FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF EXPERIMENTAL CLINICAL AND HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

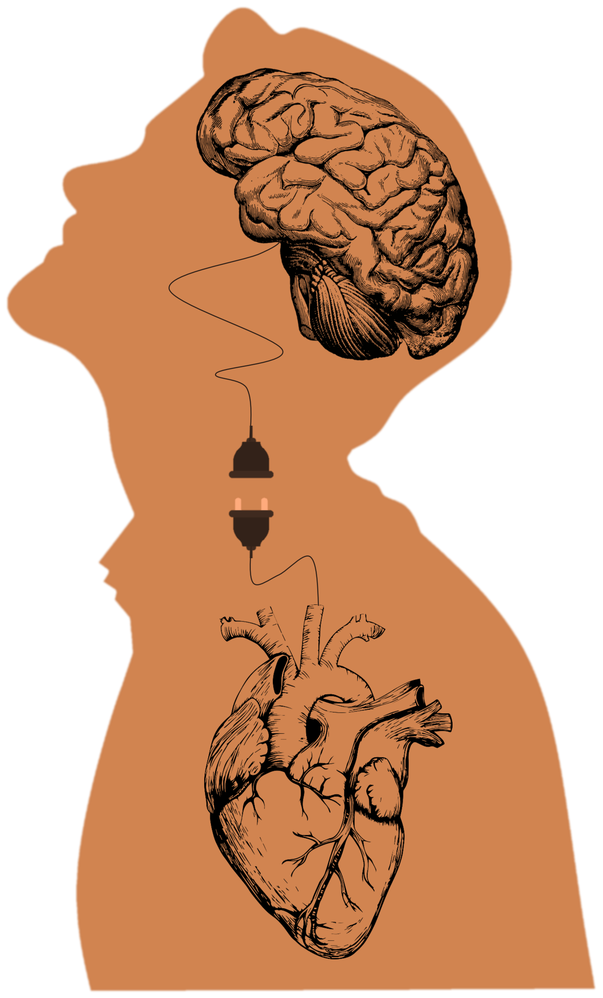
(EXPLORATORY) RESEARCH ON SPONTANEOUS EMOTION REGULATION AFTER STRESS INDUCTION

Jente Depoorter, Kristof Hoorelbeke & Rudi De Raedt

BACKGROUND

Difficulties with emotion regulation are an important **transdiagnostic risk factor** (Aldao et al. 2016). Recently, Berking & Whitley (2014) developed a theoretical framework on emotion regulation which assumes an important role for the **order of emotion regulation** processes. Prior studies have typically assessed (spontaneous) emotion regulation via standardized self-report questionnaires which do not consider the sequence by which one regulates one's emotions.

The experience and regulation of emotions in stressful situations is accompanied by **activation of the autonomic nervous system**. Therefore heart rate variability (HRV) will be measured for parasympathetic activity and pre-ejection period (PEP) and skin conductance (SC) for sympathetic activity.



STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Which emotion regulation strategies are spontaneously used upon confrontation with a standardized psychosocial stressor?

2. Does a specific sequential use of emotion regulation strategies influence stress reactivity and mental well-being?

PARTICIPANTS

100 first year undergraduate students

Exclusion criteria:

- Smoking
- Pregnant
- Current psychiatric diagnosis

STUDY DESIGN

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES

- DASS & PANAS
- CERQ & ERSQ

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENTS

- Criteria checklist
- Baseline measurement
- MINI

STRESS INDUCTION

- Adapted TSST
- Visual analogue scales

EMOTION REGULATION

- Ranking first three used
- Time spent on each strategy
- Adapted CERQ

STRESS INDUCTION

The stress induction procedure is an adapted version of the TSST in which participants have to present a scientific text in front of an online jury. This jury then provides negative, self-related feedback to the participant. How the participant handles the feedback is the main interest of this study.

Between each phase, participants fill in visual analogue scales measuring their current mood states (anger, tension, sadness and happiness). During this stress induction procedure the following psychophysiological parameters are measured: HRV, PEP and SC.

VAS T1 → Preparation (10 min) → VAS T2 → Stress (5 min) → VAS T3 → Feedback (5 min) → VAS T4 → Recovery (5 min) → VAS T5

CLINICAL RELEVANCE

The results of this study will be used for further experimental studies in which we will look at instructed emotion regulation (i.e. paced breathing, acceptance and positive reappraisal). By doing so, the hypothesis that applying different strategies in a certain order can facilitate adaptive emotion regulation, will be tested. Based on the current evidence on the relationship between psychological well-being an adaptive emotion regulation, experimental research on how to facilitate adaptive emotion regulation may be highly important to provide guidelines and interventions for the clinical practice.

Contact

Jente.Depoorter@ugent.be

Psychopathology and Affective Neuroscience lab (PANlab)

@JenteDepoorter

jentedepoorter

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References:

Aldao, A., Gee, D. G., De Los Reyes, A., & Seager, I. (2016). Emotion regulation as a transdiagnostic factor in the development of internalizing and externalizing psychopathology: Current and future directions. *Development and Psychopathology*, *28*(4), 927–946.

Berking, M. & Whitley, B. (2014). The Adaptive Coping with Emotions Model (ACE Model). In *Affect Regulation Training* (pp. 19-29). Springer New York.

V.U.: Universiteit Gent, Faculteit Psychologie en Pedagogische Wetenschappen. Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent