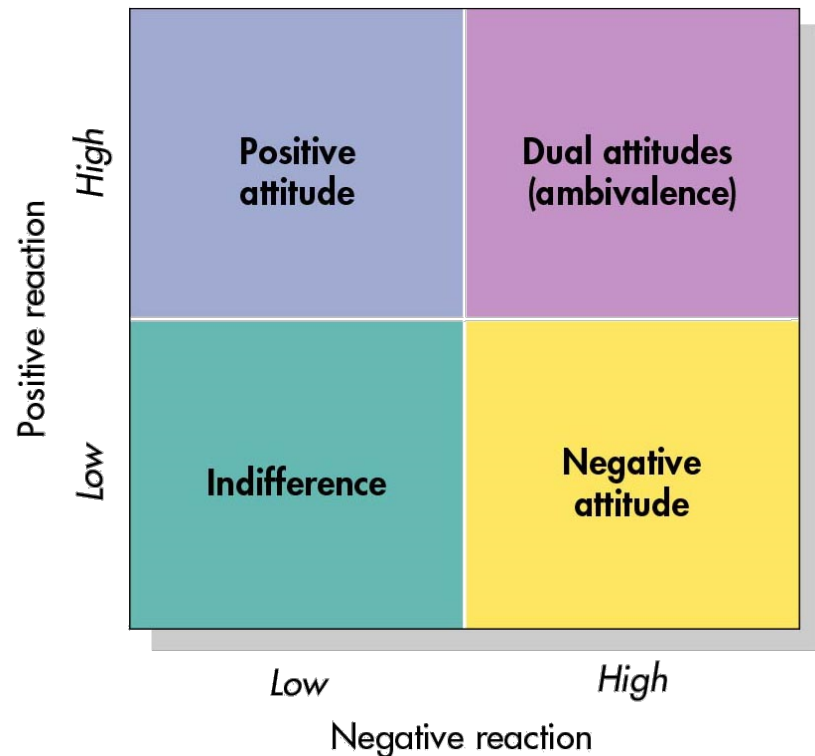# Attitudes

Discussion Questions

1. What are attitudes?
2. How do attitudes form?
3. How are attitudes measured?
4. Do our attitudes predict our behavior?
5. How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?
6. What is cognitive dissonance? How does it impact our attitudes and behaviors?

What are attitudes?

- **Attitude:** An evaluation of a person, object, or idea

- Can be positive, negative, ambivalent, or indifferent

- Need for evaluation

Figure 6.1: Four Possible Reactions to Attitude Objects

	Negative reaction Low	Negative reaction High
Positive reaction High	Positive attitude	Dual attitudes (ambivalence)
Positive reaction Low	Indifference	Negative attitude

What are attitudes?

- **Implicit attitude:** An evaluation activated automatically from memory without conscious awareness
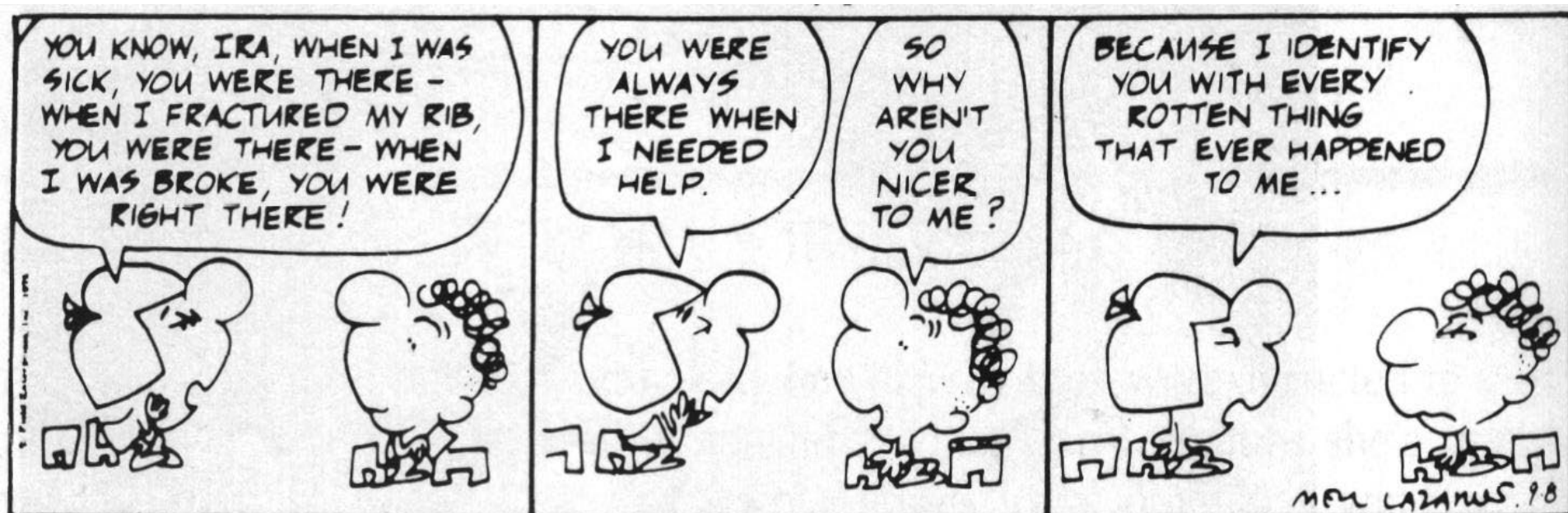
How do attitudes form?

- Are they inherited?
  - Maybe?
  - Twin and extended family studies

- Are they learned?
  - Probably!
  - Socialization
  - Life experience
 - Culture
  - Environment

How do attitudes form?

- **Evaluative conditioning:** The process by which we form an attitude toward a neutral stimulus because of its association w/ a positive or negative person, place, or thing

How are attitudes measured?

- **Self-report measures:** Ask people directly about their attitudes
  - Scales have multiple items with multiple options to capture human variation (e.g., Likert scale)
  - Bogus pipeline

| Not at all Satisfied | Slightly Satisfied | Neutral | Very Satisfied | Extremely Satisfied |
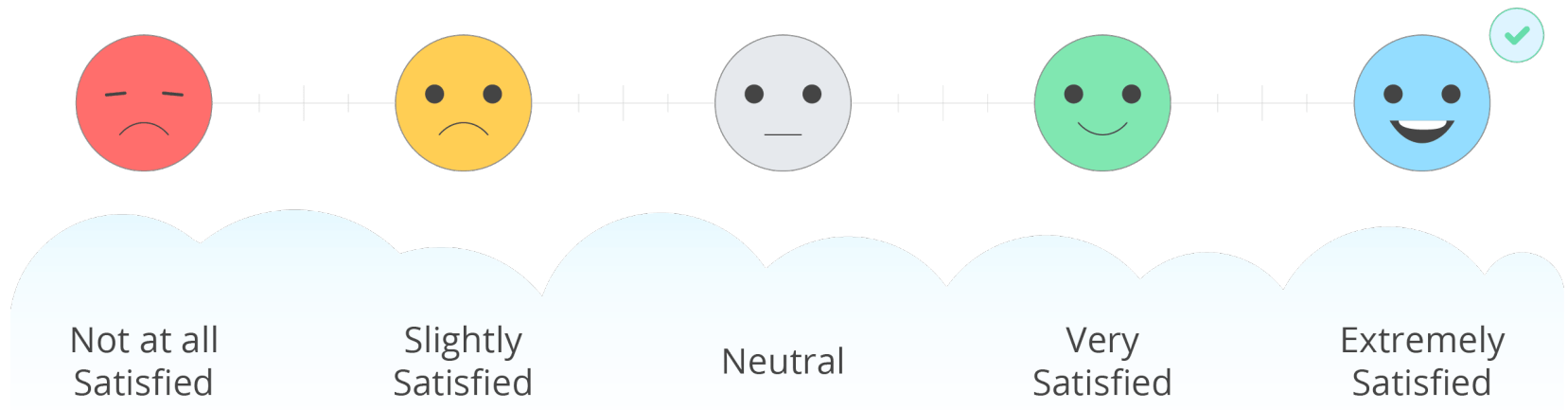
How are attitudes measured?

