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ACTIVITY 1.2

Salivating to Music

Developed by
Jeffrey R. Stowell
Eastern Illinois University

Concept

This activity allows all students to experience classical conditioning firsthand and tests students' understanding of classical conditioning principles. See also Cogan and Cogan (1984).

Materials

You will need lemonade drink mix powder (one teaspoon per student), and each student will need a blank sheet of paper.

Instructions

Have students fold up the edges of a blank piece of paper to be used as a container for a small amount of lemonade drink mix powder (about a teaspoon). Have them lick the tip of their finger and taste the lemonade powder (UCS), which will cause salivation (UCR). Instruct them to have some lemonade powder ready on their fingertip so they can lick their fingertip as soon as they hear the music begin playing. Play 3-4 seconds of a song and pair it with the lemonade powder 8-10 times, waiting about 20-30 seconds between pairings. Then, play the music only (without the lemonade powder) and have them note if they start salivating. Usually about two-thirds of the class salivates to the music.

Be sure to check with students about food allergies before introducing any substance to be tasted in a class demonstration.

BACK TO CONTENT OUTLINE

Discussion

Ask students to identify the UCS (lemonade powder), UCR (salivation), CS (music), and CR (salivation). You can also mention the timing of the UCS–CS was most likely delayed conditioning. You should then play the song until salivation no longer occurs (extinction). Play it again at the start of the next class period to see if spontaneous recovery occurs.

Recommended Reading

Cogan, D., & Cogan, R. (1984). Classical salivary conditioning: An easy demonstration. *Teaching of Psychology, 11*(3), 170-171.