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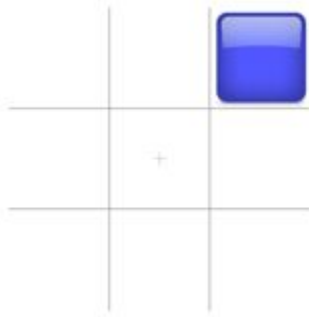
April 22, 2012

Can You Make Yourself Smarter?

By lincoln stoller

Computer-based training programs claim to be able to increase your intelligence. Unfortunately the field is filled with questionable research and general ignorance about science, learning, intelligence, and psychology.

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Dual-N-Back game screen by [Lincoln Stoller](#)

An article by this same titled just appeared in the New York Times Magazine and details the computer-based brain training Dual-N-Back game. The Dual-N-back game can be downloaded for free from :

<http://brainworkshop.sourceforge.net/>

This article gives background to the research and the phenomena. Unfortunately, like most things published by the mainstream press, it's a mediocre article because the author doesn't know the field and can't distinguish a valid from an invalid opinion. The article quotes an authority from Virginia Tech who is unaware of what he doesn't know about cold fusion, and the author presents this person's opinion as useful. Cold fusion is irrelevant to this topic, but the expert uses his flawed understanding of it as an example, thereby undermining his authority and the authority of the article.

Nevertheless, you can try to tell the truth from the falsehoods yourself and get a sense of

what's going on by reading the article at the NY Time Magazine web site:

[click here](#)

I'm currently reading an "old" book (1994) titled "House of Cards: psychology and psychotherapy built on myth" by Robyn Dawes

http://books.google.com/books?id=J6iq_khf5HkC&printsec=frontcover&dq=house+of+card&hl=en&sa=X&ei=myWUT9WhC-qx6AGpmMW_BA&ved=0CEcQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=house%20of%20card&f=false

which makes the point that the field of professional psychology has little or no grounding in science or validating research. This is an interesting point wrt to the above field of mental enhancement training.

A critical review of this book titled "House of Cards: not dealing with a full deck" at :

<http://psychcentral.com/hocart.htm>

seems to miss what I have so far gleaned to be the books main point, which is NOT that psychology offers no benefit, which the critique claims, but that psychology cannot demonstrate its benefit because clinical psychologists are no longer trained to distinguish fact from fancy. The practitioners' main flaw being a weakness in basic logic and rhetoric that has driven the field as a whole to mistake correlations for causes, shared opinion for truth, and to be unconcerned with the result.

I can attest that in my own research I find peer-reviewed and journal-published psychology articles in particular, and medical articles in general to fail in this regard. Many of these articles use references as a blunt object for which quantity of published opinion supports their thesis. Few, if any, actually engage in argument that uses references as sources of further detail. In short, most authors don't know and do not seem able to judge the validity of the methods employed in the articles that they cite.

This gets back to Robyn Dawes assertion that the field as a whole is undermined by the failing quality of its research. And this, in turn, leads down a rabbit hole of history and politics. As Dawes says early in his text (p.21):

"Having separated itself so far from its research base, how did professional psychology survive? One answer is through lobbying the state and national governments for money and privilege."

In this respect, and with regard to the question posed about making yourself smarter, there is a lot of money to be made, so don't expect any good answers soon. Do not believe what you read; just download the Dual-N-Back game and play it yourself.

Submitters Website: <http://www.tengerresearch.com>

Submitters Bio:

Physicist, neurologist, neurofeedback practitioner, junior sorcerer, enthusiastic participant in extreme explorations involving mind and body. Believer in the idea that individuals find meaning in bettering and helping to evolve the ecologies in which they participate.

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