

SENSATION AND PERCEPTION (WEEK 10).

Introduction to Sensation and Perception

Although intimately related, sensation and perception play two complimentary but different roles in how we interpret our world. Sensation refers to the process of sensing our environment through touch, taste, sight, sound, and smell. This information is sent to our brains in raw form where perception comes into play. Perception is the way we interpret these sensations and therefore make sense of everything around us.

This chapter will describe various theories related to these two concepts and explain the important role they play in the field of psychology. Through this chapter, you will gain a better idea of how our senses work and how this information is organized and interpreted.

Sensation

Sensation is the process by which our senses gather information and send it to the brain. A large amount of information is being sensed at any one time such as room temperature, brightness of the lights, someone talking, a distant train, or the smell of perfume. With all this information coming into our senses, the majority of our world never gets recognized. We don't notice radio waves, x-rays, or the microscopic parasites crawling on our skin. We don't sense all the odors around us or taste every individual spice in our gourmet dinner. We only sense those things we are able too since we don't have the sense of smell like a bloodhound or the sense of sight like a hawk; our thresholds are different from these animals and often even from each other.

Perception

As mentioned in the introduction, perception refers to interpretation of what we take in through our senses. The way we perceive our environment is what makes us different from other animals and different from each other. In this section, we will discuss the various theories on how our sensation are organized and interpreted, and therefore, how we make sense of what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell.