



Ashoka University

PSYCH!

Shades, Screens, and Breaking Schemas





WELCOME TO OUR
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
PSYCH!

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About Us

Welcome! As a part of the Psychology Society of Ashoka University, we are thrilled to bring to you our newsletter. Fueled by our passion for psychology, we aim to create a space to share knowledge and foster collaboration in our community. As we delve into the human mind and behavior, we are thrilled to bring you a diverse range of insights, research findings, and practical tips that we hope will enrich your understanding of the fascinating world of psychology. Whether you are an aspiring Psychology Major or simply someone with a passion for the understanding of the human mind, this newsletter is for you! Happy Reading!

Chromesthesia: When Notes Have Colours

Reviewed By- Srishti Ladha

Written By- Aayushee Bhat



We may often use common adjectives such as ‘amazing, wonderful, and excellent’ to describe a new song or a musical piece. Other textural adjectives such as ‘dark, sweet, heavy and rich,’ while providing a more descriptive landscape, are sensory adjectives not usually attributed to sound.

This habit of associating other sensations to sound can be seen as a figure of speech, however for some, the involuntary experience of cross-modal linkage - a stimulus evoking more than one sense - is called synaesthesia. To put it in simpler terms, it is the condition where two or more different senses are activated when there is a need for only one sense to activate. Synaesthesia is distinctive, i.e., the concurrent (for example, a colour) will differ from person to person for the same stimulus (for example, a note). It is a condition that will always add on to the ‘normal’ sensation, and will never remove nor cloak it. While it may be associated with anomalous brain activity, it is not classified as a disease or a medical condition.

In terms of neuroscience, the stimulus, which is termed the inductor, elicits an involuntary, automatic and consistent response that results in another sensation called concurrent. It must be noted that this additional response occurs without any external trigger. While there are different kinds of synaesthesia, the most common concurrent perception is colour. Common inductors include letters, numbers, and words. An example of synaesthesia is the perception of colours when certain musical notes are heard - this is specifically known as chromesthesia, which we will elaborate further.

Chromesthesia is believed to result from combined activation of visual and auditory sensors of the brain. In synesthetes, "cross-modal association" triggers the left side of the brain, heightening emotional responses by stimulating the limbic system, which manages mood and emotions. This reduces blood flow to the neo-cortex—the brain area responsible for processing information and controlling behaviour—while also activating both visual and auditory sensors.

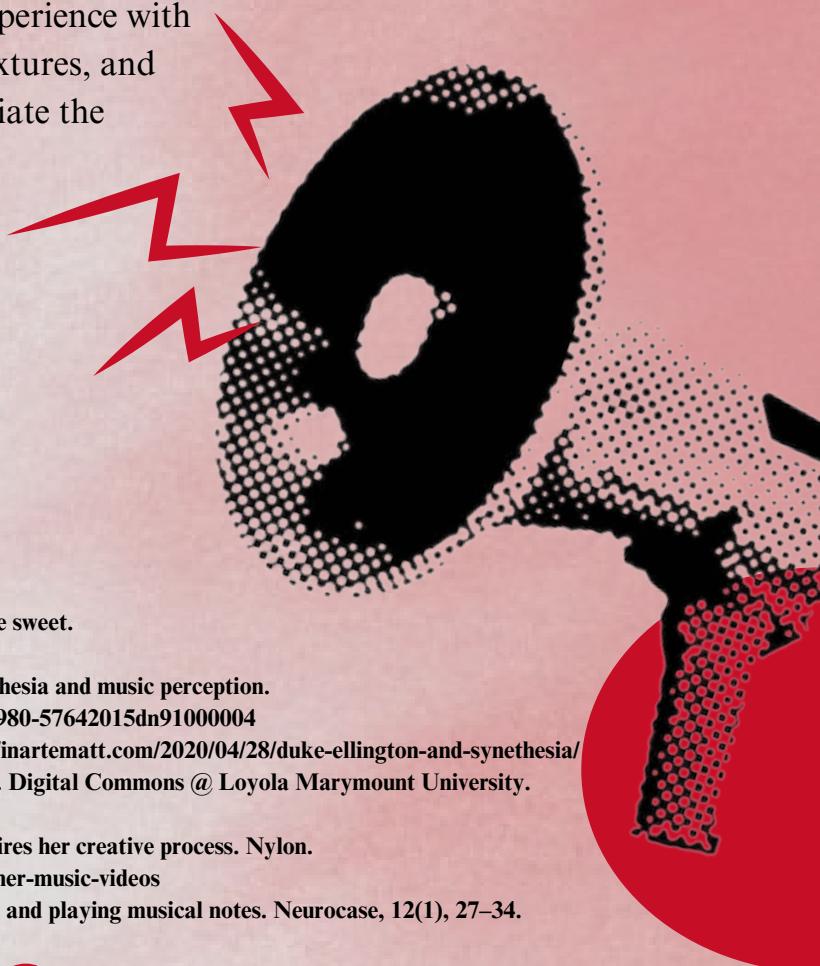
Of the adult population, 5-15% are diagnosed with chromesthesia, out of which 68% have had it since they were young. Research reveals that synaesthetic associations with colours can develop through experience and aren't necessarily fixed from birth. In one study, synesthetes experienced interference when reading musical notes in colours that didn't align with their synaesthetic associations, suggesting a genuine cross-sensory response.

