

Title: Better Memory for a Negative Event Associated with Better Emotion Regulation

Authors: Gennarina Santorelli, Rachel Gora, Daniel Rovenpor, and Rebecca E. Ready

Affiliation: The University of Massachusetts Amherst, Department of Psychology

Contact information: 135 Hicks Way, Amherst, MA 01003; 413-545-1984;
gsantorelli@psych.umass.edu

Abstract: Cognitive resources in older adults may promote psychological well-being. Our data add a novel dimension to this work by demonstrating that superior memory for negative mood induction stimuli is associated with better emotion recovery over time. Older ($n = 11$) and younger ($n = 14$) participants were shown film clips depicting themes of loss to induce negative emotions and reduce positive emotions. Self-report emotions were assessed prior to the videos, immediately after the videos, and after 10-minutes of emotion recovery. Results indicated that Positive Affect, Joviality, and Attentiveness significantly ($ps < .05$) decreased and Negative Affect, Sadness, and Hostility significantly ($ps < .05$) increased from pre- to post-video. Changes in Guilt were significantly ($p < .05$) different by age group; scores for younger adults decreased whereas scores for older adults increased. Free recall and recognition memory for the film stimuli were tested. There was a trend for younger adults to have better recognition memory for the negative film stimuli than older adults ($p < 0.10$). Poorer recognition memory was associated with less efficient emotion recovery for several negative emotions. Specifically, poorer recognition memory was associated with less efficient recovery as a trend for Fear ($r = -.35$, $p < .10$) and Sadness ($r = -.36$, $p < .10$) and significantly for Guilt ($r = -.66$, $p < .05$). Better memory for an event that causes negative emotions may facilitate emotion regulation and emotion recovery. Implications for emotion dysregulation in memory disorders are discussed.