Dr. Wager is the director of the Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience laboratory at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in cognitive psychology in 2003, and served as an Assistant and Associate Professor at Columbia University from 2004-2009. In 2010, he joined the faculty of the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has a deep interest in how thinking influences affective experiences, affective learning, and brain-body communication.

Current studies in the lab are aimed at understanding how the brain represents different types of affect (including pain, rejection, canonical emotions, and compassion), and how affective representations are influenced by both conceptual and associative processes. These studies employ mainly functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and behavioral measures, but also include work combining fMRI with peripheral physiology, electroencephalography (EEG), transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), and pharmacology. In addition, though most studies investigate basic mechanisms in healthy individuals, collaborative studies include work on clinical pain, PTSD, depression, schizophrenia, and borderline personality disorder.

Dr. Wager places particular emphasis on the development and deployment of analytic methods, and has developed publically available software toolboxes for fMRI analysis, including optimized experimental design, multi-level mediation, change-point analysis, machine learning, and meta-analysis. He believes that collaborative development and open sharing of tools and data are critical ingredients in the advancement of human neuroscience.