These colour associations in music synesthesia appear to be shaped by context, such as the clef or position on the staff, rather than by the note's shape or vertical placement. This finding implies that synesthetic connections may initially form through associations with letter names for notes, but over time, they can evolve into independent sensory links as one becomes more musically skilled. Ultimately, this research suggests that both genetic and environmental factors influence the development and specificity of chromesthesia.

Musicians with chromesthesia often describe how their synesthetic perceptions inspire their creative choices, influencing the colours, shapes, or textures they associate with sounds. For instance, Billie Eilish has shared that her songs have distinct colours, which shape her visual art-style. Similarly, Duke Ellington famously attributed his jazz compositions to his ability to "see" colours when he heard musical notes. They often have an advantage of recognising, making, and memorising music as they identify a pitch with a certain colour.

However, it is important to distinguish chromesthesia from creative imagination. It has been found that activation patterns are not the same while comparing brain activity of a synesthete and of an individual with great imagination. The colours (or even shapes and patterns) as sensed by synesthetes are very simple and basic, which is a stark contrast to complicated and elaborate images conjured by non-synesthetes while listening to a piece of classical music for example.

Chromesthesia provides us a potential new window into understanding perception from a biological perspective due to the suggestion of cross-activation between sensory areas. For synesthetes, music becomes a deeply visual experience with sounds evoking specific colours, shapes, or textures, and eliciting certain emotions that they may associate the colours with.



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The Truth Behind Ranbir Kapoor's Handwriting

Reviewed By- Ananya Dubey

Written By- Myrah Sahni

"The idea that our handwriting reveals our personality traits has intrigued most of us." Out of boredom and wonder, I, too, have gone down a rabbit hole on the internet trying to decipher my personality through my handwriting. Recently I read an article with the title "Ranbir Kapoor Handwriting reveals he is a sex addict" and you can imagine what the content of the article was like. Supposedly the size of his letters and the slant of certain alphabets tell us that he has trouble being loyal and is very indecisive among other things.

However interesting this may seem, modern psychologists have come forward and called graphology- the study of handwriting, which claims to reveal personality traits and psychological characteristics by analyzing writing style, letter shapes, and spacing, a pseudoscience.

The field originated in the 17th century, pioneered by Italian physician Camillo Baldi, and took off as a popular practice in the hiring processes of the 20th century. For a long time, people were fascinated by the potential of graphology to unlock the mysteries of human behavior. Big handwriting? You're an extrovert! Small, neat handwriting? You're likely introverted. These ideas were used in a variety of areas, from career placement to relationship counseling.



