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On The Show

A hairy challenge: 428 employees shave heads for cancer charity

 Eun Kyung Kim
TODAY

18 hours ago



Eddie Pimentel / Scott Resendes

Oh my, it's getting chilly in here! Hundreds of employees of Granite Telecommunications shaved their heads to raise money for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

What started as a "silly" dare between a chief executive officer and his employee has turned into a \$2.1 million donation for cancer research.

On Monday, 428 employees of a Massachusetts company had their heads, beards or both shorn to raise money for charity. The participants included 36 women, nearly half of whom had their hair completely shaved off. Some donated their tresses to [Locks of Love](#).

"There are a lot of bald people around the office right now, and everyone is complaining about how cold they are," Dainya Sylvester, who helped organize the fundraiser for [Granite Telecommunications](#), said with a laugh Thursday.

The idea started as a joke. Chief executive Rob Hale last month had dared one of his employees to shave off his long, ZZ Top-style beard in exchange for a company



Eddie Pimentel / Scott Resendes

The haircut challenge at Granite Telecommunications started out small, then gained momentum.

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Sorry, Pharrell. Music doesn't make everyone happy, study shows

Meghan Holohan
TODAY contributor

16 hours ago



MICHAEL YADA / AMPAS / HANDOUT / EPA

Pharrell Williams singing "Happy" on stage during the 86th annual Academy Awards ceremony.

The Pharrell Williams mega-hit "Happy" makes most people, well, happy. But not everyone wants to clap along, no matter how infectious the beat. A new study finds that some people feel indifferent to music, what researchers dubbed musical anhedonia.

Researchers at the Cognition and Brain Plasticity Group at the University of Barcelona discovered some people derived no reward from music, according to the report published Thursday in Current Biology.

"I think there are a lot of individual differences to how to people react to emotional stimuli," says Psyche Loui, an associate professor of psychology and neuroscience and behavior at Wesleyan University, who was not involved with the study. "What's so special about music is so personal and individually dependent."



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Video: A new study says some people derive no pleasure from listening to music and show no reaction to it.

The researchers had three groups of 10 people, which were divided by people who reported low, medium, or high sensitivity to music. None of the subjects were tone deaf and they all experienced rewards from other stimuli, such as food or sex. Each group participated in two tasks. In the first, people rated how

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much pleasure they experienced while listening to music and in the second they played a game to win or lose real money.

"The hypothesis was that if people in the low sensitivity to music reward group had specific musical anhedonia, they would show normal activity to monetary rewards, but they would show reduced (or no) activity to pleasant music," writes lead researcher Josep Marco-Pallarés in an email.

"The novelty of our study is that we describe specific anhedonia to music, that is lack ... reward specifically to music but not other type of stimuli."

The researchers used skin conduction to measure whether people who reported that music gave them chills, for example, actually experienced the chills.

"[The] anhedonia group showed no physiological responses to pleasant music ... but showed standard responses to monetary rewards. However, surprisingly, our anhedonic participants were able to correctly identify the emotions evoked by music (that is, to know whether a song was happy, sad...)," says Marco-Pallarés.

Being able to indentify the emotions in music shows that people with musical anhedonia understand feelings; they just don't get music in the same way.

"I found [the study] interesting. They found that there was a group of people that didn't get pleasure out of listening to music," says Kenneth Heilman, who was not involved in the study.

Some people do not enjoy music because they experience tone-deafness or their reward system is defective. But that's not the case in this study.

"It means that there is nothing wrong with their reward centers or nothing wrong with their hearing or their perception of music. And this is a taste," says neurologist Heilman, The James E. Rooks Jr. Distinguished Professor of Neurology at University of Florida College of Medicine.

Marco-Pallarés says this shows people experience rewards uniquely. Maybe music doesn't do it for some, but food or sex does.

"[T]here [are] people that enjoy opera while others hate it and like rock music. But the important point here is that a whole domain (music) might impact differently the reward network than other domains ... that might help us in our understanding of the reward network," he says.

You can test your music sensitivity here. (A score of 40-60 is normal sensitivity to music. A score greater than 60 is a high sensitivity to music. A score less than 40 is low sensitivity to music.)

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