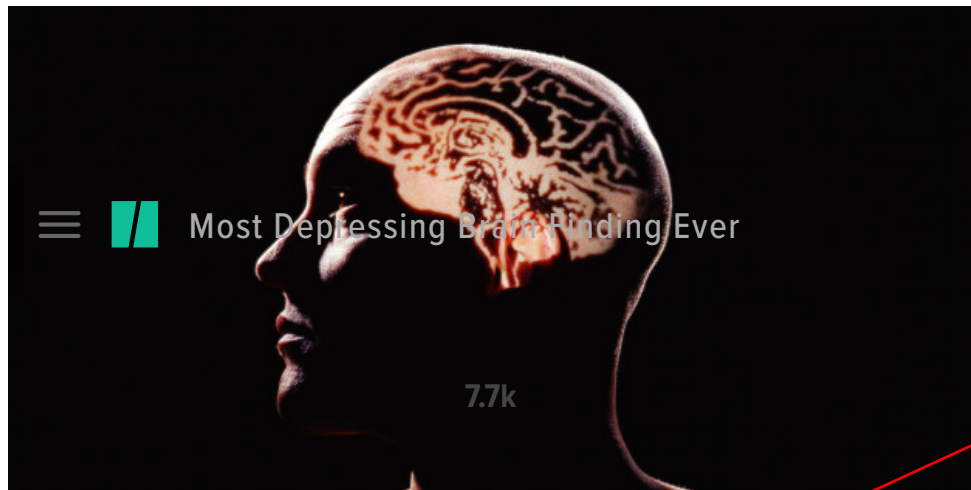


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Most Depressing Brain Finding Ever

By Marty Kaplan



GETTY

link to the study's research article

Yale law school professor Dan Kahn's research paper is called "Motivated Numeracy and Enlightened Self-Government," but for me a better title is the headline on science writer Chris Mooney's piece about it in Grist: "Science Confirms: Politics Wrecks Your Ability to Do Math."

Kahan conducted some ingenious experiments about the impact of political passion on people's ability to think clearly. His conclusion, in Mooney's words: partisanship "can even undermine our very basic reasoning skills.... [People] who are otherwise very good at math may totally flunk a problem that they would otherwise probably be able to solve, simply because giving the right answer goes against their political beliefs."

In other words, say goodnight to the dream that education, journalism, scientific evidence, media literacy or reason can provide the tools and information that people need in order to make good decisions. It turns out that in the public