A woman's touch: Physical contact increases financial risk taking

May 11 2010

A woman's touch is all it takes for people to throw caution to the wind. That's the conclusion of a new study published online in *Psychological Science,* a journal of the Association for Psychological Science. If a female experimenter patted a participant on the back, they'd risk more money than if she just talked to them, or if a man did the patting. The researchers think this comes from the way that mothers use touch to make their babies feel secure.

When we are infants, we receive a lot of touch from our mothers. This creates a sense of attachment, which makes a baby feel secure. This helps the youngster's sense of adventure; they're more willing to take the risks that come with exploring unfamiliar contexts and strange situations. Jonathan Levav of Columbia University and Jennifer J. Argo of the University of Alberta wanted to know what happens when those babies grow up: Does physical contact also affect how willing adults are to take risks?

Participants were tested to see if they would take risks, such as investing money or taking a gamble. When they started the experiment, they were greeted in different ways: by a female or male experimenter and with a light, comforting touch on the shoulder, a handshake, or no physical contact at all. At the end of the experiment, they also filled out surveys that assessed how secure they felt. The researchers found that participants who were touched felt more secure and took bigger risks than those who weren't - but only if they were touched by a woman. The effect was stronger for a touch on the back than for a handshake, but

went away entirely for participants who were touched by a man.

The results suggest that a woman's touch works the same on adults as it does on infants: making them feel more secure and more willing to take risks.

Provided by Association for Psychological Science

Citation: A woman's touch: Physical contact increases financial risk taking (2010, May 11) retrieved 26 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-05-woman-physical-contact-financial.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.