

Gene variant predicts how helpful you are, researcher suggests

People's willingness to help others may be influenced by a gene that affects their level of social anxiety, according to a new study led by a University of Nebraska-Lincoln scientist.

Scott Stoltenberg, behavior geneticist and the study's lead author, said the gene — officially known as the 5-HTTLPR triallelic genotype — affects the amygdala, an area of the brain that is sensitive to threat.

"This particular gene makes a difference in how sensitive you are to threat," he said. "If you're looking at an ambiguous social situation, where there's someone standing there, needing help — maybe you are more likely to interpret that as a threat, a potentially dangerous or embarrassing situation."

People with the recessive version of the gene were more likely to take social risks and to assist other people.

Read the full, original story here: [UNL scientists find genetic signature for helping people](#)