

# The Marshmallow Test

In the early 1960s psychologist Walter Mischel began a longitudinal research study which measured impulsivity in 4 year olds and then examined several outcome variables upon their graduation from high school. Dr. Mischel and his research assistants independently placed a marshmallow in front of each child and told them that they could either have the one marshmallow now or, if they could wait a few minutes (10-15 min), they could have two marshmallows later.

Some of the children were able to wait. To maintain themselves they covered their eyes with their hands, rested their heads on their arms, talked to themselves, sang, and made up games with their hands and feet. These children were rewarded with two marshmallows. The other children (the more impulsive ones) grabbed the one marshmallow almost as soon as the researcher left the room.

What Dr. Mischel found 14 years later was that the the “grabbers” (or the impulsive ones) were:

- Seen by others as stubborn and overreactive
- Prone to jealousy and envy
- Easily upset with frustrations
- Troubled with low self-esteem, thinking of themselves as “bad”

However, the “waiters” (or the gratification delayers) were:

- More socially competent
- More personally effective and self-assertive
- More able to cope with frustrations of life
- More trustworthy and dependable
- More academically successful
- 210 points higher on their SATs scores

This study showed the importance of impulse control for academic, emotional and social success!