

Chugga Chugga Chew Chew! The Science of Misophonia

By Mindy Thomas

<<Mindy and Reggie bustling around to get ready for game night>>

Mindy. Reggie, you're doing a great job on that. Maybe just a little more frosting around the windows. Gotta make sure we've covered every nook and cranny...

Reggie. Coo

Mindy. I know I am so excited for hosting game night tonight! And thanks to you Reg, this place is looking tasty.

Reggie. Coo

Guy Raz. Hey Mindy!

Mindy. Guy Razzzy!

Guy Raz. Sorry I'm a little late to the game night...uh...hope I haven't missed anything!

Mindy. Oh no... you're fine everyone's still just arriving.

Guy Raz. Okay, well, uh, this is for you...

Mindy. Oooh a bouquet...of..<<sniffs>>. Kale?!?

Guy Raz. An *organic* bouquet of kale hand picked by yours truly!

Dennis. Wow Mindy! I love what you've done with the place! Though I have to say, the marshmallow sofa is not really working in that configuration, and I preferred your cups being in the cabinet next to the fridge. I don't understand why you moved them.

Mindy. Wait...Dennis have you ever actually been inside of my gingerbread mansion?

Dennis. No.

Mindy. Oh..

Thomas Fingerling. <<Whistles>> Is that a chandelier made of candy? A candylier? Oh, and look at the craftsmanship on the exposed pretzel beams! Now hopefully that's a pressure treated pretzel otherwise <<trails off>>

Guy Raz. <<Yelling to Mindy from a nearby room>> Hey Mindy...mind if I change the music? I just put together a great party playlist!

Mindy. Oh yeah sure, do whatever you want Guy Raz! Umm...has anyone seen Gramma G-Force?

<<Music changes to elevator music>>

Dennis. What's that elevator music sound I'm hearing?

Guy Raz. Oh it's elevator music! This song is called...

Mindy. Excuse me, excuse me, has anyone seen Gramma G-Force!

Dennis. Mindy, she said she was coming in through the chimney.

Guy Raz. What??

Gramma G-Force. First one to catch me wins a free ham! <<Lands in the fireplace with a thud>>

Dennis. Ooh, ham!

Thomas Fingerling. Don't fall!

Gramma G-Force. <<Slips>> ahhhh!

Everyone. <<Gasp!>>

Gramma G-Force. Boo-yeah!

Thomas Fingerling. G-force! I said don't fall!

Gramma G-Force. Oh, sorry. Couldn't hear that.

Guy Raz. Uh

Mindy. Okay! Well, now that everyone's here for the neighborhood game night...how about a party game?

Guy Raz. What kind of party game is this, Mindy?

Mindy. Uh...great question Guy Raz. What kind of party game is this? Well, it's a... guessing game! Yeah!

Reggie. Coo

Mindy. Where's everyone... wears a... **blindfold**?

Thomas Fingerling. Oh, well good thing I always carry a blindfold on me. <<Putting on blindfold>> Okay, there we go. Now what.

Mindy. And then...we uh...

Guy Raz. Mindy, do you have a game planned or are you just making this up as you go along?

Gramma G-Force. What?

Reggie. Coo.

Gramma G-Force. There's chimney soot stuck inside my ears! And I can't hear the sweet sound of sounds!

Mindy. *Gasp* sound! Yes, sound. It is a sound game. A blindfolded...guess the sound game!

Guy Raz. Go on...

Mindy. And to play...one person...or pigeon makes a sound...and then everyone else has to guess what that sound is!

Everyone. Ahhhh

Gramma G-Force. Ahh! There! Got the soot out! I can hear again! It's a miracle.

Mindy. Here's a blindfold for you, Gramma G-Force...

Gramma G-Force. You want me to put a brown paper bag over my head?

Mindy. Uh huh!

Gramma G-Force. Well okay

Mindy. And here's a blindfold for you, Dennis...

Dennis. Mindy, this is a diaper!

Mindy. Yeah, sorry...I ran out of paper bags.

Reggie. Coo

Dennis. Reggie! My head is not shaped like a butt!

Mindy. And for you, Guy Raz...I have a bucket blindfold, you can put it on your head.

Guy Raz. Mindy, this bucket is filled with fried chicken!