Table 1. Item-Total Score Correlations for Original and Modified 6 Items

| Item	Original	Correlation	Modified	Correlation	Z- Score
2	My pet means more to me than any of my friends.	.555**	My pet means more to me than any of my friends (or would if I had one).	.692**	1.58
3	I would like to have a pet in my home.	.634**	I would like a pet, or to continue to have a pet, in my home.	.390**	2.97*
8	I have occasionally communicated with my pet and understood what it was trying to express.	.682**	I have occasionally communicated with my pet and understood what it was trying to express (or would if I had one).	.681**	.01
16	I frequently talk to my pet.	.666**	I frequently talk to my pet (or would if I had one).	.652**	.173

* p < .05 (2-tailed)
** p < .01 (2-tailed)

How are attitudes measured?

- Covert Measures
  - Observe behavior and infer attitudes
  - Measure physiological arousal
    - E.g., Eye tracking, facial electromyography
  - Measure brain activity
    - E.g., Electroencephalograph and fMRI
  - Measure association reaction times
    - E.g., Implicit Association Test

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)
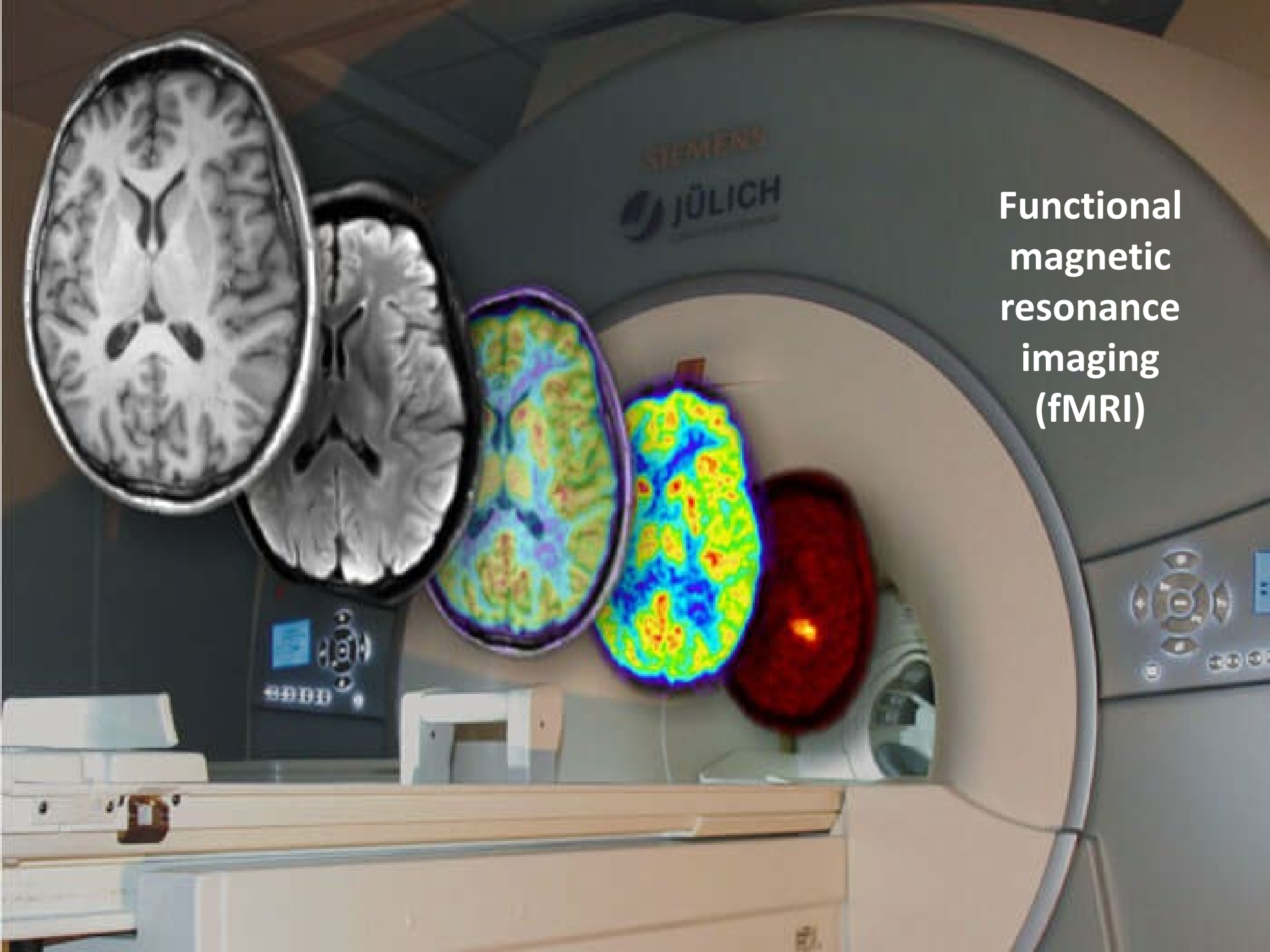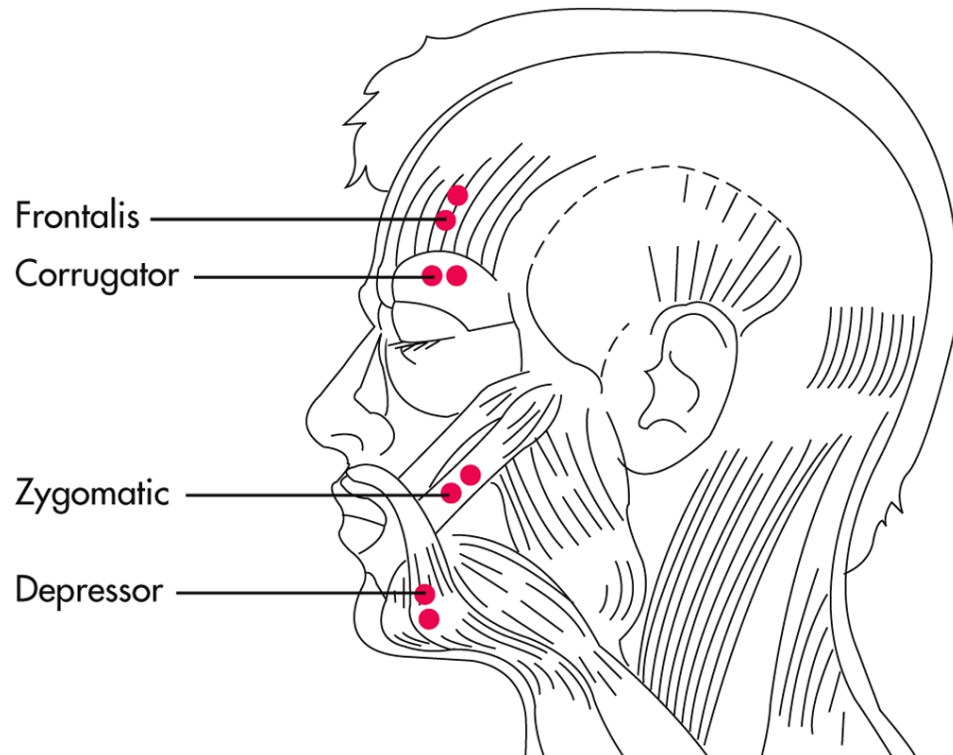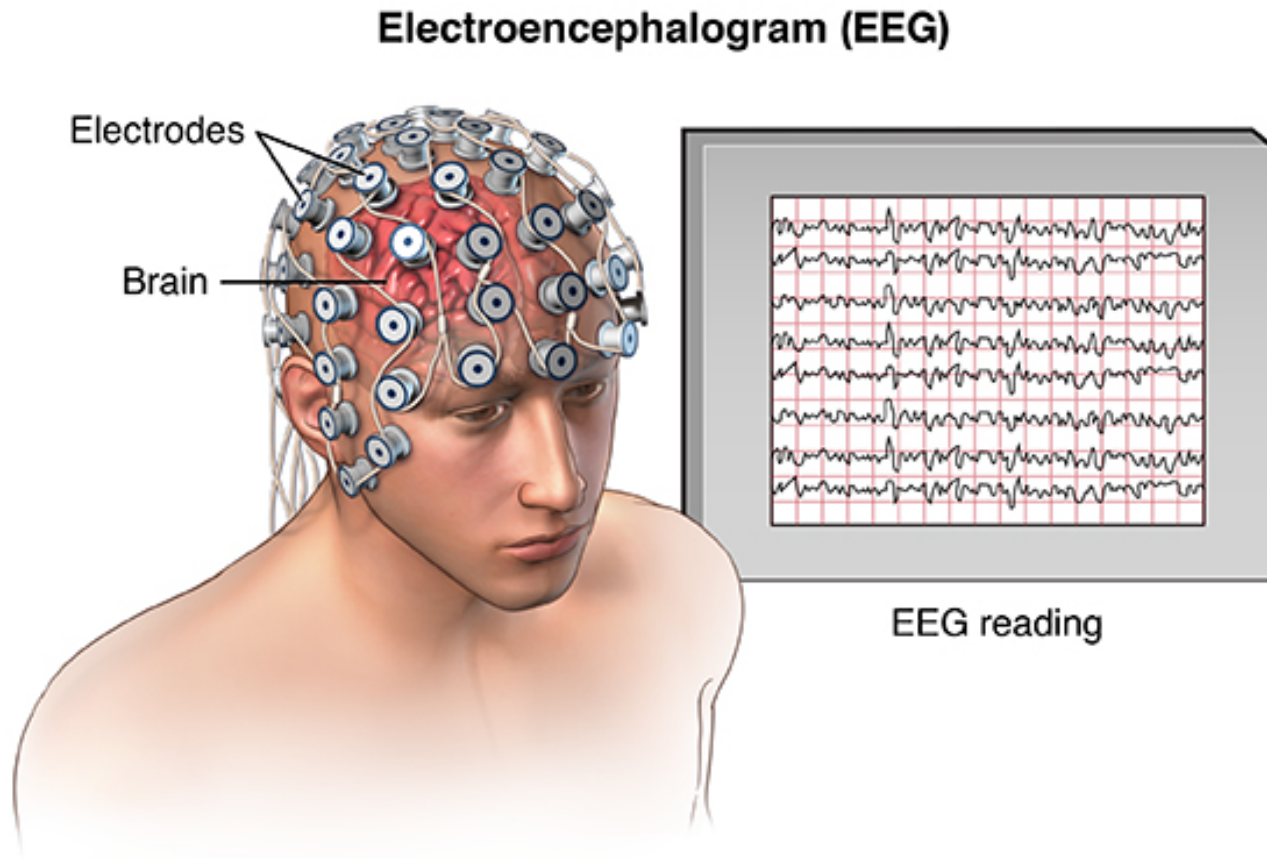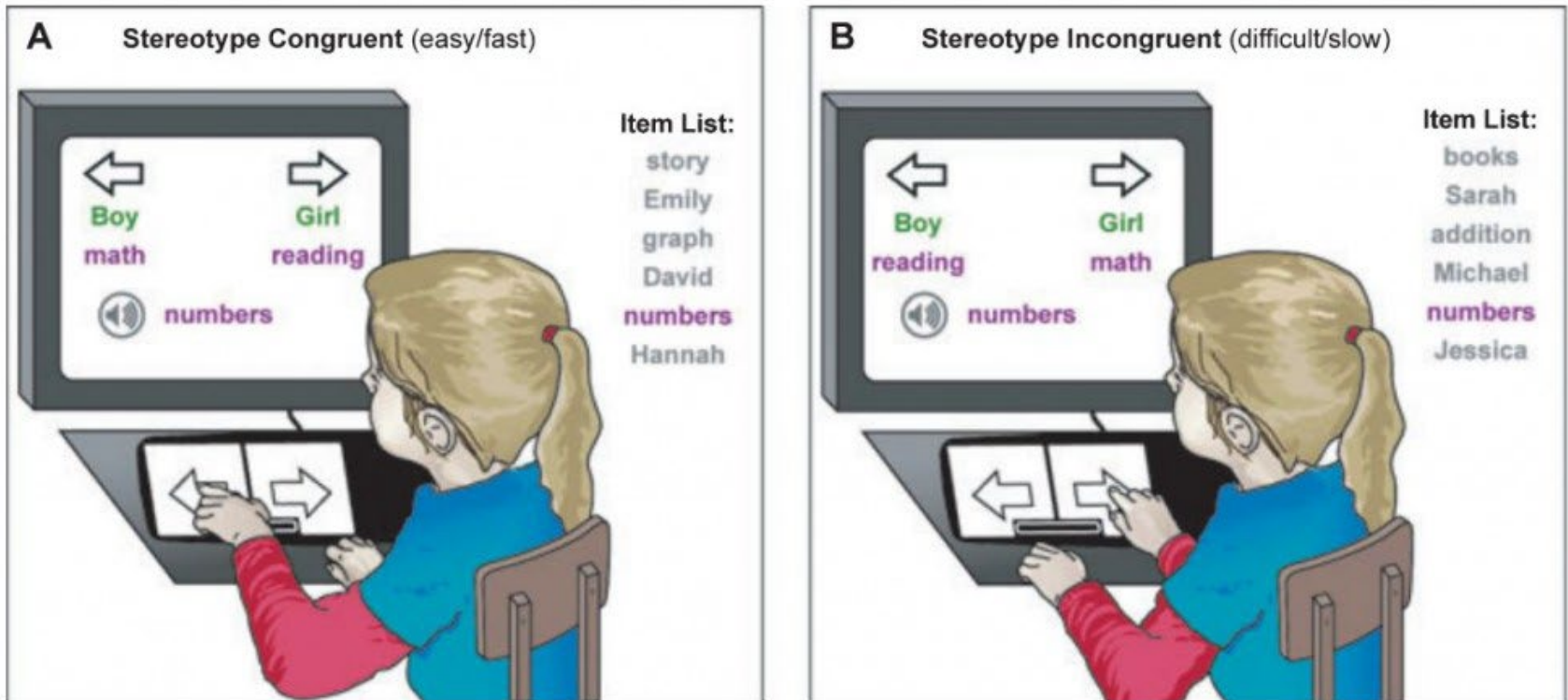
How are attitudes measured?

