The School of Psychology invites you to a Special Seminar with

Dr. Tomer Shechner
Section on Development and Affective Neuroscience
Emotion and Development Branch
National Institute of Mental Health, USA

On:

Attention, Learning and Anxiety: Focusing on Youth

Thursday, January 19, 2012, 10:00, Faculty club, IDC Herzliya Campus

Pediatric anxiety disorders are prevalent, cause significant impairment, and predict risk for psychopathology in adulthood. Individuals with anxiety have inappropriate responses to motivational stimuli, including threats and rewards, which impacts their attention. This talk will review data on the interactions between attention and such motivational stimuli, as they impact risks for and treatments of anxiety disorders. These data derive from studies investigating perturbations in behavior, underlying cognitive processes, and associated brain activation profiles, as assessed during attention-based and fear conditioning tasks.

Research on attention provides a promising framework for studying anxiety pathophysiology and treatment. The study of attention biases is particularly pertinent to both the developmental trajectories of anxiety as well as research on therapeutics. Developmental relationships between normal and pathological anxiety may arise from perturbations in neurocognitive factors such as attention. The first part of the talk will summarize recent findings about attention orienting in anxiety, drawing on findings in recent developmental psychopathology and affective neuroscience research. The second part of the talk will extend such findings by focusing on learning, as it relates to both fear and attention. Specifically, the talk will focus on the subjective and neural correlates of fear learning, as it is expressed during conditioning and fear extinction, two forms of learning that may go awry in individuals with anxiety. Data will be reviewed for recent behavioral and neuroimaging findings on fear conditioning, extinction, and extinction recall among anxious and non-anxious children and adults.