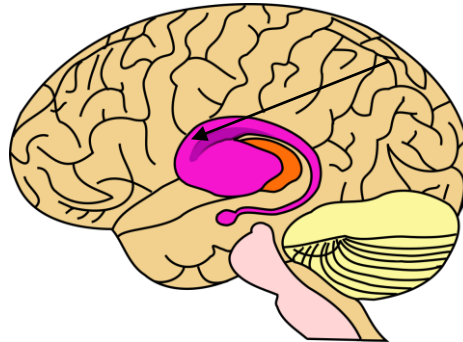




## Popularity

The Cortex – The cortex does not catch up to the Ventral Striatum until the mid-twenties  
The Cortex is the wall that prevents impulses from running free  
“Motivational Magnets” – seeking status



Ventral Striatum – Reward Center  
Grows additional Dopamine/Oxytocin receptors in adolescents

- Activated with social rewards

Ventral Pallidum – Translates likes into urges  
Just as active in adulthood

The take away – the stronger your Ventral Striatum the stronger you want to conform to peer pressure.  
“Reflected Appraisal” – basing self-esteem on how we think other approve of us.

Neural outputs from the Ventral Striatum lead to the “Emotional Salience” network – Hippocampus/Amygdala – influence our emotional arousal

### Problem with Popularity

#### Four Problems

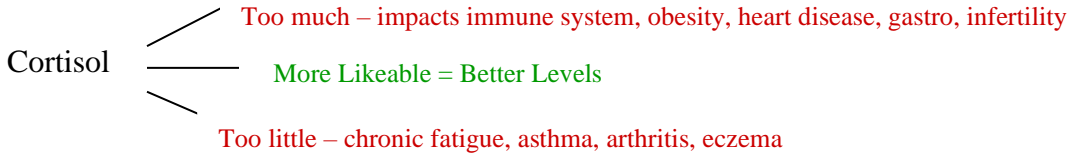
1. How far will we go for Status
  - Proactive Aggression – Targeted towards those who threaten dominance i.e. Bullying
  - Reactive Aggression – Uncontrolled reactions to anger
2. Have we granted some of our peers too much Status – Celebrities – Biologically Programmed
3. Is our desire for Status excessive – Wanting stuff has doubled and tripled while good marriage, children and feeling connected have slightly declined.  
Celebrity was difficult to attain ten years ago. Now everyone thinks they can be famous and should be i.e. Social Media, Vlogging, YouTube, Vines, Tik Toc, etc
4. We think status will make us happy – Stages of Popularity
  1. Elation;
  2. Overwhelmed;
  3. Resentment;
  4. Addiction;
  5. Splitting;
  6. Loneliness and Depression;
  7. Wishing for something else

### Health implications

Large network of friends = Likability = 50% increase for survival rate  
91% higher chance of survival if likable versus those alone



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The parts of the brain that react to physical pain also react in the same way to unpopular – **It hurts = “Social Pain”**

“Molecular Remodeling” – DNA changes in response to social rejection. Become hyper sensitive to rejection. This can occur in just a few months.

Despite more ways to connect the number of people reporting no close friendships has tripled.

### Traits of Likability

Likable people are generally well adjusted.  
They are smart (but not too smart).  
They are often in a good mood.  
They can hold up their end of a conversation.  
But they make sure to give others a turn to speak.  
They are creative, especially at solving awkward social dilemmas.  
And perhaps most important: they don't disrupt the group.

We are not always conscious we are keying in on likability.  
Brains spend all day drawing upon formative high school.  
**Cue encoding – We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are.**

### Online Impact

Online social comparison linked to depression for those unpopular and made upward comparisons.  
Social media = **Pursuit of status over likability**  
**Seeking Likes Reduced Prefrontal Cortex = more impulse/pleasure seeking**  
**What can Parents do?**

Parents that are hypersensitive and overly protective i.e. helicopter parent are linked to strong predictor to unpopularity.

1. Scaffolding i.e. potty training – gradually less hands off over time. Heavy teaching and monitoring in the beginning and slowly over time allow for independence.
2. Level of involvement in your child's life. Heavy in the toddler years and backing off by the time of preschool.
3. Modeling – coaching and modeling how to handle social situations.

Take away **Prioritizing likability over status means choosing to help our peers rather than exclusively satisfying our own needs, showing more interest in others rather than vying for more attention and power, and cultivating relationships more than likes.**