Although, it is important to understand that these ideas never had any scientific backings because as stated earlier, graphology is simply a pseudoscience and in order to debunk these notions I went through two empirical papers that claim graphology is a pseudoscience. Dazzi and Pedrabissi (2009) and Gawda (2014) both conducted experiments to find the correlation between handwriting and personality traits. The results of both studies showed little evidence that handwriting could be a dependable reflection of someone's character.

These studies, along with many others, underscore the fact that handwriting, despite its visual appeal, isn't a crystal ball into our personality. If anything, the persistence of this myth can be attributed to cognitive biases such as the **Barnum Effect**. This psychological phenomenon explains why we're so willing to accept vague, general statements about ourselves when they seem personalized. Much like how horoscopes work, handwriting analysis taps into our desire for self-understanding and quick fixes, even when the science behind it is weak.

In conclusion, while graphology may have once held a place in pop psychology, it has since been thoroughly debunked by empirical research. Ranbir Kapoor's handwriting might give us a glimpse of his handwriting style, but not his personality.

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DEBUNKING: How is Cinema fear-mongering?

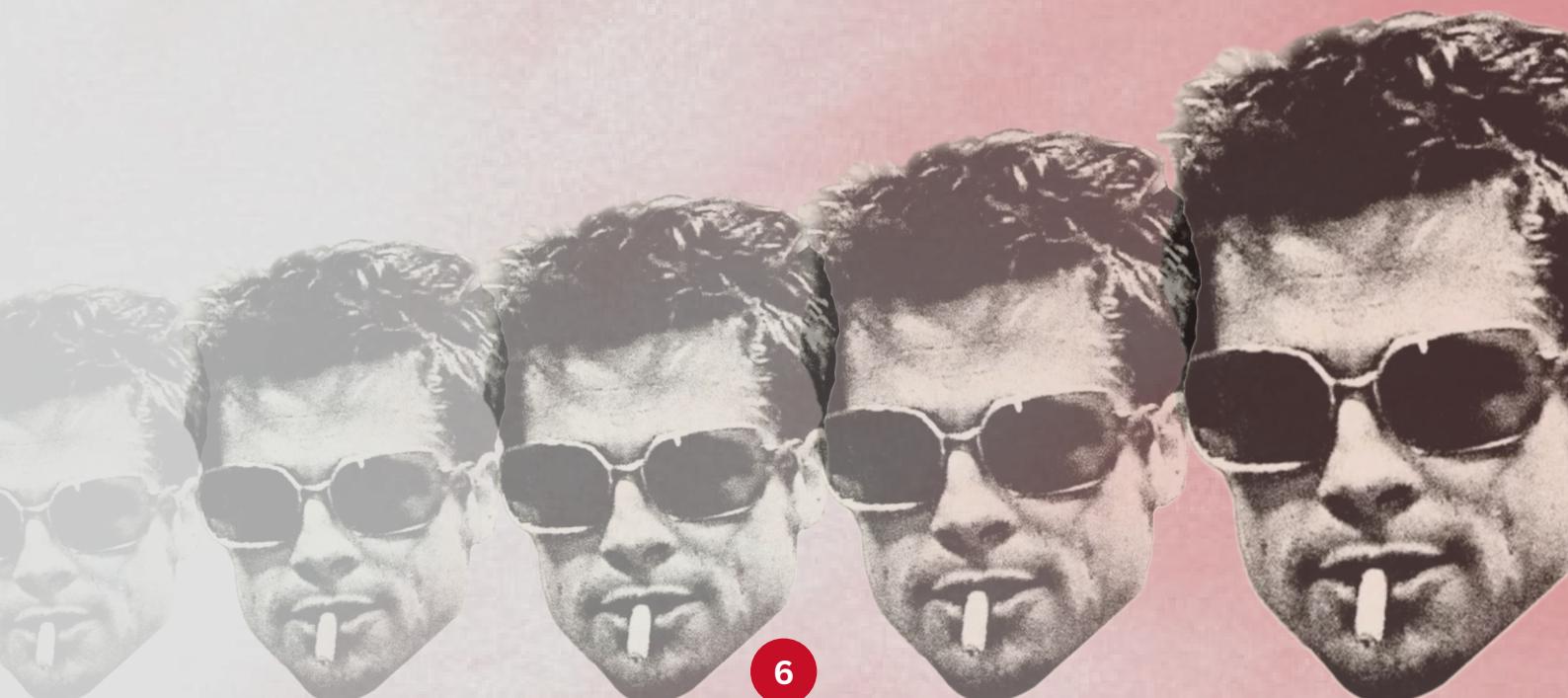
Reviewed By- Sridhari Deorah

Written By- Chitrangada Tiwari

How often do we see positive representations of mental health in the media? And how often do we think about the accuracy of such characters to actual mental health struggles? The propagation of information to the public about mental disorders is vastly restricted to media platforms, which are often misinformed.

Film is a form of mass communication that has a very large influence on the perspectives of the audience and/or viewers. Studies show that depictions of mental illness that are present in the media negatively influence the public's perspective (Smith, 1995), while contributing to the stigma around such disorders. Basically, your favourite psychological thriller movie villain is not evil but is simply a person with a mental disorder who has been demonized.

