

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Emotion Regulation Strategies that Promote Learning:
Effects of Rumination, Reappraisal of Importance, and Reappraisal of Outcomes on
Children's Memory for Educational and Emotional Information

By

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Children's effective emotion regulation is linked to academic achievement, but we do not know which specific emotion regulation strategies are most effective for children to use, nor do we know whether the effectiveness of emotion regulation strategies varies across ages. The present investigation was conducted to provide insight into children's emotion regulation abilities and the effects of emotion regulation on children's memory.

Sixty-three younger (6-9 years old) and 63 older children (10-13 years old) viewed a brief film clip that elicited sadness, and were randomly assigned to experimental conditions in which they were instructed to use one of three strategies to regulate sad feelings. The three strategies were *Reappraisal of importance*, *Reappraisal of outcomes*, and *Rumination*. Children in a fourth *Control* condition received no instructions concerning the regulation of their emotion. After implementing the specified strategy, children viewed an educational film. Memory for the information presented in the educational and emotional film clips was then assessed via free and cued recall questions. Children were also asked to report how they had gone about following the instructions to regulate their emotions, as well as whether they had used any emotion regulation strategies during the sad film clip before receiving instructions.

Results showed that regulating sadness by reappraising the importance of emotional events enhanced memory for peripheral information from a cued recall test about the educational film, relative to children in the control group. Likewise, children who reported reappraising importance after the emotion regulation instructions made fewer intrusion errors in free recall, relative to children who reported using distraction, when remembering the sad film. Children who reported reappraising importance during the sad film remembered more information during cued recall of the sad film than did children who reported using distraction. Older children, unsurprisingly, remembered both educational and emotional information better than did younger children. As predicted, however, younger children who were instructed to reappraise outcomes showed especially poor memory for the information from the educational film, relative to younger children who were instructed to ruminate about the sad film. Findings carry implications for educational programs designed to enable children to learn effectively.