Mindy. Oh...whoops! Let me just dump that out right there...<<dumps out the chicken>> Here ya go!

Guy Raz. Eww

Thomas Fingerling. Aww, I was gonna eat that!

Mindy. Now.. Is everyone ready to play the game?

Everyone. Yes!

I'm ready!

Absolutely!

You got it, dude!

Gramma G-Force. Talk louder!

Mindy. Ok great...now that you're all wearing blindfolds, I will make the first sound, and then you have to guess what that sound is! Here we go...<<starts chewing gum loudly>>

<<Start hearing a dissonant sound in Guy's mind while everyone wrongly guesses in the background>>

Dennis/Thomas Fingerling/Gramma G-Force. Hmmm what is that?

It's a goat eating a watermelon rind.

No, it's wet gummy bears in plastic wrap!

Guy Raz. <<Uncomfortable reactions bubbling up>> gah! Mindy! Stop smacking your gum!!!

Thomas Fingerling. Awe, I almost had it.

Mindy. <<Rings bell>> and it looks like we have a winner, for round one folks! That was the sound of me smackin' my gum!

Guy Raz. Please! Never do that again!

Mindy. Next up...it's Gramma G-Force!

Gramma G-Force. Alright...let me just get outta this chair here...<<toot>>

Everyone. Ughhhhh!

Dennis. Ooo, I know! It's a duck!

Gramma G-Force. Nah that was just the warm up act.

Mindy. Okay, Gramma G-Force...whenever you're ready...

Everyone. Make..that...sound!

Dennis. Oh, I like that, we all say it together!

Gramma G-Force. <<Slurping soup>>

<<Everyone shouting incorrect guesses while we hear Guy's inner monologue>>

Dennis/Thomas Fingerling. Hmmm let's see...

Some sort of liquid

It's a bowl of something!

Oh, bowling ball!

Guy Raz. <<Uncomfortable growing reaction>> ughhh ughhhhhh blaghhhhh!
Please! Stop slurping your soup!!! That sound! It's...it's...

Gramma G-Force. <<Burps>> oh yeah

Mindy. It's corrrrrrect! Guy Raz...you are two for two! Let's keep the momentum rolling...Thomas Fingerling...you're up!

Thomas Fingerling. Alright! You are never gonna guess what I'm gonna do...

Everyone. It's time to make-that sound!

Thomas Fingerling. <<Starts cracking knuckles>>

<<Everyone shouting incorrect guesses while we hear Guy's inner monologue>>

Dennis/Gramma G-Force. Ok, uh, uh ,uh oh!

Tree branches breaking into a million pieces!

Chicken bones thrown down a staircase!

Walnuts being crushed by a leather hammer!

Guy Raz. <<Uncomfortable growing reaction>> gaaaah! Please! Stop cracking your knuckles!!! That popping sound! It's...unbearable!

Mindy. Is it unbearable Guy Raz...or is it....corrrrrrect! <<Ding!>> The answer is crackin' knucks! Guy Razzy, you are really crushing it at this game! Okay final round everyone...this one's for all the marbles...Dennis, you're up!

Dennis. Oh boy!

Guy Raz. No no no no no no no! I can not...will not...sit here anymore and listen to knuckle cracking, gum smacking, or soup slurping! These sounds....they're like an attack on my brain!

Dennis. That's ok, Guy Raz. We can stop playing. I'll just sit here quietly and eat these potato chips. <<Crunch>> mm-mm-mmm!

Guy Raz. Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!

Mindy. Guy Raz...I'm no doctor, but I wonder if you may be suffering from a relatively newly understood condition known as misophonia!!!

Guy Raz. Miso-what-ia?

Mindy. Misophonia! It's a condition where a person has a strong reaction to specific sounds! I just read a study about it in the journal scientific reports!

Reggie. Coo

Guy Raz. Are you suggesting that there may be a scientific reason for the way I reacted to all those...awful...sounds?

Mindy. I mean maybe! But also maybe not. See the study came out of the university of Amsterdam and it was led by this professor of psychiatry named Damien Deyns.

Guy Raz. And by psychiatry you mean the branch of medicine that deals with the mind and emotions and behavior right?

Mindy. Exactoritos.

Guy Raz...knowing that many people in the world go just as bonkerballs as you do when they hear certain sounds...Dr Denys decided to head to his lab to try to figure out...why.

