

We _____ to _____ and _____ others about our extraordinary experiences--that time we _____ Mount Kilimanjaro, _____ to _____ that rare food or _____ a celebrity on the street--but research _____ this may not _____ such a wise idea. In fact, the findings _____ in the latest edition of psychology journal, _____ that _____ these extraordinary experiences _____ not as beneficial as we might _____ and can actually _____ at a social cost.

“Extraordinary experiences _____ pleasurable in the moment but can _____ us socially worse off in the long run,” _____ psychological scientist and study author Gus Cooney of Harvard University. “The participants in our study mistakenly _____ that _____ an extraordinary experience would _____ them the star of the conversation. But they _____ wrong because to _____ extraordinary is to _____ different than other people, and social interaction is _____ in similarities.”

Cooney, who _____ the research with co-authors Daniel T. Gilbert of Harvard University and Timothy D. Wilson of the University of Virginia, was _____ in _____ the negative consequences of extraordinary experiences _____ on his own observations with others. He had _____ that we _____ keen to _____ our friends about new or rare experiences, but most successful conversations _____ about ordinary topics. He therefore _____ “if there might _____ times when extraordinary experiences _____ more costs than benefits, and whether people _____ what those times are.”

To _____ if he was right, Cooney, Gilbert and Wilson _____ sixty-eight participants to their laboratory in groups of four. In each group, one participant was _____ to _____ a highly rated video of a street magician _____ for a crowd, while the other three participants were _____ to _____ a lower-rated animated video. Participants were _____ about each video’s rating. After _____ the videos, the participants _____ around a table and _____ a five-minute unstructured conversation about them.

The findings _____ not what participants _____. It _____ we should _____ more careful when _____ and _____ our experiences, because the participants who _____ the higher-rated video, the “extraordinary experiencers”, _____ worse after the group discussion than those who _____ the lower-rated video. Even though, before the experiment, all participants _____ that the “extraordinary experiencer” would _____ more during the post-video discussion, that person actually _____ less and _____ excluded from the conversation as a result.

Answers:

We love to reminisce and tell others about our extraordinary experiences--that time we climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, got to taste that rare food or ran into a celebrity on the street--but research suggests this may not be such a wise idea. In fact, the findings published in the latest edition of psychology journal, suggest that sharing these extraordinary experiences are not as beneficial as we might think and can actually come at a social cost.

“Extraordinary experiences are pleasurable in the moment but can leave us socially worse off in the long run,” says psychological scientist and study author Gus Cooney of Harvard University. “The participants in our study mistakenly thought that having an extraordinary experience would make them the star of the conversation. But they were wrong because to be extraordinary is to be different than other people, and social interaction is grounded in similarities.”

Cooney, who conducted the research with co-authors Daniel T. Gilbert of Harvard University and Timothy D. Wilson of the University of Virginia, was interested in exploring the negative consequences of extraordinary experiences based on his own observations with others. He had noticed that we are keen to tell our friends about new or rare experiences, but most successful conversations are about ordinary topics. He therefore wondered “if there might be times when extraordinary experiences have more costs than benefits, and whether people know what those times are.”

To find out if he was right, Cooney, Gilbert and Wilson invited sixty-eight participants to their laboratory in groups of four. In each group, one participant was asked to watch a highly rated video of a street magician performing for a crowd, while the other three participants were asked to watch a lower-rated animated video. Participants were told about each video's rating. After watching the videos, the participants sat around a table and had a five-minute unstructured conversation about them.

The findings were not what participants expected. It seems we should be more careful when choosing and sharing our experiences, because the participants who watched the higher-rated video, the “extraordinary experiencers”, reported feeling worse after the group discussion than those who watched the lower-rated video. Even though, before the experiment, all participants thought that the “extraordinary experiencer” would talk more during the post-video discussion, that person actually spoke less and felt excluded from the conversation as a result.