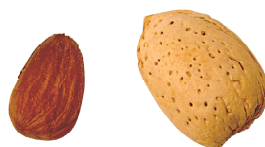


Emotion and the Amygdala



- This almond-shaped mass of gray matter resides deep within limbic system, one per hemisphere, in the anterior portion of the temporal lobe.
- “Amygdala” comes from the Greek word for “almond” because the shape and size of the amygdala is roughly the same as that of an almond.
- Because it’s designed to aid survival, the amygdala is functional from birth.
- Emotional components of memory are stored here.
- It assesses all incoming sensory data and compares it with stored information.
- It’s always alert to threat: It triggers fight or flight.
- It can hijack us emotionally by causing us to react before rationale thought occurs.
- It is larger in males and enlarged in sociopaths; it shrinks in the elderly.
- It triggers “hot button” responses and re-activates old patterns when threat is perceived.
- It detects incongruent words, feelings, tone of voice, and micro facial expressions.
- After months of prolonged stress, the amygdala increase in size, causing heightened fear response and cognitive impairment.