Guy Raz. Why?

Mindy. Why do some people feel like their heads are going to explode when they hear a perfectly natural sound of someone chewing potato chips? Or slurping soup, or smacking gum?

Guy Raz. And did he have any ideas as to why? Maybe even a hypothesis?

Mindy. You know it Guy Raz...so Dr Deyns thought the answer could lie somewhere in the human brain. So to get closer to the answer, he decided to conduct an experiment!

Guy Raz. Ooh! I love an experiment!

Mindy. For this experiment, Dr Denys invited 44 people into his lab. 21 of those people with misophonia...and 23 people without it. And then, while monitoring or studying their brains...he had them watch some videos!

Guy Raz. Huh...what kind of videos?

Mindy. Well, two kinds actually...the first videos showed people making some common sounds that really seem to bother people with misophonia. You know...lip smacking...heavy breathing...stuff like that.

Guy Raz. <<Trepidatious>> and the other videos?

Mindy. The other videos were of things that do not normally affect people with misophonia...things like a person meditating...or even a gross scene from a movie.

Mindy. What Dr Deyns found was that both groups of people reacted pretty much the same to the videos of meditation and gross stuff.

Guy Raz. But what about the videos of the lip smacking and the heavy breathing?

Mindy. Ah, well that's where things got interesting! See only the people in the misophonia group reacted badly to those videos! The other group, they were basically just meh..

Guy Raz. And earlier you mentioned earlier that Dr Deyns was monitoring or studying their brains? So what did he discover?

Mindy. Well, he discovered that his hypothesis may have been correct! That when watching the videos of the lip smacking and heavy breathing...the group of people with misophonia felt intense anger and disgust, and their heart rates went bonkerballs!

Guy Raz. Those are the same feelings and reactions that people express when they might be experiencing extreme emotions! Or fear! I know these feelings, Mindy!!!

Mindy. What Dr Denys discovered when studying the brain activity of these people, was that the parts of their brain that are responsible for helping to control fear and emotions...well, those parts, they went into hyperdrive!

Guy Raz. Ahh...so in other words, some of the survival-related parts of the brain felt attacked or in danger!

Mindy. Exactoritos! Which led Dr Deyns to suspect that people with misophonia might have parts of their brain that are wired a little differently than people without it.

Guy Raz. So I suppose that when a person with misophonia hears a sound...like Gramma G-Force clipping her toenails...

Gramma G-Force. Say what? Oh snap.

Guy Raz. That person might receive an extra strong signal to their brain, causing them to respond in an extreme way?

Mindy. Bingo Guy Raz! A person with misophonia might react to Gramma G-Forces toenail clipping sound the same way another person might respond to the sound of a loud fire alarm!

Guy Raz. Do these scientists know of anything that can be done to help people with this condition deal with these sounds?

Mindy. Well not just yet, Guy Raz...see the study of misophonia is still so new, that scientists haven't even agreed on a specific definition of what it is yet!

Guy Raz. <<Sigh>>

Mindy. I mean, before they can know how best to detect and treat it in a person, they at least have to agree on what it is exactly.

Guy Raz. I can tell you what it is! It's the panic I feel everytime I hear another person slurping, or smacking, or chewing!

Mindy. Yes...but what might result in a feeling of panic for you, might result in extreme fear...or disgust or even rage in someone else!

Guy Raz. Interesting

Mindy. And in another person, it might result in just a strong annoyance!

Reggie. Coo

Dennis. Mindy...can we get back to the game, please? It's Reggie's turn and I want to hear what he does.

Reggie. Coo, coo

Dennis. Ok everyone, blindfold's on!

Mindy. Okay, Reggie...whenever you're ready...make...that...sound!

Everyone. Make...that....sound

Reggie. Coo

<<Talons on a chalkboard>>

Everyone but Guy. <<Loses it>>

Ahhh, ahhhh! What's happening???

It sounds like needles on my brain!

Oh snap, make it stop!!!

Oh heavens! It sounds like the devil doing math problems!

Ahhhh!!!

Guy Raz. I'd recognize that sound anywhere, Reggie! That's talons on a chalkboard!

Guy Raz. Hey...what's everyone freaking out about? It's just a sound!

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The end