

Thinking like a Coffee Pot

By Leila Giles

Couldn't imagine reading this article until you'd emptied your mug? You're not the only one. The National Coffee Association has found that [62% of adults](#) drink at least one cup of coffee every single day.

If you're used to starting your morning with this common pick-me-up, days when you run out of beans or oversleep can seem absolutely miserable. Without the expected boost to focus and alertness, your whole day can feel off.

But if we look at some tricks our mind likes to play, there might be a way to game the system. I'm not saying you should give up your morning coffee—it's delicious and [nutritionally beneficial](#). However, on those days when you've missed your Americano, there are ways to trick your brain.

Primed to Succeed

Some of our confidence in coffee stems something called "priming." Priming is similar to a placebo effect. In placebos, your body is making an educated guess. For example, if someone tells you that a vitamin is in fact a painkiller, that Vitamin C might ease your headache. With priming, your brain doesn't have to make a guess. It just prepares for something that will probably happen.

Your brain knows that when it thinks seriously about coffee, it usually receives caffeine. Caffeine helps you focus better. So your brain decides to smooth out the process, doing away with that middle step. Over time, when you're still brewing that cup of coffee your brain starts boosting alertness.

A recent [study](#) dug into this interesting phenomenon. The University of Toronto researchers were trying to compare tea to coffee, but also found that their study participants didn't have to drink the chosen beverages to grow focused, they just had to think about it.

Fake It 'Til You Make It

You can use this quirk of the brain to your advantage. Out of coffee? Sit in your usual chair, drinking a glass of water. It won't be the same, but you might be able to snap your brain into gear anyway.

In the study I mentioned before, the simulated caffeine effect was created by reading and writing about coffee for a few minutes. Yes, that does mean that this article is waking you up right now!

If your coffee habits exceed those of the average Joe (coffee pun intended), it might be harder to replicate the effect. The more coffee your body is used to, the more it relies on the actual substance.

Believing is believing

If this all sounds too good to be true, you might not be able to gain the benefits of priming. Unfair as that sounds, the [strength](#) of your association is very important. If you are really confident that coffee increases your alertness, the priming effect will work better. If you're doubtful that imaginary coffee could help you, it probably won't.

So what're you waiting for? Go have a nice hot drink...or think about one.