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Proper stimuli

Regarding "Tuning in to a tasty meal" (SN: 11/15/97, p. 315): If the paddlefish decides in favor of life (risking a nonfatal shock) rather than death (not responding to an electric stimulus that in its world is associated with food), then I would say that it is indeed clever and the one who is "not that clever" is the researcher.

I'd like to see a human put in a lab test whereby the human had to decide between not responding to food (death) or risking a nonfatal shock by eating (life).

*Claudia Yapp
Needham, Mass.*

Motivation and recovery

"AA's motivated benefits" (SN: 11/8/97, p. 297) hits the target dead on. The motivational fire it refers to is a *want* to get better. This comes from the individual.

Too much credit is given to support treatment, medication, and self-help programs. If a recovering person wants recovery as much as or more than the previous desire for a drink or fix, recovery is assured. The *want* usually involves a psychic experience entailing adoption of a Higher Power to provide the necessary external assistance.

After all, the person assumes the blame for the addiction, why not the credit for the recovery?

*W.C. (Bill) Schlondrop
Alcohol Recovery Advisory Services
El Paso, Texas*

Most persons working in the occupations related to recovery from chemical dependence could have written the essence of "AA's motivated benefits" without any formal research. There is no news in it.

Other programs, such as Self Management And Recovery Training (SMART), Rational Recovery (RR), and Secular Organization for

Sobriety (SOS), use motivational approaches to recovery that are not incorporated into the ubiquitous 12-step approach. There is no treatment or support program, to my knowledge, that will motivate toward recovery those who simply do not want the alternatives to their use or abuse of chemicals. For such individuals, the alternative, when society deems it necessary, remains the carrot-and-stick approach.

*Luis Carlson
Silicon Valley SMART Recovery
Fremont, Calif.*

Most, if not all, people who have long-term success in Alcoholics Anonymous, with or without the benefit of formal treatment, never consider themselves as having "completed" a 12-step program. Rather, they constantly work to improve their lives through the principles of the program.

*Hugh C.
Alpharetta, Ga.*

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Cover: The ancient Maya built a huge balcony in front of a cave at Guatemala's Naj Tunich site. Religious ceremonies and shamans' rituals may have taken place on the balcony and in the cave's depths. **Page 56**
(Photo: James E. Brady)

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