



Marshmallows

Photo courtesy of Marshmallows/<https://flic.kr/p/8wF8Jf>

Don't eat the marshmallow ...

yet! 

Adapted from *CBC News*
by Nancy Carson

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Walter Mischel designed an experiment. Mischel is a psychology professor. He wanted to study self-control in young children. The children were ages four to six.

“The Marshmallow Test”

The children got one treat. The researcher gave each child one marshmallow, pretzel or cookie.

Then she told the child she was going out. She said, “You can eat it now or you can wait for me to come back. If you can wait for me, you will get two treats.”

Results of the test

Mischel tried the test with children of different ethnic groups. The results were the same. About one-third of the children could wait for the second treat. Other children ate it right away. Or a few minutes later.

Why are some patient?

All children wanted the treat. The patient children did many things while waiting. They covered their eyes, they sang songs, they played with their clothes. Or they played under their desk. They “forgot” about the treat. Time passed quickly for them.

Greater success as adults

Researchers studied these children for many years. The researchers watched the children until the children became adults. The children who waited were more successful as adults.

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The children who could not wait often had trouble paying attention. Many could not handle stress. Many found it hard to keep friends.

Self-control can be learned

Mischel now believes that self-control can be learned. Children can learn ways to wait for the second marshmallow. Parents can teach a child to wait for dinner, to wait to open a gift, or to save money.

Not measuring self-control

The Marshmallow Test did not measure self-control in kids. It is not true that some kids can wait and others cannot. Very young children can learn ways that help them to wait for something.

“They want the second marshmallow,” says Mischel. But what can the kids do to help them wait?

Beat your shortcomings

“We can’t control the world but we can control how we think about it.”

Even the smartest kids need to do their homework and turn off the TV.

“Intelligence is at the mercy of self-control,” Mischel concludes.

Not about your personality

We can learn to control strong feelings, save money, or say no to dessert.

The real challenge is turning mental tricks into habits.

This requires years of careful practice. It’s not just about marshmallows.



Have you heard of “s’mores”?

S’more: (a shortened form of “some more”) a sweet snack which is a sandwich made with toasted marshmallows, chocolate and graham crackers.

Recipe for s’mores

<http://whatscookingamerica.net/Cookie/Smores/Smores.htm>

Making a S’more is a special treat.
Photo by Christopher Penn/flic.kr/p/ayEmVV

Videos and links

Oliver and Breanna take the marshmallow test:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZC5JlnqsGBg>

Different ages do the test:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo4WF3cSd9Q#t=24>