

ASMR - Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response

The official history of ASMR began in 2007 on a discussion forum for health-related subjects. ASMR is a tingling sensation that begins on the scalp and moves down the back of the neck to the spine. It is a pleasant sensation which may invoke intense excitement. ASMR is the experience of "low-grade euphoria" characterized by "a combination of positive feelings and a tingling sensation on the skin". It is usually triggered by auditory or visual stimuli.

The letters "ASMR" mean:

- **A**utonomous – spontaneous, self-governing, without control
- **S**ensory – using the senses
- **M**eridian – a peak or climax
- **R**esponse – an experience triggered by something external or internal

Sensation (paresthesia)

The experience of ASMR can be described as similar to "a mild electrical current" or "the bubbles in a glass of champagne". The tingling sensation on the skin (called "paresthesia") originates on the head, and propagates to the neck, shoulders, arms, spine and legs, and it makes you feel relaxed.

Variance

To date, little scientific research has been conducted on the phenomenon. However, there are many forums, blogs and videos describing the phenomenon. Analysis of this "evidence" has supported the consensus that ASMR is euphoric but non-sexual, and has divided those who experience ASMR into two categories:

- 1) ASMR depends on an external trigger;
- 2) ASMR can be augmented without external stimuli, using mental control, similar to meditation.

Triggers

ASMR triggers, which are usually auditory or visual, can be encountered through interactions of daily life. They can also be experienced from exposure to specific audio or video. Stimuli that can trigger ASMR include:

- Listening to a soft or whispering voice;
- Listening to a person blowing into a microphone;
- Listening to quiet mouth sounds, like a tongue "clicking";
- Listening to gentle, regular tapping sounds, like fingers on a table;
- Listening to buttons being pressed, like on a computer keyboard;
- Listening to quiet, repetitive sounds, like the pages of a book being turned;
- Walking through a forest with a light wind blowing through the trees;
- Watching somebody execute a mundane task, like preparing food;
- Receiving intense personal attention, like having your hair styled, or a medical exam;
- Listening to rain gently tapping the roof or window;
- Listening to certain types of music;
- Listening to the gentle hum of an aircraft in flight;
- Listening to fire;
- Listening to the crinkling of paper;
- Listening to somebody writing, when the pen/pencil makes a scratching noise on paper.

A 2017 study of 130 people found that low, complex sounds, and slow, detail-focused videos are effective triggers.

Many YouTube videos that are intended to trigger ASMR feature somebody performing the above actions and creating the appropriate sounds.

Personal attention

In addition to specific auditory stimuli, many people say that ASMR is triggered by intense personal attention, combining physical touch and vocal expression, like when you have your hair cut, nails painted, ears cleaned, or back massaged while the service provider speaks quietly to you. The provision of such personal attention can be simulated in a video and can be sufficient to trigger ASMR.

Effects

It is claimed that ASMR videos can be effective in inducing sleep for people who are susceptible to insomnia, and they can reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety and panic attacks.

Goosebumps

A similar but opposite reaction is when we get goosebumps from intensely irritating sounds such as fingernails scratching a blackboard or rubbing polystyrene with our hands. These are also examples of an auditory stimulus provoking a physical response.

Example videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVNqvUT7U9M>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SYwOAe6V_4

