Twitter Thread by David McRaney



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Here's something you should know about yourself. When choosing between two options, your decision is heavily influenced by whether you are asking yourself: "which is better" or "which is worse." 1/9

In research by Shafir, scientists asked subjects which of these two vacation spots they'd PREFER: one with average weather, beaches, hotels, warm water and decent nightlife -- or one with great weather, beaches, and hotels, but cold water and no nightlife. Most chose the latter.

But when told to imagine they had reserved both and had to CANCEL one or the other: one with average weather, beaches, hotels, warm water and decent nightlife -- or one with great weather, beaches, and hotels, but cold water and no nightlife. Most chose the latter. 3/9

Same information, different choice, and the only difference was how the question was framed: which would you prefer or which would you cancel? 4/9

They also asked people to imagine deciding case for custody of a child. One parent had average income, health, work hours, rapport with the child, and a stable social life. The other had above average income, great rapport, but worked long hours and had an active social life. 5/9

When asked to AWARD custody, most people chose the above-average parent without a lot of spare time. When asked to DENY custody, most people chose the exact same parent. 6/9

Same information, different choice, and the only difference was how the question was framed: which would you award or which would you deny? 7/9

When looking for good reasons, you base your decision on what seems better-than-average. When looking for bad reasons, you base your decision on what seem worse-than-average. And you do this for everything -- potential partners, new cars, places to live, eat, work, etc. 8/9

This is the essence of motivated reasoning. You don't carefully contemplate all the pros and cons of your choices, you use either pros or cons as a guide depending on your motivation. In other words, when you are looking for a reason to choose A

over B, you will find it. 9/9