In Fight Club (1999), the unnamed narrator dissociates into Tyler, a man that is completely opposite to what the narrator is really like. By the end of the film, the narrator is "captured" by Tyler and must force himself to "kill" Tyler to free himself from his alternate identity. This propagates entirely incorrect ideas about the nature of the mental disorder that the narrator might have had, be it schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder. D.I.D. specifically entails 'alters' that are independent of each other and have distinct characteristics (Mitra, 2023) which may not necessarily be violent. Secondly, in the movie Split (2017), James McAvoy stars as the main character, who has twenty-three alters along with a bestial twenty-fourth emerging, which is referred to as the "Beast." His host personality, or original personality, has a therapist who talks about the disorder as a new form of 'evolution' instead of as a mental disease. McAvoy's character kidnaps three teenagers, and as his latest personality forms, he has a craving for human flesh and devours two of the three girls.



This film shows alternate personalities to be not only violent and destructive but cannibalistic as well — a view that propagates very harmful stereotypes about mental illness and violence when, in fact, more often than not, people with mental illnesses are victims of violence rather than perpetrators (Stuart, 2003). Most movies continue to show the unrealistic myth of dissociative personalities being brutal and savage and cast them as villains. What needs to be understood is that the formation of multiple personalities is a way to cope with long-term physical, sexual, or emotional abuse and trauma and not as a weapon to harm others.

Mental illnesses are just that — illnesses, and destigmatization of mental disorders in context of violence and otherwise can only be possible with unbiased knowledge and by practicing empathy.

Helpline number in India for mental health rehabilitation: 1800-599-0019.



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WOMEN'S 'DISGRACEFUL' QUEST FOR PLEASURE

Reviewed By- Mihika Sangtani

Written By -Asthya Agarwal

Women, to quench their desire for pleasure, like men, prefer to loiter around but that seems problematic to some people in our society as they say that given that most women in India don't have access to even basic facilities, we are being frivolous when we want to roam around without a purpose. For men, it is considered normal to dawdle and dwindle about but for women, it is considered a social taboo. This difference is deeply embedded in social norms, which dictate what behavior is considered "acceptable" for men versus women. From the perspective of psychology, conformity theory explains why many women internalize these societal standards and avoid loitering, even if they individually desire the freedom to do so. When women adhere to these restrictive norms, it perpetuates the idea that loitering is solely a male privilege, making it feel "disgraceful" for women to claim similar rights.

