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Back to basics: A critique of the false dichotomy surrounding the Iowa Gambling Task

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Abstract: The debate surrounding how emotion and cognition are organized in the brain has recently been drawn toward Damasio's Somatic Marker Hypothesis. The theory endorses a highly interactive process that emotion has with cognition, but has been criticized for: 1) being too broad to capture the specific processes that emotion offers cognition, and 2) implicitly endorsing that emotion operates from a separate neural architecture that is functionally dissociable from cognition. The Iowa Gambling Task has been used to support the theory, but the findings are misconstrued as they can promote a false dichotomy between emotion and cognition. Issues will be raised regarding the theory as ill formulated in accounting for the specific phases of decision making, which makes assessing the theory with the Iowa Gambling Task problematic. Further theoretical work is proposed that may align the task with Damasio's view of emotion as integrated with cognition.