

# theSlog

FROM THE MUDDLED MINDS THAT BROUGHT YOU THE NYK EXPERIMENT, MARVEL AT THE SLOG: YOUR HOSTS MR. SPHERICAL ROY AND DR. G DAWG GUIDE YOU ON A MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR OF NOTES, LINKS AND QUERIES, ON AN ECLECTICALLY SIMILAR LIST OF TOPICS.

FRIDAY, JULY 03, 2009

## How to Think, Say, or Do Precisely the Worst Thing for Any Occasion


Brilliant paper in this week's Science (which you probably can't read unless you have a subscription) dealing with our inability to avoid the things (thoughts, actions, comments) we actively wish to avoid. Or in the words of the author:

"... the precisely counterintentional error. This is when we manage to do the worst possible thing, the blunder so outrageous that we think about it in advance and resolve not to let that happen."

I can't help but to think of certain scenarios I've experienced where this is exactly the consequence of suppression of thoughts. 'I couldn't be more embarrassed right now' said the friend who's skirt promptly fell to the ground in a room full of people. And as for the spilling red wine example, I honestly don't think I spill many liquids at all in my life, but give me a glass of red wine and a white carpet to walk over and it's almost a guarantee.

I'll leave you with an urge to read the paper and one of my favourite lines from it:

"Ironic lapses of mental control often appear when we attempt to be socially desirable, as when we try to keep our minds out of the gutter."

*Wegner, Daniel, M., 2009. How to Think, Say, or Do Precisely the Worst Thing for Any Occasion. Science: Vol. 325. no. 5936, pp. 48 - 50 DOI: 10.1126/science.1167346* 

MUMBLED BY GARETH AT [12:02 AM](#)

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### THE ECLECTICALLY SIMILAR

[music \(90\)](#)

[glasgow \(57\)](#)

[design \(52\)](#)

[web \(51\)](#)

[video \(48\)](#)

[photos \(45\)](#)

[friends \(44\)](#)

[art \(43\)](#)

[geo \(27\)](#)

[technology \(26\)](#)

[climate \(18\)](#)

[travel \(18\)](#)

[quotes \(14\)](#)

[outdoors \(13\)](#)

[cycling \(12\)](#)

[debate \(10\)](#)

[cake \(9\)](#)

[politics \(9\)](#)

[ersatz-philosophy \(8\)](#)

[calgary \(7\)](#)

[films \(6\)](#)

[theatre \(6\)](#)

[volcanos \(4\)](#)

[architecture \(3\)](#)

[family \(3\)](#)

[identity crisis \(3\)](#)

[radio \(3\)](#)

[fiction \(2\)](#)