

COLLOQUIUM QUESTIONS

(Colloquium takes place at Mgr. Malatincová's office, Dept. of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Building C, 5th floor)

Please register for a particular time in the IS when exam dates are available.

1. A mother cares for two 5 year old children – Alice and Michal. She prepares pancakes for dinner. Then she serves both of them one pancake. Suddenly she realizes Michal's pancake is bigger, so she cuts a piece from the bigger pancake and puts it on Alice's plate. One of the children will probably start to cry - which one and why? How can the mother easily solve the situation?
2. Brian wants to buy his first new car. He is very excited, but after narrowing down the choice to two cars, he suddenly cannot make the final decision. In the end, he asks his wife for her opinion, who tells him that she prefers Car A. At that moment, Brian suddenly realizes that Car B is much better by several criteria and, to his wife's surprise, goes for the latter option. Why didn't Brian see the difference before? What happened?
3. Does our memory work like a video camera - precisely records what is happening around us? Can we rely on our memories? If not, why?
4. What factors influence our willingness to conform to other people and not to do what we think is right? In what situations do you tend to conform?
5. Many companies today adopt a 'free trial' marketing strategy in which they let the customer 'try out' the product for several weeks or months for free. After that, the customer can either purchase the product or return/stop using it without any financial or other commitments. This strategy turns out to work very well: Even people who initially did not plan to buy the product often end up doing so after the free trial period, although their general attitude to the product (its quality, usefulness, etc.) has not changed. Why do you think this happens?
6. Peter is a university student who has a persisting problem: Every time he leaves for home for the weekend or a holiday, he has his suitcase packed with books and papers he plans to study. However, once he gets home, he never even looks at them. Despite this, he keeps carrying the heavy books up and down every time he travels home. Why do you think this happens?
7. Sarah has decided to adopt a dramatically healthier lifestyle. She wakes up two hours earlier than she used to, goes running, has a cold shower and eats a super-healthy breakfast before she goes to work. In the afternoon, she plans to do some housework and study English but instead finds herself turning on the TV and switching from one channel to another until late in the night, with a pack of cookies at hand. Before going to sleep, she feels remorse and makes a promise to start anew in the morning. The "cycle" repeats itself for a few days until Sarah completely drops her fitness plans. What do you think Sarah's problem is? Why did her efforts fail?
8. To what extent do you think Stanford prison experiment simulates conditions in the real prisons? What might be similar? What might be different?

9. George was given a really difficult homework. He went to his older brother and asked him to do it for him. His brother refused, but offered to explain everything. After the session George was able to solve his homework without hesitation. Is there any concept in psychology that explains this? If so, who is the author and how can we use it?

10. Stephen's parents want their son to be a successful young man with a respectable job and meaningful hobbies. To help him out, they provide him various stimulating 'toys' for birthdays and Christmases: a telescope, a camera, a bicycle, a bow, a fishing rod, a guitar, books on various topics, etc. However, although Stephen is very happy about every new present, as he grows older, he spends more and more of his time just playing computer games in his room and doing nothing in particular. His parents do not understand how he can be like this in such a stimulating environment. Can you explain what may be happening?

11. Why won't people in situations, when many other people are present, help a person in need?

12. Maggie, Lucy and Linda all should be working on their final theses. However, it is still long before the deadline, and even the slightest idea of the thesis is very stressful to all of them and puts them in a bad mood for days. The three students deal with this situation differently: Maggie avoids thinking about the thesis and uses various distractions to maintain a positive mood. Lucy tries to perceive the thesis in a matter-of-fact way as a technical problem that need to be solved as quickly as possible with as little effort as possible. Linda spends every day in front of a computer screen with an open document, telling herself to keep calm, forget about stress and maintain a positive attitude about the thesis. Which of these anti-stress strategies do you think is the most effective one and why?

13. Several years ago, Susan and Jack got lost in a forest while hiking. As they were trying to find their way out, both of them equally worried, Susan slipped on a rock and into a cold muddy pond, getting her clothes drenched all up to the waist. Jack laughed; Susan cried. Every time they would tell the story later, their accounts were very different. Susan would say the forest was large and dense; Jack would say the forest was small and thin. Susan would say it was cold and dark; Jack would say it was a nice dusk, and the weather was fine. Susan would say it was a scary, disturbing experience; Jack would say it was a thrilling adventure. And when Susan said there were scary noises all around, Jack would say, humorously, that they were just birds chirping and that Susan had no sense of romance and had always been a bit of a scaredy-cat. In fact, he had been calling Susan "my little scaredy-cat" ever since and would tease her every time she emphasized how she hated it. What do you think are the reasons for this difference in recollections and for the difference in Jack's and Susan's behaviour?

14. Do you think that people from other cultures can have problems with understanding Western-style pictures? What can be the sources of differences among cultures in perception of pictorial material?