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Pill could ease bad memories
Written by: QMI Agency
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People say you can never escape your past, but a team of researchers in Puerto Rico would like to challenge that adage.

New research published in the journal Science paves the way for a pill that would ease the pain of bad memories by essentially replacing it with warm and fuzzy feelings.

A University of Puerto Rico study, funded by the U.S. government, successfully tested a bad-memory suppressant on mice.

First the researchers gave the mice traumatic memories by exposing them to electric shocks and a loud noise at the same time. Eventually, they came to associate the noise with the shock, and became afraid whenever they heard it.

Next, the researchers treated the mice with a drug called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), and the fear disappeared.

BDNF is naturally occurring in the brain, and it helps calm the fear associated with bad memories. Patients who suffer from mental illnesses like post-traumatic stress disorder are unable to control that fear naturally.

The scientists say BDNF didn’t erase the memory of the shock. Rather, it created a sense of safety and positivity that helped the mice cope. It works by triggering the growth of connections between cells in the part of the brain that deals with fear.

The researchers hope this study will lead to the development of pills that can treat PTSD, anxiety, phobias and other fears and memory-related mental-health problems.

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