Apes, like humans, show bias towards positive spin

Are you likelier to buy an expensive diet pill when you hear it has helped 40 percent of people or failed to help 60 percent? That's easy. People are much more likely to go with a choice framed positively, even when the odds are 50–50. New research shows that our ape cousins share these tendencies, suggesting the response is rooted in our biology rather than in how we are socialized in our culture and economy.

The susceptibility to positive framing is what scientists call an irrational bias, and it is very powerful. To better understand why our psyche responds so deeply, Christopher Krupenye, a Duke University graduate student in evolutionary anthropology, and his colleagues Alexandra Rosati of Yale University and Brian Hare of Duke gathered 40 of our closest living relatives—23 chimpanzees and 17 bonobos—and offered them options for choosing food: either one or two fruits versus a constant number of peanuts. Sometimes the apes were shown one piece of fruit each time they made the selection, but half the time they were given two: positive framing. In other trials, the apes were initially presented two pieces of fruit, but half the time they got only one: negative framing. Regardless of the framing, the apes ended up with an identical quantity of fruit. Yet they were more likely to choose fruit when they were offered the single fruit with its frequent "bonus" than the double fruit with its frequent "loss."

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: Like Humans, Apes Are Susceptible To Spin