

Can briefly reflecting upon unconditional regard buffer adolescents selves? A field experiment

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Registration date 13/03/2014	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Last Edited 13/02/2015	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
		<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Unconditional regard refers to the feeling that one is accepted and valued by others without conditions. Psychological theory holds that when people experience unconditional regard from others, they feel valuable without conditions. Thus, unconditional regard might reduce negative self-feelings in the face of setbacks (e.g., I am a valuable person, even if I get low grades in school). However, evidence for this concept is lacking. This study tests whether reflecting on unconditional regard can reduce adolescents negative self-feelings (i.e., negative feelings about oneself) in the face of a common setback low grades in school. This study focuses on 11-15 year olds, because this is an age during which negative self-feelings peak.

Who can participate?

Adolescents aged 11-15 years old.

What does the study involve?

Participants are randomly allocated to reflect for 15 minutes on experiences of unconditional regard (experimental condition), conditional regard (first control group), or other social experiences (second control group). Three weeks later, after receiving their course grades, participants report their negative self-feelings and negative other-feelings. Course grades are obtained from school records.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

We do not foresee any risks.

Where is the study run from?

A public secondary school in the Netherlands.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study started in November 2011 and ran until January 2012.

Who is funding the study?
The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Study information

Scientific Title
Can briefly reflecting upon unconditional regard buffer adolescents negative self-feelings following low school grades? A randomized single-blind field experiment

Study objectives
We hypothesize that reflecting upon unconditional regard, compared to two active control groups,
1. will buffer participants negative self-feelings following low school grades
2. but will not buffer participants negative other-feelings following low school grades.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
The Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Utrecht University, the Netherlands, 28/02/2014

Study design
Single-blind randomized controlled field experiment. Experimenters and teachers are blind to condition assignment.

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Negative self-feelings (i.e., negative feelings about oneself)

Interventions

Participants are randomly assigned to the unconditional-regard condition or one of two active control conditions.

1. In the unconditional-regard condition, participants are told to think of peers who always accept and value you, no matter how you behave or how good you are at something. Next, they visualize and write about a situation in which one of these peers still accepted and valued you even though you made a mistake or did something stupid.
2. In the first control condition, participants are told to think of peers who accept and value you, but only if you do or say the kind of things these peers like, approve of, or look up to. Next, they visualize and write about a situation in which one of these peers accepted and valued you less because you made a mistake or did something stupid.
3. In the second control condition, participants are told to think of peers who do not really know you. Next, they visualize and write about a situation in which one of these peers was present while you made a mistake or did something stupid.

In all conditions, the exercise takes about 15 minutes.

Intervention Type

Other

Phase

Not Applicable

Primary outcome(s)

1. Negative self-feelings (i.e., negative feelings about oneself) measured by questionnaire at 3 weeks post-manipulation
2. School grades measured by report card received at 3 weeks post-manipulation

Key secondary outcome(s)

Negative other-feelings (i.e., negative feelings about others) measured by questionnaire at 3 weeks post-manipulation

Completion date

16/01/2012

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Adequate Dutch language ability
2. Attending Dutch secondary school
3. Between 11-15 years old

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

11 years

Upper age limit

15 years

Sex

All

Key exclusion criteria

Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment

28/11/2011

Date of final enrolment

16/01/2012

Locations**Countries of recruitment**

Netherlands

Study participating centre

Heidelberglaan 1

Utrecht

Netherlands

3584 CS

Sponsor information**Organisation**

Utrecht University (Netherlands)

ROR

<https://ror.org/04pp8hn57>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Research organisation

Funder Name

The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Netherlands) Ref. 431-09-022

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not provided at time of registration

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article	results	01/12/2014		Yes	No