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Connecting minds and sharing emotions through human mimicry

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Connecting minds and sharing emotions through human mimicry:

by Eliska Prochazkova

1. The tendency to synchronize emotional expressions with others may give rise to advanced human social capacities such as empathy and trust (Preston and de Waal, 2002).
2. Spontaneous synchrony occurs on many levels of expression including motor movements, gaze and physiology (e.g., heart rate, pupillary and sweat responses).
3. When the pupils of interacting partners synchronously dilate, partners' social brain regions (ToM) involved in cognitive empathy become more active.
4. During real life dating interactions, partners who show similar patterns in their sympathetic activity (heart rate and sweat response) become more attracted to each other.
5. Nonverbal physiological alignment, which cannot be consciously perceived, can explain more in terms of interpersonal attraction than visible facial expression mimicry.
6. Social phenomena such as emotional contagion should be studied in real-life interactions to account for the dynamic exchange of non/verbal communication.
7. Until research comes up with alternative ways to manipulate autonomic signals, the causality between autonomic mimicry and pro-social behavior will remain speculative.
8. Physiological synchrony might be linked to neurological synchrony, whereas autonomic alignment is not necessary a result of emotional understanding. Instead, understanding and physiological synchrony is a single act performed by two brains.
9. A better understanding of how and why autonomic mimicry modulates pro-social behavior is an endeavor that is sure to stimulate research in many more years to come.