

MEN'S HEALTH



Testosterone and Behavior: What Happens When Someone Is Watching

192 healthy men. A single dose. A learning task played alone or in front of observers.

Swipe

THE OLD ASSUMPTION

People Are Nicer When Someone's Watching. Everyone Assumes Testosterone Makes That Worse.

Scientists call it the audience effect, and there were two competing predictions for what testosterone would do to it: shrink it, or amplify it.

THE EXPERIMENT

192 Men. One Dose. Double-Blind.

A single 150 mg dose of testosterone gel or an identical placebo, then a learning task where one symbol paid out 75 percent of the time, the other 25.

WHAT HAPPENED

Placebo Men Got More Generous When Watched. Testosterone Men Did Not.

Placebo: more correct choices for charity when observed (OR 1.43, $p=0.042$).

Testosterone: no change at all (OR 0.87, $p=0.418$).

WHAT STAYED THE SAME

It Was Never About Selfishness

Choices made for themselves did not change with the drug, with being watched, or with both together.

THE DEEPER FINDING

Learning Was Untouched. One Specific Mental Step Changed.

Of five modeled decision parameters, only choice consistency, how strongly learned knowledge steers the hand, shifted with testosterone and an audience.

WHO IT AFFECTED MOST

The Effect Was Strongest in Dominant Men

Testosterone reduced correct choices for others under observation specifically among more dominant men (OR 0.60, $p=0.008$), and was not significant in less dominant men.

THE BOTTOM LINE



A Window Into Mechanism, Not a Verdict on Character

One dose, one afternoon, healthy young men, no aggression measured. It says nothing about months of treatment or a genuine diagnosed deficiency.