Figure 6.2 – Facial Electromyograph (EMG)

How are attitudes measured?

Electroencephalogram (EEG)

Electrodes

Brain

EEG reading

How are attitudes measured?

implicit association tests (IAT)

How are attitudes measured?

- **Implicit Association Test (IAT):** Measure the speed with which people respond to word pairings

- Used to infer implicit attitudes and bias

- Used to study especially sensitive topics

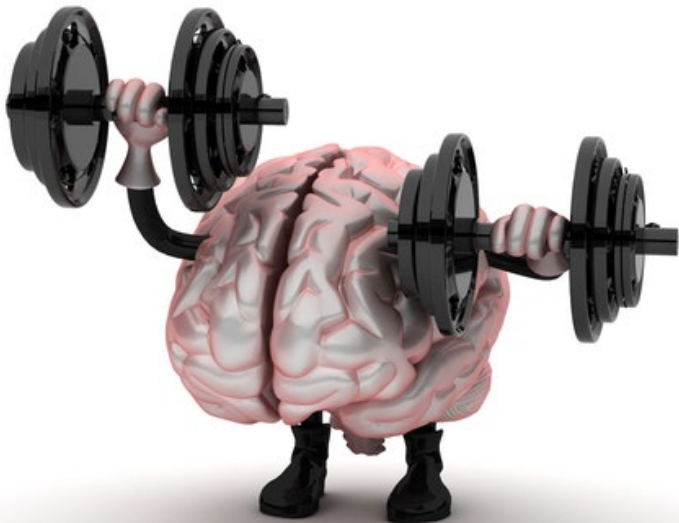Do our attitudes predict our behavior?

Do our attitudes predict our behavior?

- Sometimes, but not always
- Stronger attitude-behavior link when:
  - Attitudes are strong
  - Attitude measure is specific to the behavior in question
- Many other determinants of behavior
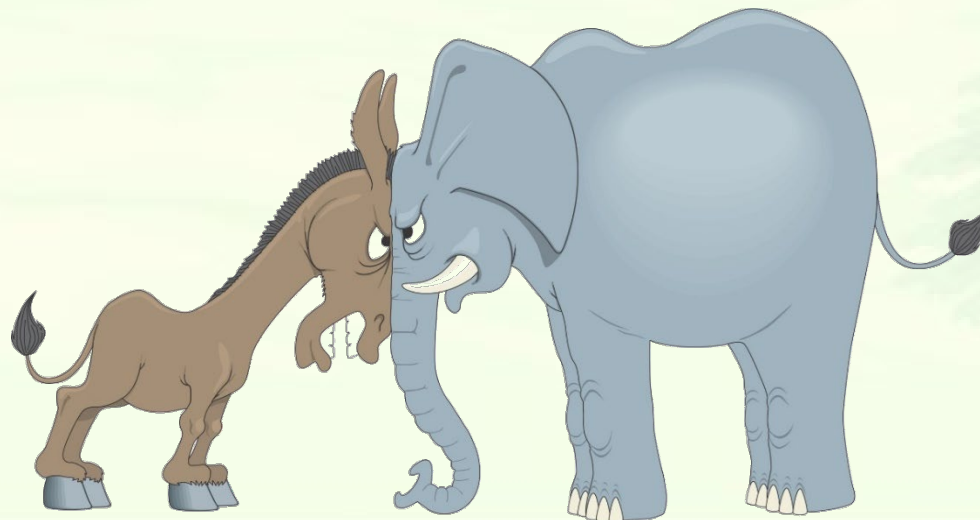
Do our attitudes predict our behavior?

- Does the issue affect me?

- Is it related to my values?

- Is it of concern to my loved ones?

- How informed am I?

- Did I acquire information through experience?

- Have I successfully resisted an attack before?

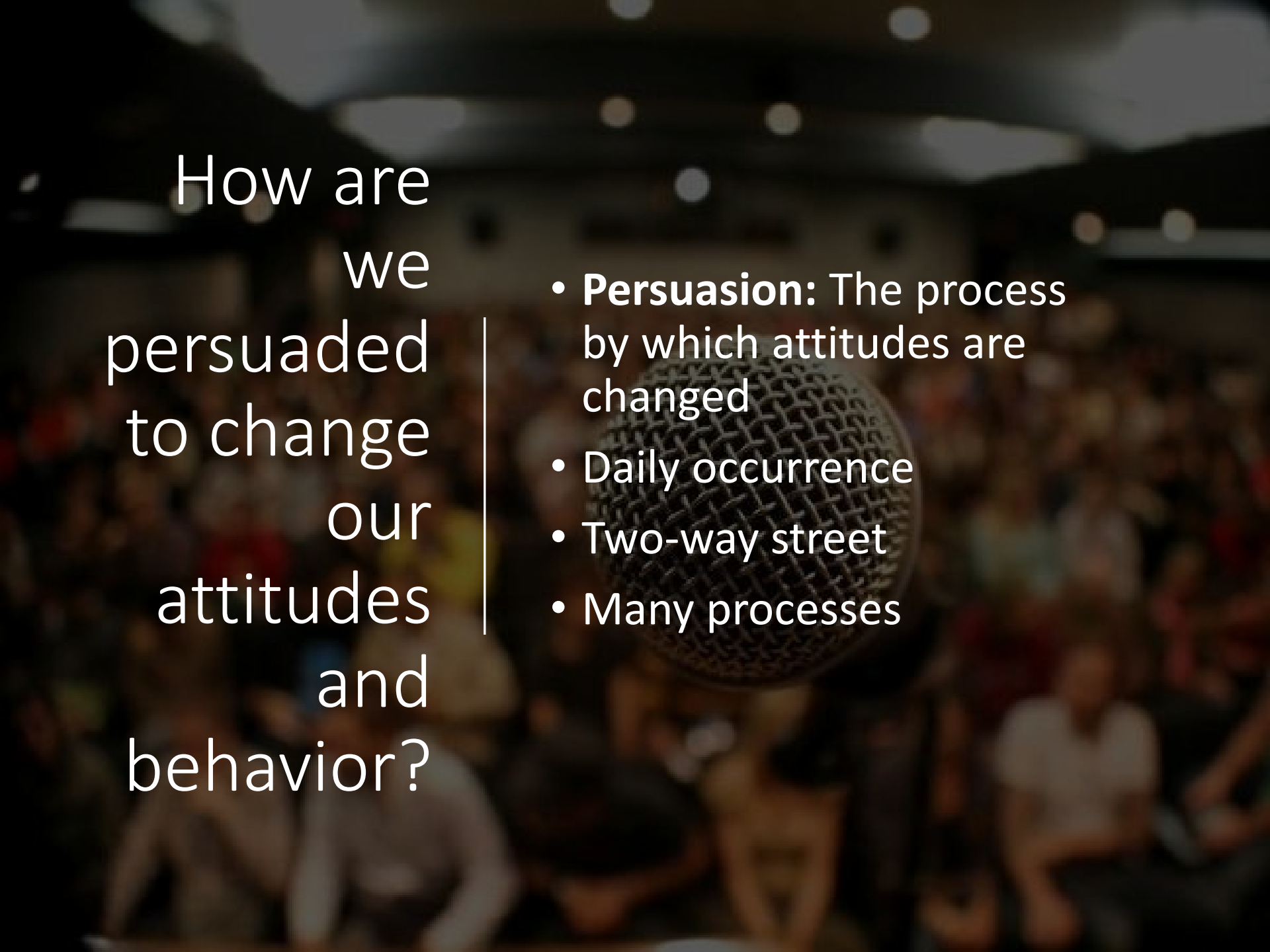- How accessible is the attitude to my awareness?

