

[60-Second Psych](#) - November 22, 2007

## When The Virtual You Changes The Real You

Imagine a future where a digital you is influencing the real you; where a communicating clone can convince us to alter our decisions and behavior. Research underway at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab has shown that our digital self can persuade our real self to exercise more. (A good thing after gorging on mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie!)

Here's a novel way to make sure you work off that second helping of pumpkin pie you're about to wolf down this Thanksgiving: watch a 3D video of you, or rather a digital you, jogging.

According to research at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab watching a "digital you" strongly influences the "real you."

Principal author Jesse Fox had 25 subjects watch a digital clone (or avatar) of themselves running on a treadmill for five minutes.

She found that those who watched their avatar break a sweat spent more time exercising within a 24-hour period (an hour more in fact), than the control subjects who watched another person jogging, or those who watched their own avatar doing nothing. That's more than double the Surgeon General's minimum daily recommendation for exercise.

The authors suggest that eventually we could have a digital us pop up on our cell phones reminding us to take that extra loop round the track.

Persuasion studies have shown that we are most influenced by those similar to us, in looks, values, education. But here we are being persuaded by the ultimate model: our own self.

Jeez. What happens when Coca-cola finds out about this?