

DILEMMAS

Nature or nurture - Brain or mind?

It is a highly discussed dilemma what to blame for unsuitable and inappropriate behavior. Why are some people aggressive while others are not? Why do some people end up as alcoholics while others can easily drink a few glasses of wine in the weekends without ever being addicted? Scientists are still struggling with finding the answers as there are many things to take into consideration.

In groups of 4, cut out the following dilemmas and place them face down on the table between you. All the dilemmas revolve around the issue described: *Should we blame the brain or the mind? Nature or Nurture?*

Take turns drawing a dilemma, read it aloud and discuss it in the group. Remember to speak English.

Peter, age 17, is on the verge of being kicked out of school due to bad grades and truancy. He has talked to the student counsellor numerous times, but he simply cannot seem to motivate himself for school. His parents never got an education, and he is the first in his family to attend college prep-school, and therefore he does not have a lot of help with homework and hand-ins at home. As a result he often skips doing his homework and goes to the gym instead.

Can his lack of skills in school be linked to his biology or personality (nature or nurture)?

Cathy, age 25, is not feeling well. She is very obese and it has caused her knees and ankles to hurt, and she has difficulties standing up too long. She has been unfit to work for over a year due to her obesity. She sees a dietician once a week who tries to help her eat healthier and eat smaller portions. But she finds it hard. She has always been obese - ever since she was a baby! It is part of who she is now, part of her life, part of her daily habits. She almost never eats fast food because she likes to cook and study new recipes. People always praise her cooking, and she likes that acknowledgement. Her sister likes to cook too, but she is not obese. Cathy finds it very unfair!

What can be blamed for Cathy's obesity? Biology or personality (nature or nurture)?

Sienna, age 18, is struggling with lonesomeness. She is a senior at her high school, but even though she has spent several years with her classmates, she still does not have any true friends. She is average in both looks and skills in school, but she is extremely shy. She simply does not feel comfortable when talking to others. She starts to stutter, sweat and if the teachers ask her to speak up in class, she feels like she is about to vomit. No one in Sienna's family is that shy, but Sienna's dad has told her that he too struggled when he was in high school, but that he 'taught himself' to socialise.

*What can be blamed for Sienna's lonesome senior year? Biology or personality
(nature or nurture)?*

Julian, age 23, just cannot get up in the morning. He is feeling extremely tired every morning no matter what time he tries to go to bed. He has felt like this for as long as he can remember. He studies law at the University of Washington, and he just got a very important and interesting internship. But he has to be in the office at 8 am, and he is having a really hard time concentrating the first couple of hours in the office because he is so sleepy. For almost a week he has tried to go to bed at 10 pm, but even though he lies with his eyes shut, he rarely falls a sleep before midnight. Julian's parents have always said that his sleep pattern is due to him having a 'Type B personality' instead of e.g. his mother's 'Type A personality'.

*What can be blamed for Julian's slow start in the mornings? Biology or personality
(nature or nurture)?*

Sara, age 19, has a violent temper. She cannot seem to get into a disagreement without it ending in a fight. And she is always the first one to get physical. Her parents, teachers in school and a number of different counsellors have talked to her about her violent behavior, but even though she hears what they say, it is as if she forgets everything the second she gets angry. She just cannot seem to control her own hands. It is like they just react without any consent of her head. The disagreement does not even have to be very serious, and still she cannot help but slapping the person in front of her.

What can be blamed for Sara's violent behavior? Biology or personality (nature or nurture)?