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Unhealthy treatment makes for unhealthy habits

By Relaxnews

Researchers from the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) in Canada have found those suffering from negative stereotypes, discrimination and prejudices lose "self-control" when it comes to their emotions, the ability to think rationally, keep focused and eat a balanced diet.

The study was initially published online (July 12) in advance of the August print edition of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Michael Inzlicht, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at UTSC, led the study and explained in a university announcement on August 10, "Even after a person leaves a situation where they faced negative stereotypes, the effects of coping with that situation remain."

Inzlicht and co-author Sonia K. Kang set out to test whether "...there are lingering effects of prejudice" and if "...being stereotyped ha[s] an impact beyond the moment when stereotyping happens" by conducting a number of studies mainly with women including "one study [that] examined prejudice based on a number of dimensions, including race, religion, gender, and age. The participants were university students, so between 18 and 20 years old," Inzlicht told Relaxnews on August 11.

"People are more likely to be aggressive after they've faced prejudice in a given situation. They are more likely to exhibit a lack of self-control. They have trouble making good, rational decisions. And they are more likely to over-indulge on unhealthy foods," said Inzlicht.

Inzlicht noted that, "These lingering effects hurt people in a very real way, leaving them at a disadvantage. Even many steps removed from a prejudicial situation, people are carrying around this baggage that negatively impacts their lives."

However Inzlicht explained to Relaxnews that individuals are able to regain and maintain self-control.

He recommends, "...approaching situations mindfully; try to see things objectively and in a non-reactive manner. In other words, it can help to reappraise one's emotions."

Full study, "Stereotype threat spillover: How coping with threats to social identity affects aggression, eating, decision-making, and attention": <http://www.utoronto.ca/~inzlicht/research/publications/Inzlicht%20%20Kang,%20in%20press.pdf> or <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20649368>

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