



Habituation Vs Sensitization

Useful for psychology entrance exams!

Sample MCQs For Psychology Entrances

Before jumping to the topic, let's challenge your preparation with a few exam-based questions.

Q1. If a loud noise repeatedly occurs and a person shows an increasing startle response, which form of learning is being demonstrated?

A. **Habituation**

B. **Sensitization**

C. **Classical conditioning**

D. **Observational learning**

Q2. Which of the following statements about habituation is correct?

A. It increases behavioral response over time

B. It requires reinforcement to occur

C. It helps organisms ignore irrelevant stimuli

D. It only occurs in humans

Read carefully the complete post and try solving it on your own.

If not, the last slide has the answers.

Introduction

Habituation and sensitization are basic forms of non-associative learning.

- Non-associative learning: Learning that occurs without linking two different stimuli (unlike classical conditioning).
- These concepts explain how our nervous system adapts to repeated stimulation, either by reducing or increasing responses





Habituation

- **Definition:** A decrease in response after repeated exposure to the same stimulus.
- **Example:** Ignoring the ticking of a clock after some time.
- **Purpose:** Helps organisms filter out irrelevant stimuli to focus on important changes in the environment.

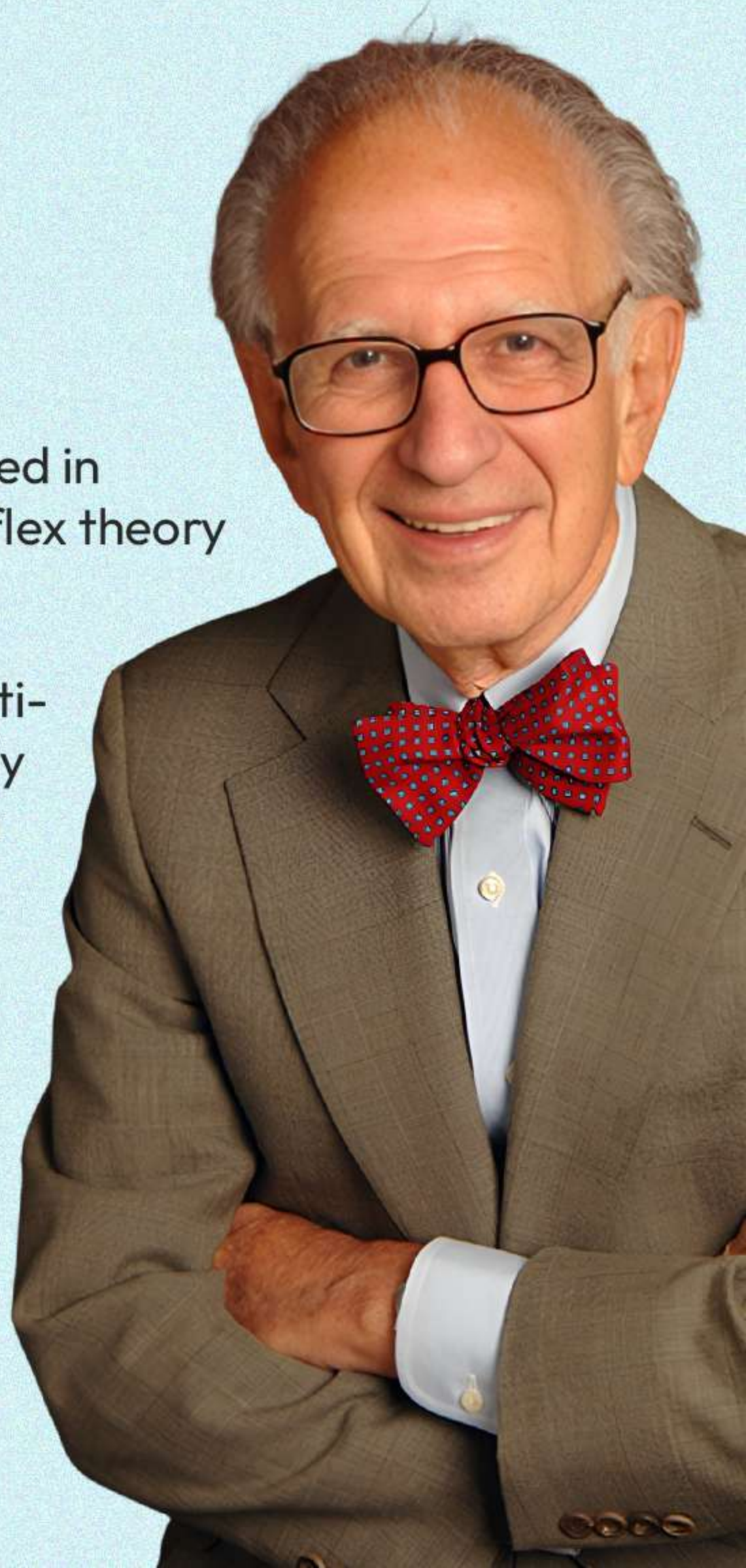
Sensitization

- **Definition:** An increase in response after repeated or intense exposure to a stimulus.
- **Example:** Becoming more irritated by a dripping tap at night.
- **Key feature:** Helps organisms remain alert to potential threats in their surroundings.



