

# Mall of America® and University of Minnesota Reveal Groundbreaking Research on Fear at Onionhead's Revenge Haunted House

*Findings show that fear strengthens social bonds*



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Halloween is in full swing, and with it, a fascination with fear. The National Retail Federation projects total Halloween spending will soar to \$11.6 billion this year, with haunted houses being one of the top seasonal draws. One of the most spine-chilling experiences is [Onionhead's Revenge Haunted House](#) at [Mall of America®](#), now in its second year. But there's more to this terrifying attraction than jump scares and ghouls

– it's a proving ground for scientific research on the power of fear.



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*Jill Renslow, Chief Business Development & Marketing Officer*

In collaboration with the University of Minnesota, Mall of America® conducted an innovative study exploring the psychology of fear. What they discovered may surprise you: fear doesn't just make us scream – it also brings us closer together.

"Every year, thousands of people come to Mall of America® to get their fright on," said Jill Renslow, Chief Business Development & Marketing Officer at Mall of America.

"Partnering with the University of Minnesota gave us a unique opportunity to dive into the science behind why people love haunted houses. The University has been an incredible partner in helping us learn the psychology behind this popular phenomenon and the results were fascinating."

Key Findings from the Study:

- Nearly 300 participants took part in the research at Onionhead's Revenge.
- Cameras placed throughout the haunt captured participants' facial expressions, revealing their emotional journey through fear.

- Surveys conducted before and after the experience measured changes in social bonding and emotional satisfaction.

### The Surprising Science of Fear:

- 73% of participants reported feeling more satisfied with their relationships after experiencing the haunted house together.
- Even among strangers, feelings of fear led to increased social bonding, with many reporting a greater sense of connection after the shared experience.
- 77% of attendees felt moderate to high levels of relief after finishing the haunt, with many expressing amazement and awe at conquering their fears.

“This study sheds light on how shared fearful experiences, like haunted houses, can bring people closer,” said William Hedgcock, Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota. “We tend to think of fear as self-focused, but it could play an important role in bonding us to others – especially when we experience it together.”

### Why It Matters:

- Fear + Friendship = Stronger Bonds: The study shows that fear, typically seen as a negative emotion, can foster positive social outcomes when experienced in groups.
- Perfect for Couples and Friends: Whether it’s your first date or a group of close friends, haunted houses like Onionhead’s Revenge might just be the key to strengthening your relationships!

Participants were recorded gasping, laughing, and even stopping to catch their breath after escaping the clutches of Onionhead’s Revenge. This surge of emotion, followed by the overwhelming relief, creates a sense of bonding that drew participants together.

### Want to Dive Deeper?

For more information or to schedule interviews, please contact: Laura Utecht  
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Video footage and photos from the research are available upon request.

For more details on Onionhead’s Revenge Haunted House, visit: [www.americanmonsters.com](http://www.americanmonsters.com)

Researchers involved in the project included:

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## ABOUT MALL OF AMERICA

At 5.6 million square feet, Mall of America is the largest shopping and entertainment complex in North America with up to 520 world-class retail stores and restaurants; Nickelodeon Universe, a 7-acre indoor theme park; SEA LIFE Minnesota Aquarium; FlyOver America; Crayola Experience; and more. The Mall opened in 1992 and is located in Bloomington, Minn., minutes from downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul and adjacent to MSP International Airport. Follow Mall of America on Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok. Listen to So Much More – a Mall of America podcast, on all major platforms or watch on YouTube. Download the Mall of America app from the App Store for iOS or Google Play for Android.

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