

Abstract

Interpersonal emotion regulation happens on a daily basis. Previous researches have shown that listeners of people in distress experience vicarious distress in the process. The current study aimed at studying how one's dispositional characteristics affect their experience of vicarious distress. We exposed our participants in an interpersonal emotion regulation context and analyzed their responses in relation to their dispositional characteristics. Our results indicated that people who had difficulty with emotion regulation, and a negative self schema tended to experience higher self-oriented distress in the regulation process. In addition, the general tendency of emotion contagion was not related to self-oriented distress when mood variables and other-oriented emotions were controlled. Our study hereby demonstrated that self-oriented distress of the listener was in fact not reflective of one's ability in detecting and understanding others' emotions, instead, it was related to one's own ability of emotion regulation and negativity of self-schema.

Keywords: interpersonal emotion regulation, vicarious distress, empathy