

Coping with death: Our brains are wired to think it only happens to other people

Warning: this story is about death. You might want to click away now.

That's because, researchers say, our brains do their best to keep us from dwelling on our inevitable demise. A study found that the brain shields us from existential fear by categorising death as an unfortunate event that only befalls other people.

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To investigate how the brain handles thoughts of death, [researcher Yair] Dor-Ziderman and colleagues developed a test that involved producing signals of surprise in the brain.

They asked volunteers to watch faces flash up on a screen while their brain activity was monitored. The person's own face or that of a stranger flashed up on screen several times, followed by a different face. On seeing the final face, the brain flickered with surprise because the image clashed with what it had predicted.

Various words appeared above the faces on screen. Half of the time these were death-related words such as "funeral" or "burial". The scientists found that if a person's own face flashed up next to deathly words, their brain shut down its prediction system. It refused to link the self with death and no surprise signals were recorded.

Read full, original post: [Doubting death: how our brains shield us from mortal truth](#)