The struggle against violence rests on the premise of 'us' v/s 'them' where people are divided into two groups that are against each other. Thus, it can only be sustained through violence itself. On the other hand, the quest for pleasure is inclusive and rests on a positive base. It brings people together as there are no aggressors or victims in this quest, just people seeking the same pleasures. Psychology suggests that cognitive dissonance plays a role here. Many women experience an inner conflict when their desire to enjoy public spaces clashes with the societal messages they've internalized. They may feel subtle guilt or unease when they loiter, influenced by the belief that it is improper for them to be in public without purpose. Yet, in choosing pleasure over fear, women can resolve this dissonance, asserting their right to exist in public spaces without restriction.

An incident occurred a while ago when I had gone to explore Delhi with a friend that would serve as the perfect example for this paper that talks about loitering. While we were roaming around in Connaught Place, an extremely happening and popular street in Delhi, an auto rickshaw driver stopped us and said that we should not be there at that time in the evening and we should either enter one of the shops or he would be happy to drop us off wherever we wished to go. Of course, his intentions were perfectly fine and his genuine concern was evident, however, the fact that about half of the world's population is made to feel like we are doing something wrong if we go out onto the streets just for the sake of going out tells us that something really and seriously needs to change.

This well-meaning “concern” aligns with how the media often reinforces the notion that women’s presence in public is inherently risky. Women’s behavior is often policed in the name of “protection,” yet when framed this way, it implies that their presence in public is dangerous or improper. Such portrayals in media reinforce the stereotype that women need protection more than freedom, making it harder for them to see loitering as a right rather than a risk. This stereotype limits women’s access to public spaces, pushing them to conform to roles that fit “proper” behavior.

As *stereotype threat* research in psychology shows, when women know that society labels loitering as frivolous, they may avoid it to escape judgment. Media reinforces this by portraying women as vulnerable in public, while men are shown as natural occupants of these spaces, enjoying them without restriction.

Observational learning plays a role here; if the media began portraying women confidently and safely enjoying public spaces, it could help society normalize this behavior, encouraging women to embrace their presence in public as rightful, rather than risking judgment or guilt.

The quest for pleasure encompasses the struggle against violence as only when violence is stopped can true pleasure be attained. Loitering is such an evidently basic right that each individual, irrespective of gender or any other differentiating factor, should possess. It is a pleasure that requires no resources and no expenditure. It harms no one. Walking around aimlessly is fun boiled down to its simplest form. In a world where women are still struggling to fight against violence, advocating for basic rights such as roaming around outside have taken a back seat which is wrong on so many levels and desperately needs changing.



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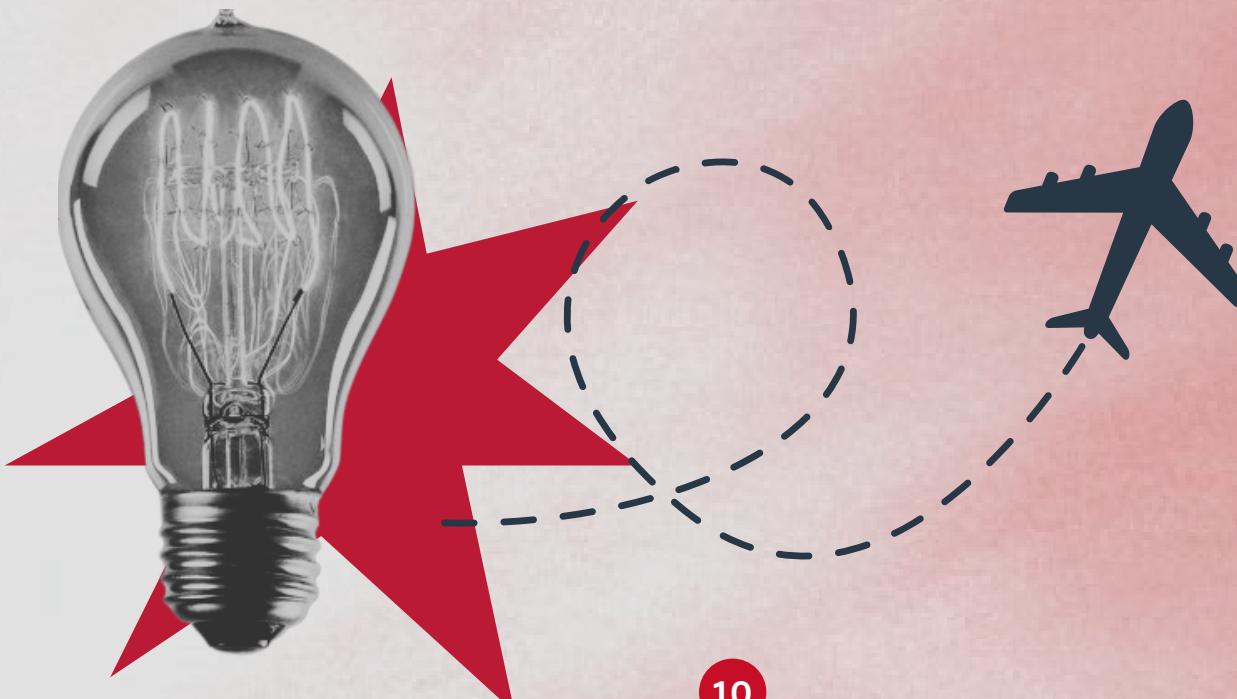
Psychology Fact of the Month