Do our attitudes predict our behavior?

- **Theory of planned behavior:** Suggests attitudes toward a behavior combine with subjective norms and perceived control to influence actions
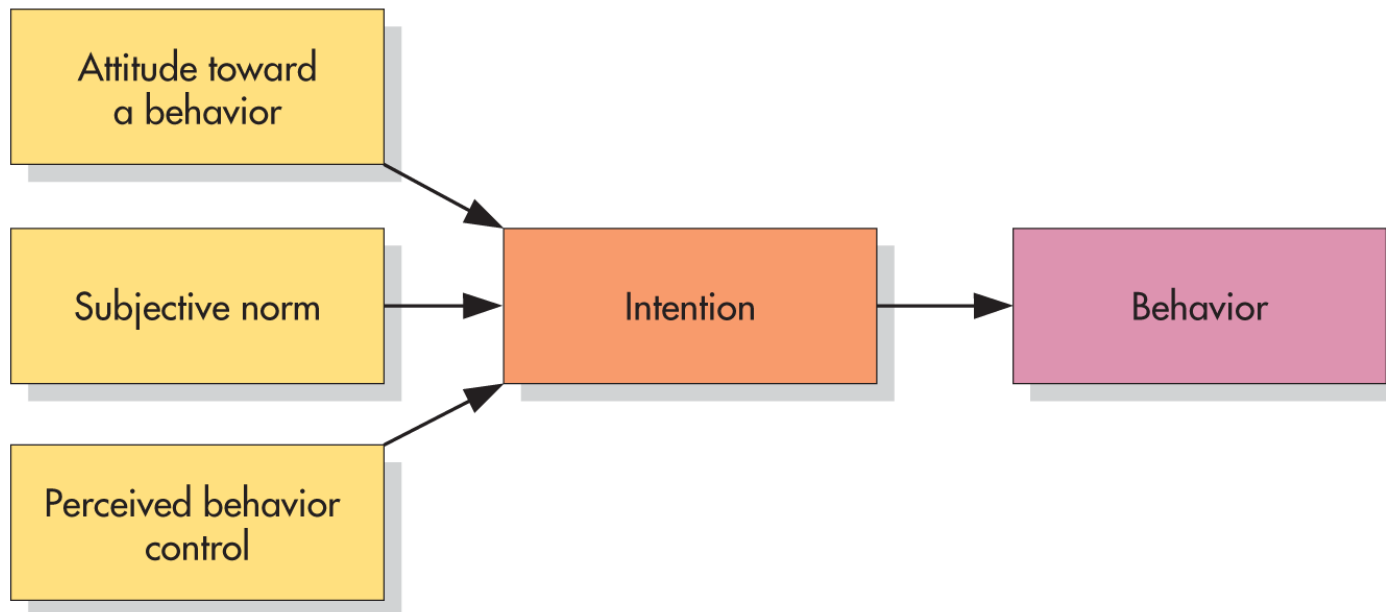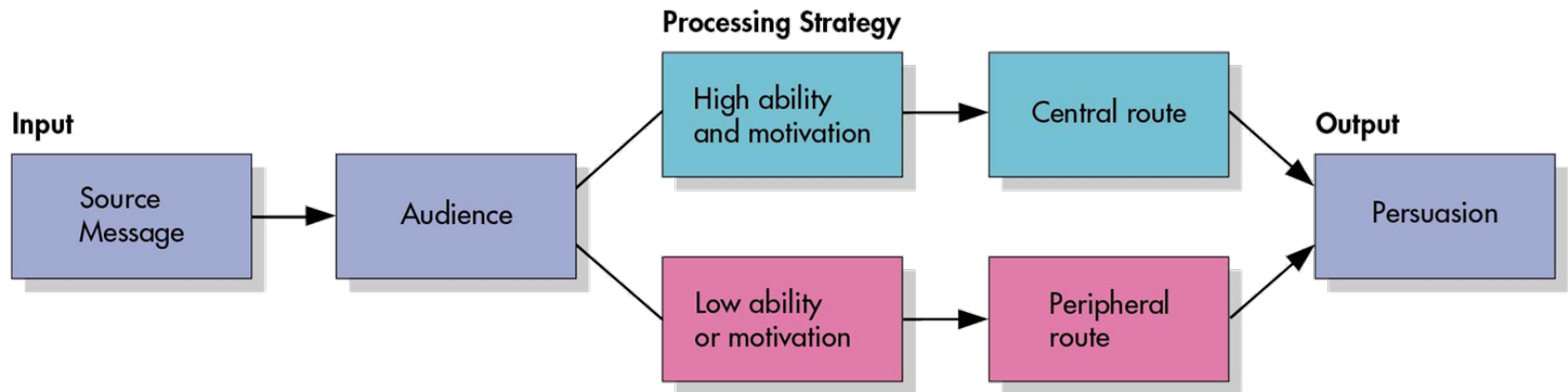
How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- **Persuasion:** The process by which attitudes are changed
- Daily occurrence
- Two-way street
- Many processes

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- **Dual-process model of persuasion:** Suggests we process information using the central and peripheral routes

Processing Strategy

Input

Source Message → Audience

Audience → High ability and motivation → Central route

Audience → Low ability or motivation → Peripheral route

Central route → Persuasion

Peripheral route → Persuasion

Output: Persuasion

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- **Central route:** Used to think carefully about a message
  - Influenced by the argument's strength
  - Requires reception, elaboration, and acceptance of the message

- **Peripheral route:** Used when <u>not</u> thinking carefully about a message
  - Influenced by superficial factors

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

Source credibility	**Source likeability**	**Message length**
Message discrepancy	**Message fear appeal**	**Audience positive emotions**
Audience need for cognition	**Audience self-monitoring**	**Audience culture**

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

TABLE 6.1
Whom Do You Trust?

In 2003, a CNN/USA Today Gallup poll was conducted to determine the level of honesty attributed to people from various occupational groups. Indicated below are the percentages of respondents who rated each group as "high" or "very high" in honesty.

