Evolved Health Psychology
Exploring the added value of an evolutionary perspective on health behavior

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1. Human psychology did not evolve ‘a motivation to be healthy’ despite the widespread assumption in theories of health behavior that it did (this dissertation).

2. When one takes a functional perspective on behavior, many health compromising behaviors may in fact not be fitness compromising (this dissertation).

3. Tiny pathogenic threats, with various and substantial health consequences, may have shaped our “evolved” health psychology. It was found that individual differences in pathogen-avoidance motivation are predictive of health-protective inclinations (this dissertation).

4. People who get tested for venereal diseases are not negatively evaluated in general, but specific perceptions are causes of others’ negative attitudes, in particular perceptions of promiscuity and infectiousness (this dissertation).

5. Shaping environments in ways that tap into evolved motivations may effectively engender behavior change (valorization).


7. ‘Those who believe themselves to be exempt from philosophical influence are usually the slaves of some defunct philosopher’ (Thagard, 2009, p. 238).

8. Conceptual clarification is the first step towards empirical replication.

9. Social learning ability is one of the great feats of evolution; sadly, however, it is also one of the biggest barriers to scientific progress.

10. Not all health behaviors cluster: when you accept cognitive dissonance, it is perfectly possible to eat healthy, exercise regularly, and smoke and drink.

11. ‘You can think I’m wrong, but that’s no reason to stop thinking’ (House M.D, 2005).