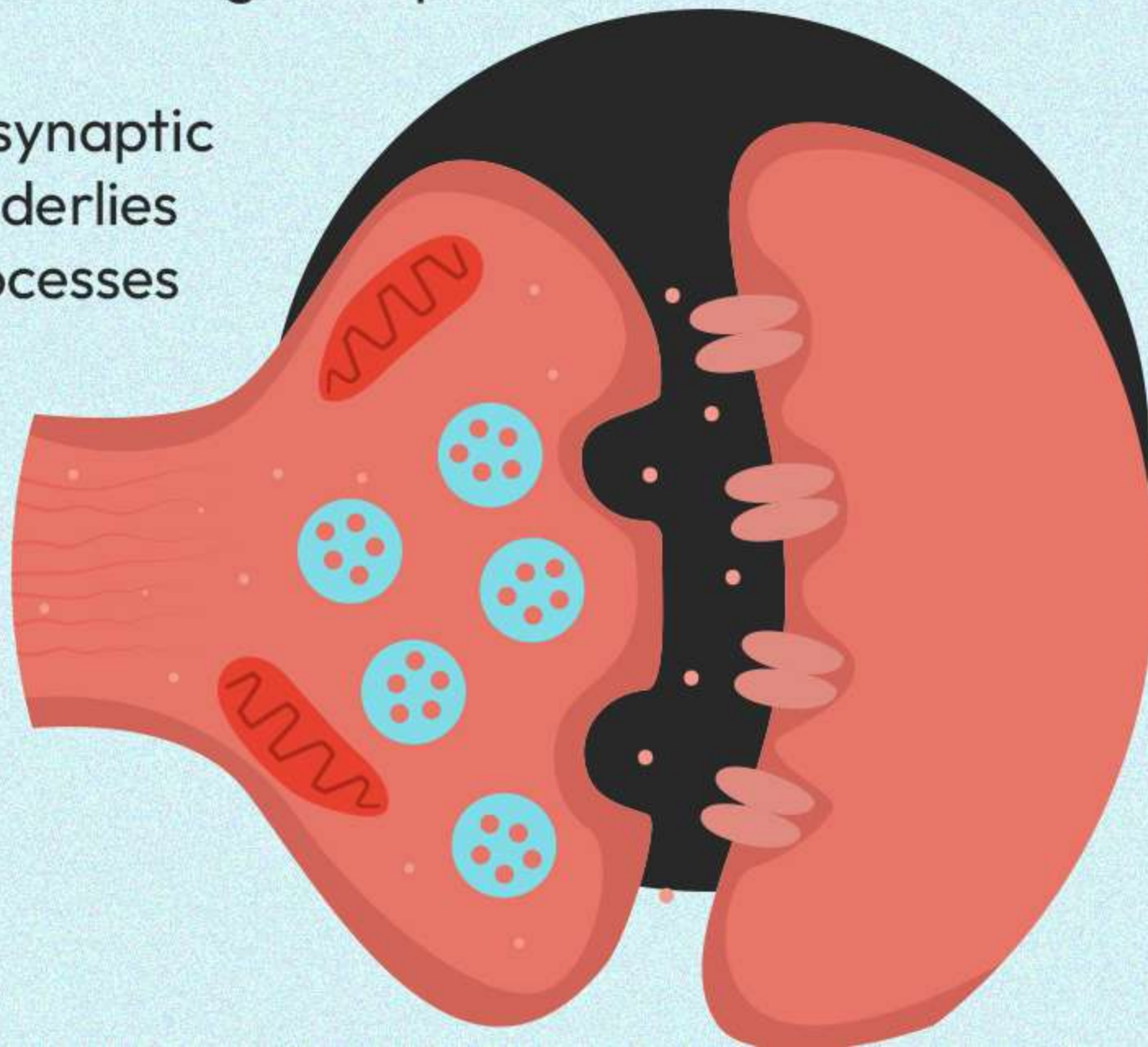
Research & Literature

- Habituation was studied in Sokolov's orienting reflex theory (1963).
- Habituation and sensitization were extensively studied in *Aplysia* (sea slug) by Eric Kandel (Nobel Prize, 2000).
- These studies show that even simple nervous systems demonstrate non-associative learning.



Neural Mechanisms

- **Habituation:** Decrease in neurotransmitter release at synapses → weaker response.
- **Sensitization:** Increase in neurotransmitter release due to modulatory interneurons → stronger response.
- Shows how synaptic plasticity underlies learning processes



Key Differences

Habituation:



Response decreases →
stimulus seen as safe/
irrelevant.



Sensitization:



Response increases →
stimulus seen as thre-
atening/significant.



Both are adaptive survival mechanisms,
but with opposite outcomes.

Follow us on :

    @upseducation

for more exam-focused psychology content &
stay ahead in your preparation!

The correct answers are:

Q.1 b) Sensitization

Q.2 c) It helps organisms
ignore irrelevant stimuli