

How to Solve Modern Crises with Ancient Snacks

Written by Alex Baer

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Popcorn could be just the breakthrough we've all been looking for.

We've long needed something to help break through Madison Avenue's icy grip on our minds and on our wallets. It could even allow, and help facilitate, contact with the Space Aliens openly living in our midst, called Republicans.

Popcorn? □ Madison Avenue? □ Space Aliens?

OK, let's back up and go slowly. For openers, you know how a familiar feeling of vulnerability sometimes goes -- the sense that there are teams of psychologists working around the clock, seeking inroads to your psyche, in order to make you want to buy useless products, and ensure you are helpless to all commercial ads and suggestions, right?

Those feelings are normal, of course.

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(Anyone suspecting that such sensations represent an outcropping of paranoia should consider that the people following you don't really believe you are paranoid, nor believe in paranoia, nor in belief itself, generally speaking.

Also, people suspecting the potential role of paranoia in their quite normal feelings of advertising defenselessness would be well advised to seek immediate hypno-therapy, in order to help break down modern conditioning and discover, for example, just why it is that you're uncontrollably buying products you don't really need -- like all those jars of "Slimbo's Behind-the-Knee Deodorant Pads.")

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Back to popcorn. There's a new study out from Cologne University that says cinema advertising is less effective when audience members eat popcorn. Oddly intriguing is the notion that it may provide us all with a defensive barrier to one of modernity's apparently necessary, and ultimately symbiotic (on a good day) pests, advertising.

Scientists say popcorn-eating short-circuits the process of how we remember new names, normally done by our performing what researchers call "inner speech." This happens when we simulate the pronunciation of new names using our mouths.

But, if our mouths are busy crunching away on a 5,600-year-old maize product -- evidence of popcorn from 3,600 BCE was found in New Mexico -- then, we have trouble with that "inner speech."

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(Unlikely as it is, for any Republicans reading this far who believe the planet is a few thousand years old at best, and that dinosaurs and humans co-existed on a shared timeline: There is really not much to say to you at this point, except that the *Flintstones* are on now, and it's time for your meds.)

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Even more intriguing are results from a second study in which people were shown ads in similar circumstances, then given money to donate to charity. One group -- those who had been given sugar cubes to eat -- showed a later donating preference for charities they had seen advertised, while the popcorn munchers showed no preference at all.

Sascha Topolinski, one of the researchers quoted by the BBC in the report, said, "The mundane activity of eating popcorn made participants immune to the pervasive effects of advertising."

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By now you've likely started forming a fair question: *But how does this help us talk with the Space Aliens, even though it helps us to not buy things like "Aunt Melg's Pork-Chop Flavored Mouth Rinse"?*

Fair enough, good question. See, the trick is to initially penetrate the heavily fortified stone wall of GOP dogma surrounding test subjects, to get beyond the thick, defensive fore-skull plating, and then, finally, into the Space Alien -- the Republican -- mind.

Granted, we must first assume there is actually a mind in there that's available for contact and communication, behind all those propagandistic barriers, and not just a rat's nest of reptilian, neural knee-jerk mechanisms responding randomly to various stimuli in the environment.

Peculiar and erratic behavior of test subjects to the contrary, we'll go with the assumption of mind for the moment.

Testing that assumption, we discover additional barriers to first contact: Before one can meaningfully converse, one must first get the attention of the other party and then find a common language. These two tasks have often been stuck in utter failure for years at a time, despite the best efforts of scientific teams, independent researchers, and creative artists who have spent a heck of a lot of time waving their arms around and holding up shiny, sparkly things in front of test subjects to no avail.

It is here that popcorn can show us the way.

Yes, where scholars and thinkers and envoys and negotiators and Washington insiders and cult deprogrammers and crystal ball gazers and religious leaders and water dowsers and a parade of other political browsers and future diviners have all failed, only popcorn is left standing as humanity's -- *OK, well, Americans'* -- best hope.

Here's how: We get hungry Republicans into a movie theater, offer them all the free popcorn

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they can eat -- tapping into the greed drive -- and play them some rousing GOP drivel in pre-movie advertising form. As we know from the study, they will later on show reduced recall and no preference for this information.

Over time, the thinking goes, the steely grip of GOP propaganda and dogma will slacken off, providing a much-decreased (or even totally evaporated!) defensive barrier, which then allows a window of opportunity for establishing attention-getting hand signals and conversational first contact.

With time, opportunity, and patience, the theory goes, we might then push beyond incoherent, nearly incomprehensible mumbling and demands, and slowly establish a common language in which we begin to explore areas of shared needs and desires for both our species.

Popcorn: The Miracle Food.

Get some today!

More info on how popcorn can help: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-24518203>

... and on popcorn, in general: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popcorn>

P.S. Yes, the trick will be to find hungry Space Aliens -- I mean Republicans -- as they all eat so darned well -- and so much! -- day after day after day. ☐ I'm sure something can be worked out, even if it's just a temporary reduction in their caloric intake, via that disgraceful "freedom fries" business and semi-boycott that had GOP undies in such an embarrassing, eye-rolling twist a while back.

And, yes, another drawback is that, in order to be personally protected from ads, at least in

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cinemas, you will have to break down and buy a product often marked up by 900% or so. While this may be aggravating, it is far cheaper, in the long run, than becoming a junkie needing a regular fix of "Mister Sanitary MoonShine's Pickled-Eggplant-Scented Surface Wipes, Laundry Dryer Sheets, and Room Refresh'ner Strips."