Occupation	Honest? (%)
Nurses	83
Medical doctors	68
Pharmacists	68
College teachers	59
Police officers	59
Clergy	56
Bankers	35
Journalists	25
Business executives	18
Lawyers	16
Stockbrokers	15
Insurance salesmen	12
Car salesmen	7

- Credibility of the source
  - Competence
  - Trustworthiness
  - Selflessness
    - **Self-interest rule:** Suggests people who have something to gain from persuasion may be biased in their argument
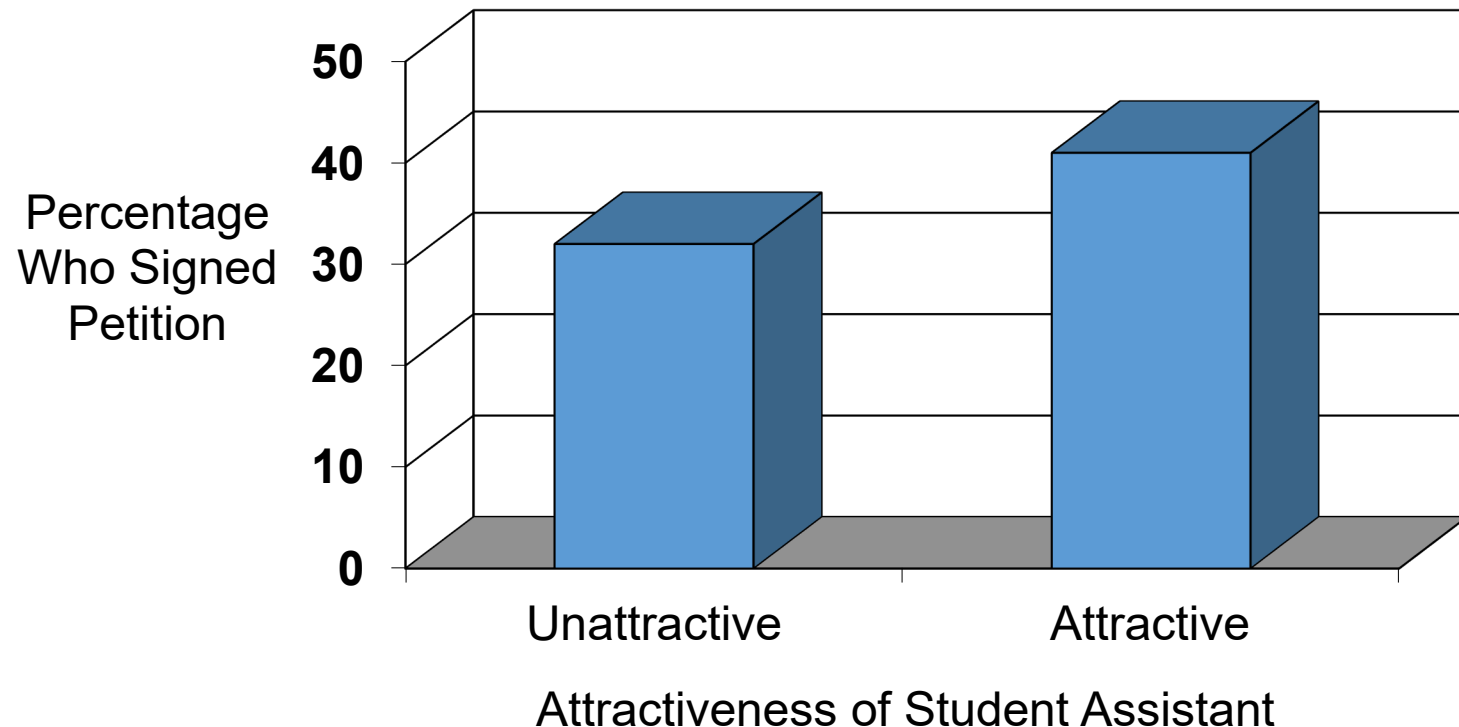
How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Likeability of the source
    - Similarity can enhance and dissimilarity can inhibit persuasion
    - Attractiveness can enhance persuasion

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

Chaiken (1979)

Percentage Who Signed Petition

Attractiveness of Student Assistant

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Length of the message
  - Longer is better if information is valid
  - Strong and relevant points enhance persuasion

- Message discrepancy
  - Moderate amounts of discrepancy enhance persuasion

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Message fear appeals
  - Arousing high levels of fear can be effective for people who do not resist
  - Impact depends on strength and presence of coping instructions

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Audience's positive emotions
  - Enhance persuasion
  - Activate peripheral route

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?
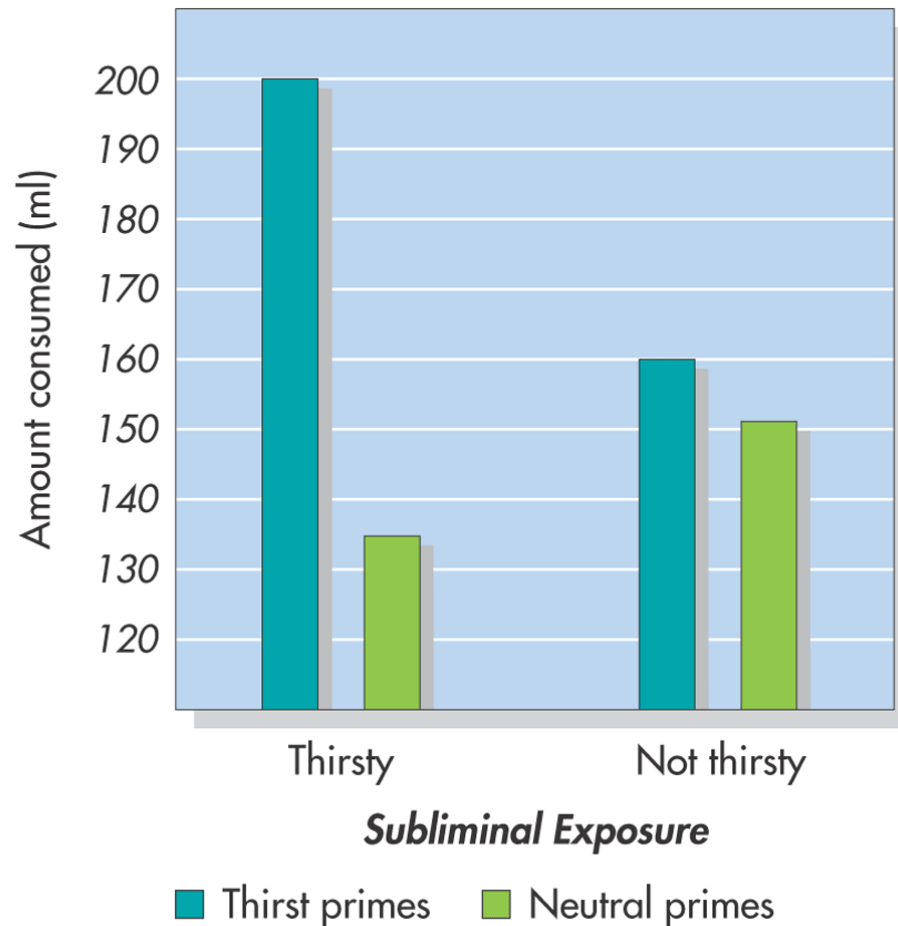
How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Audience's need for cognition
  - **Need for cognition:** The extent to which we enjoy effortful cognitive activities
  - High NC persuaded by information-oriented arguments
  - Low NC persuaded by peripheral-based arguments

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

TABLE 6.3

Need for Cognition Scale: Sample Items

Are you high or low in the need for cognition? These statements are taken from the NC Scale. If you agree with items 1, 3, and 5 and disagree with items 2, 4, and 6, you would probably be regarded as high in NC.

(Cacioppo & Petty, 1982.)

1. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.
2. Thinking is not my idea of fun.
3. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.
4. I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them.
5. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.
6. It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works.

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Audience's self-monitoring
    - High SM persuaded by arguments that appeal to public self-presentation
    - Low SM persuaded by information-oriented arguments
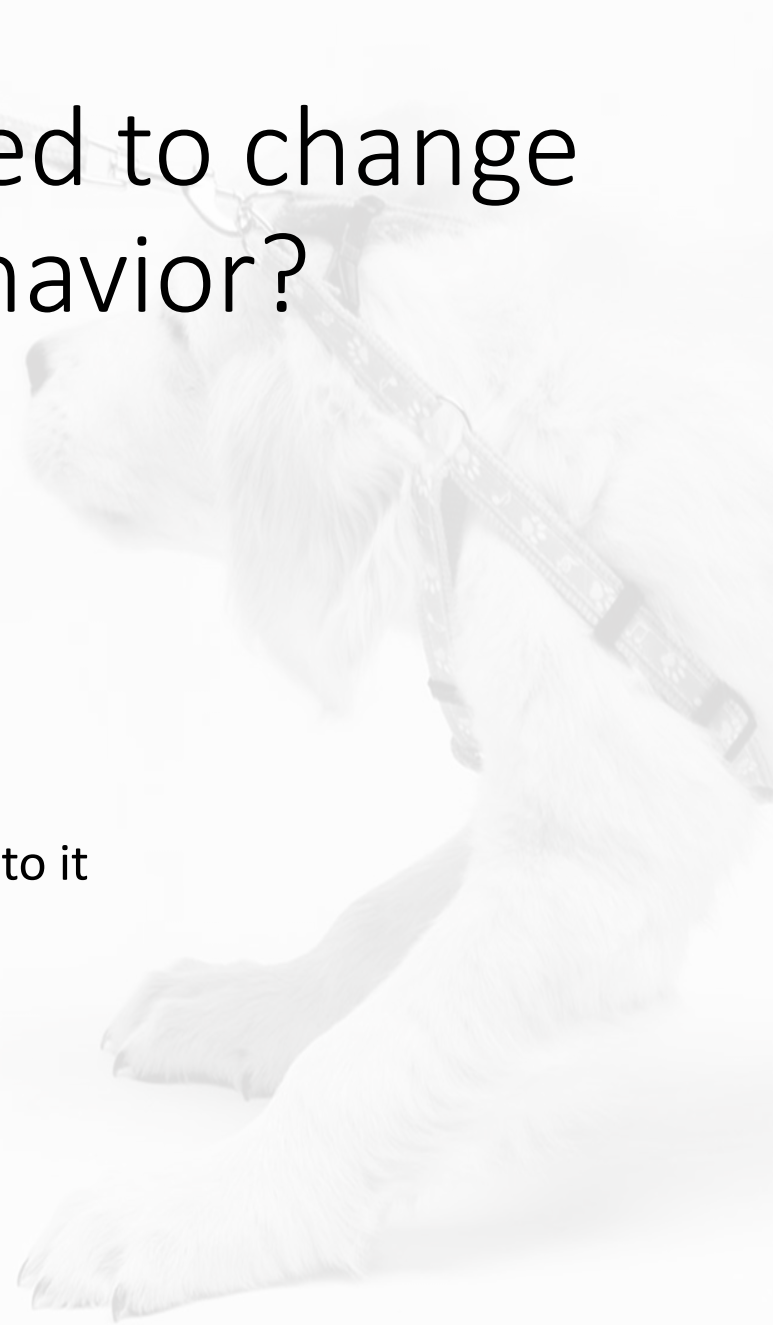
How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Audience's culture
    - Appeal to culturally shared values
    - Appeal to individual and group benefits

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

- Forewarning
  - More likely to resist when forewarned
  - Develop counterarguments
    - **Inoculation hypothesis:** Suggests exposure to weak arguments for a message increases later resistance to it
  - Assert our independence
    - **Psychological reactance theory:** Suggests we react to threats to our freedom by asserting ourselves

How are we persuaded to change our attitudes and behavior?

TABLE 6.4

Strategies for Resisting Persuasion

Strategy	Example
Attitude bolstering	"I reassure myself of facts that support the validity of my belief."
Counterarguing	"I would talk to myself and play devil's advocate."
Social validation	"I also rely on others with the same opinion to be there for me."
Negative affect	"I tend to get angry when someone tries to change my beliefs."
Assertions of confidence	"I doubt anybody could change my viewpoint."
Selective exposure	"Most of the time I just ignore them."
Source derogation	"I look for faults in the person presenting the challenging belief."

What is cognitive dissonance?

- **Cognitive consistency:** A state of mind in which attitudes and behaviors are compatible
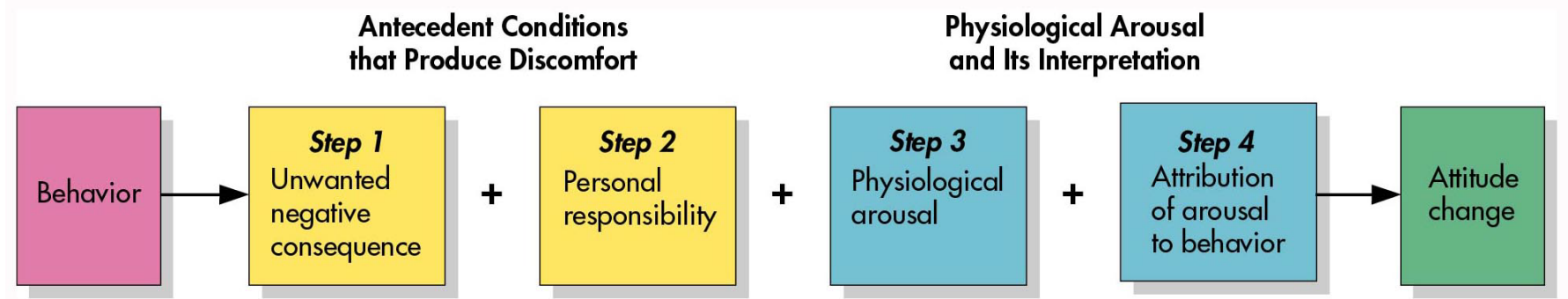
- **Cognitive dissonance:** A state of *tension* in which attitudes and behaviors are *in*compatible

  - **Cognitive dissonance theory:** Suggests we try to reduce this tension

How does it impact our attitudes and behaviors?

- Cognitive dissonance aroused under certain conditions

What is cognitive dissonance?

