



Multitasking & Flexibility

Online Conference

Hosted by the Translational Neuropsychology and Aging Lab,
Department of Psychology, Bar-Ilan University

Supported by the DAAD: German Academic Exchange Services

November 27, 2025

11:00–15:45 Israel Time (UTC+2)

10:00–14:45 CET (UTC+1)

Speakers:



Sharon Naparstek

Department of Psychology,
Bar-Ilan University



Andrea Kiesel

Faculty of Economics and
Behavioral Sciences|
Institute for Psychology
University of Freiburg



Maayan Katzir

Conflict Management,
Resolution and Negotiation
Program, Bar-Ilan
University

Schedule

11:00-11:15	Welcome & Opening — Assaf Bloom (DAAD) and Sharon Naparstek (Bar-Ilan University)
11:15-12:00	Talk 1 — Andrea Kiesel (University of Freiburg)
12:00-12:45	Talk 2 — Maayan Katzir (Bar-Ilan University)
12:45-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-14:45	Talk 3 — Sharon Naparstek (Bar-Ilan University)
14:45-15:30	Panel: Translating lab measures into real-life behavior Led by students from University of Freiburg and Bar-Ilan University
15:30-15:45	Concluding remarks



Participation is free, but registration is required here



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Abstracts

Talk 1: Self-organized task scheduling in multitasking/ Dr. Andrea Kiesel

Research often focused on the costs when multitasking. Yet multitasking might also be beneficial due to constraints in the environment. For example, multi-step tasks often entail waiting times until one process is finished – like waiting for the water to boil when cooking tea. In a variant of the voluntary task-switching procedure, we explored whether and how participants adapt task selection to their individual task-switching performance limitations (switch costs) with such externally induced waiting times. In several experiments, we observed that participants equally trade off switch costs against increasing time waiting for the stimulus needed for a task repetition. In a variant of the task, we manipulated motor effort for task repetitions and observed that participants switch tasks more with increasing force required for responding in task repetition trials. Thus, participants considered their individual cognitive and motor costs when selecting tasks, demonstrating a close link between task selection and task performance.

Talk 2: Are there dominant response tendencies for social reactions? Trust trumps mistrust-evidence from a Dominant Behavior Measure (DBM)/ Dr. Maayan Katzir

Are people more prone to trust or to mistrust? We introduce a novel paradigm – the Dominant Behavior Measure (DBM) – that is based on decades of meticulous research in task switching. We find that trust, similar to other dominant response tendencies, is faster, harder to switch to, more interfering and more facilitating than mistrust. The DBM can be used to study dominant responses in other fields.

Talk 3: Affective flexibility with self-organized task switching: Dissociating voluntary task choice and execution/Dr. Sharon Naparstek

Affective flexibility, the ability to adapt cognitive control in emotional contexts, is essential for mental health. Yet prior work has mostly examined responses to external cues, leaving unknown how people choose to engage with, avoid, or switch between emotional situations when given free choice. To address this question, we developed a novel affective voluntary task-switching paradigm that investigates the interplay between voluntary task selection (choice) and execution (performance) in emotional contexts. We found a context-dependent double dissociation: participants avoided choosing emotional tasks but performed them faster once engaged, revealing an "emotional escape mechanism." We conclude that voluntary choice and task execution are governed by distinct, context-specific cognitive control policies, demonstrating the paradigm's utility for mapping the mechanisms of affective flexibility.