

Social Comparison and Negative Emotions

Envy and schadenfreude (pleasure at another's misfortune) are profoundly social emotions and, perhaps, uniquely human. The mechanisms and brain areas underlying these sentiments are unclear. Using brain imaging, **Takahashi *et al.*** (p. [937](#); see the Perspective by [Lieberman and Eisenberger](#)) found that the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, where cognitive conflicts are processed, plays a central role in processing envy. Dorsal anterior cingulate activation was stronger when the envied person had superior and more self-relevant characteristics. In contrast, the ventral striatum, a central node for processing reward, was associated with schadenfreude. Ventral striatum activation was more intense when misfortune befell an envied person more so than a neutral person. The more dorsal anterior cingulate activation an envied individual triggered, the greater the ventral striatum activation when bad luck struck them.