TABLE 6.5

Ways to Reduce Dissonance

"I need to be on a diet, yet I just dived head first into a chocolate mousse." If this were you, how would you reduce dissonance aroused by the discrepancy between your attitude and your behavior?

| Techniques	Examples
Change your attitude.	"I don't really need to be on a diet."
Change your perception of the behavior.	"I hardly ate any chocolate mousse."
Add consonant cognitions.	"Chocolate mousse is very nutritious."
Minimize the importance of the conflict.	"I don't care if I'm overweight—life is short!"
Reduce perceived choice.	"I had no choice; the mousse was prepared for this special occasion."
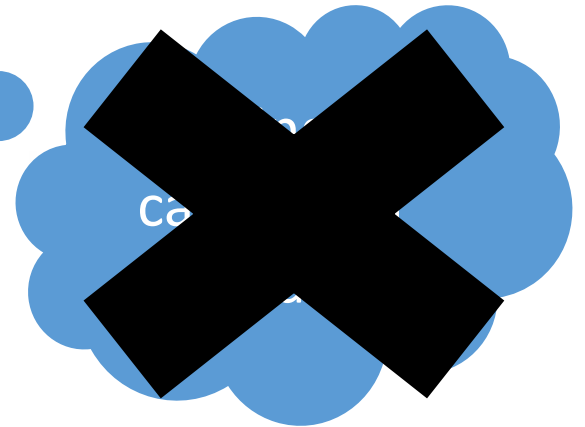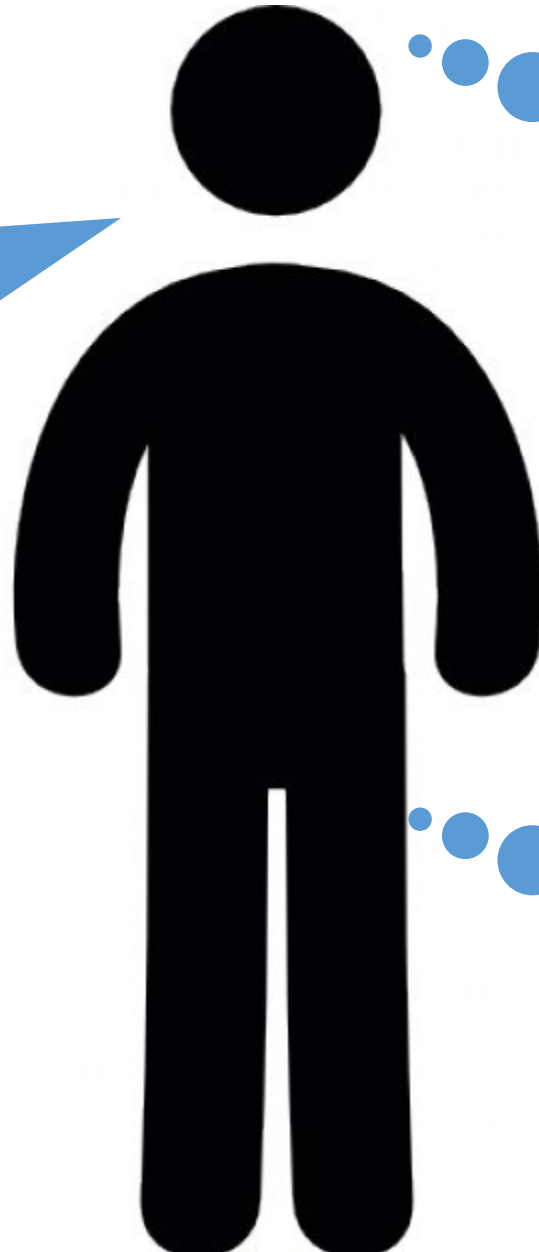
How does it impact our attitudes and behaviors?

- Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) asked participants to complete a *boring* activity and then tell the next participant it was *enjoyable*.
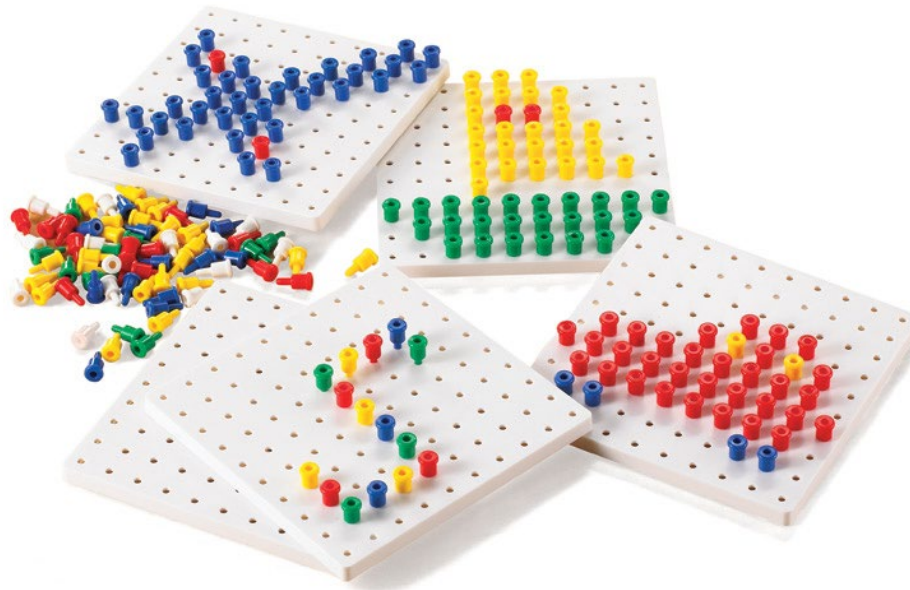
How does it impact our attitudes and behaviors?

- **Insufficient justification:** A condition in which people freely perform an attitude-discrepant behavior without a large reward
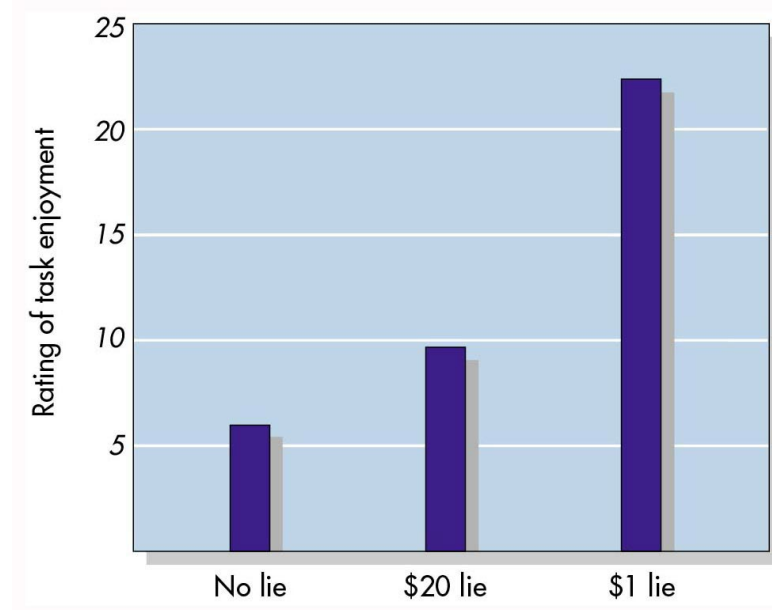
How does it impact our attitudes and behaviors?

- Festinger and Carlsmith (1959)
  - Attitude-discrepant behaviors can prompt attitude change
  - Big rewards do not always prompt big changes