

Psychology in Context: The Psychology of Thrill-Seeking

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Organizing a course around a central theme can provide much-needed context to help students learn psychological concepts. A rich central theme can advance critical thinking, increase motivation, and foster active learning. In this presentation, I'll demonstrate how the psychology of thrill-seeking can serve as such a theme. Thrill-seekers crave intense experiences despite physical or social risks. They jump out of planes, climb skyscrapers, and eat anything (even poisonous pufferfish) while others, the chill-seekers, are overwhelmed by the same experience. Over the last 50 years, hundreds of studies have been published examining various aspects of thrill-seeking. Thrill-seeking can be used as a theme to teach various aspects of psychology such as theories of personality, research methods, statistics, and positive psychology in a way students find personally engaging and memorable. In addition to learning about thrill-seeking, attendees will learn how they can incorporate themes into their own curricula in order to provide deeper context, increase engagement, and help students apply their knowledge.