to the Midwest that – fun fact – mate for 24 *consecutive* hours). Love may indeed be about chemistry and we now know their names are oxytocin and vasopressin.

Kayt Sukel, science author of ["Dirty Minds: How Our Brains Influence Love, Sex and Relationships."](#) has interviewed scores of scientists doing research on this confounding source of human highs and lows. You'll learn what's known and still to be figured out in the neuroscience of the varied ways to love – parental love, mating love, same-sex love, spiritual love and lust. She'll discuss the biology, endocrinology, psychology and neuroimaging work in the field, talk about visits to research labs, and even how she donated her body and mind in unique ways to contribute to the cause of science. *Dirty Minds* will be available for purchase and signing.

Wednesday, April 18th 2012 6:00 – 8:00pm

Stage 773, Pro Theater, 1225 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago

All these programs are **FREE** and open to the public.* ISC maintains an ‘open-mind’ on many things, however, seating is limited. So we ask only that you remember to **reserve a seat in advance** by visiting <http://Brains.IllinoisScience.org>

* Zombies not allowed.

Questions should be directed to brains@IllinoisScience.org



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The Illinois Science Council ("ISC") is an independent, volunteer-driven 501c3 nonprofit organization that engages, educates, and entertains the adult public about science and technology in our everyday lives. We showcase the scientists and the research of Chicago-area institutions and companies that make Chicago the nation's true "City of Science."

We are inspired and motivated by Carl Sagan's quote: **"We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology."** It's true, but it's also extremely serious. ISC explores all areas of science and technology but we do it with a fun, non-stuffy approach. We don't care about what's been forgotten since we were in school (or never learned in the first place). Our "mascots" - Muppets Dr. Bunson Honeydew and Beaker - remind us that science and technology are not only important, but interesting and fun too! It's all about simply exercising our sense of curiosity. Visit: IllinoisScience.org for more info or to get involved.