

Random Thoughts on the Brain

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There is no real theme here, just a few recent things I read that made me pause and think, “That’s interesting.”

From the *Another-Reason-to-be-Patient-with-Teenagers* file:

- Helen Fisher, Cultural Anthropologist and author, investigated how the brain responds when someone falls in love. Her book, [Why We Love](#), looked at the brain mechanisms and emotions that a person experiences when they fall in love. It turns out that for those in love, particularly in the early stages, the brain’s reward centers light up. Using MRI brain scans, she took a look at the brains of those in love and concluded, “The part of the brain that lit up the strongest was that associated with rewards and pleasure.” She goes on to explain that some individuals who had reported being “madly in love” spent as much as 80 percent of their waking hours not being able to think of anyone else. This may help explain why some of our teens and pre-teens are particularly distracted; especially when that *special someone* is in the room.

From the *Almost-Really-Good-News* file:

- Researchers from Oxford University found that individuals who consumed chocolate, wine, and tea had enhanced cognitive performance relative to those who didn’t consume those foods. It seems there are micronutrients, known as flavonoids, in those foods that seem to enhance cognition. That is the good news. But wait, the study was done on individuals between the ages of 71 and 74 and only moderate amounts were consumed. They warn that much more research needs to be done before final conclusions can be made. So, we still need to practice self control over the Holidays.

From the *That-Makes-Sense* file:

- Have you ever noticed that in a noisy room, say a school cafeteria, where there is a hum of dozens of noises and conversations you can hear your name from across the room even when you can understand nothing else? According to the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, that happens because “Your ears sense sounds, but it’s your brain that does the hearing. Your brain has to be selective about what it senses, or hears, otherwise it would be overwhelmed by sound. Your name is near the top of the list of things your brain considers to be important, therefore it will recognize it in a noisy room.” No wonder the kid who didn’t seem to be paying attention in class responds right away when you call his name.