Did you know? You can 'borrow' someone else's Identity without realizing it.

Have you ever used escapism by immersing yourself in someone else's story that it almost felt like your own? This phenomenon is referred to as Vicarious Identity where an individual adopts someone else's life experiences as a part of their own identity. While sometimes this can lead to motivation and thus personal growth, oftentimes it causes emotional instability. A person emulating a mentor's qualities can be an example of positive vicarious identity where it provides them with a temporary sense of security, meaning and stability in the learning period. However, over-reliance on this borrowed identity can hamper the development of an authentic self.

There also exists negative vicarious identity which often manifests itself in very destructive ways. Negative vicarious identity stems from people internalizing traumatic stories or develop unhealthy comparisons through social media. This disrupts the person's mental well-being. Vicarious Identity also has societal implications as people have started curating lifestyles and personas on social media causing feelings of inadequacy. Drawing comparisons between idealized identities can be extremely harmful and degrade the meaning derived from life events where the end goal is to just click a picture.

Understanding the concept of vicarious identity is crucial in the new age of hyper-connectivity where it is becoming increasing difficult to develop one's authentic self. So, the next time you find yourself getting too sucked into someone else's life, pause and ask if it is really worth your time.



KEEP UP WITH PSYCHSOC



Be 'KIND' marketing event

In collaboration with the marketing department, we set up a banner where the student body could pose as the 'I' in the word 'KIND'. This was later posted on our social media pages.



KEEP UP WITH PSYCHSOC

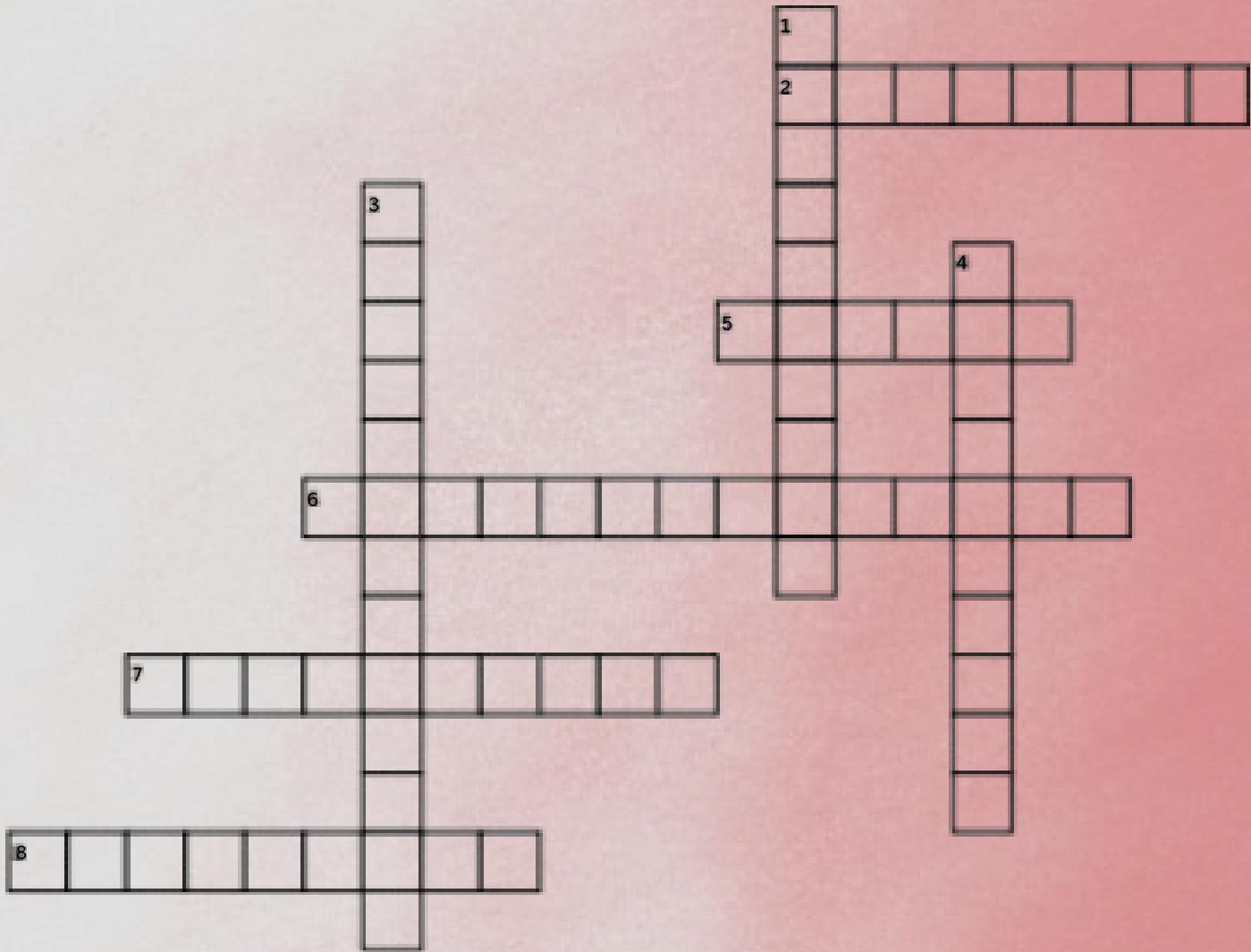


Psy-Kicks episode 2

Mind Over Monsters: A Psychological Dive into the Paranormal. The podcast is a spirited encounter with the paranormal as we discuss demonic possession, witch trials, schizophrenia, out-of-body experiences and more through the lens of psychology.



FUN CORNER



Across

2. A trigger that initiates a sensory response in the brain.
 5. The act of lingering or idling, often seen as reclaiming public space for women.
 6. A technique used in cinema to create panic or exaggerated fear.
 7. The study of handwriting to infer personality traits.
 8. The mental process involved in interpreting stimuli.

Down

- 1. The scientific study of the mind and behavior.
 - 3. A type of synesthesia where sounds evoke colors.
 - 4. Mental shortcuts

MEET OUR TEAM



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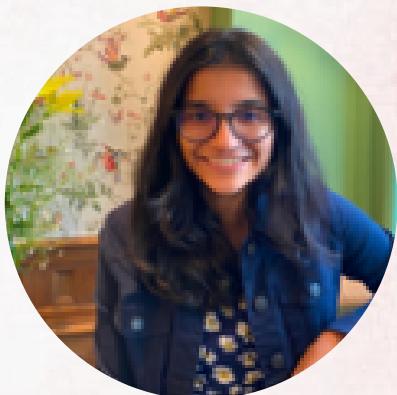
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