

TMS TRENDS

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RUMINATION IN DEPRESSION: A NATURAL COPING MECHANISM?

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/835824>

Researchers at McMaster University and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health who have been studying the roots of depression have developed a test to measure analytical thinking and rumination that are hallmarks of the condition. The test led them closer to the idea that depression may actually be an adaptation meant to help people cope with complex problems.

The group discovered a meaningful connection between answers to their 20-question test and analytical rumination--a type of distraction-resistant thinking that is characteristics of clinical and sub-clinical depression.

“Depression has long been seen as nothing but a problem,” stated Dr. Paul Andrews, one of the researchers in the group. “We are asking whether it may actually be a natural adaptation that the brain uses to tackle certain problems. We are seeing more evidence that depression can be a necessary and beneficial adaptation to dealing with major, complex issues that defy easy understanding.”

The test revealed which subjects were experiencing analytical rumination at varying levels of intensity, and found a relationship between those results and subjects who were experiencing depressive symptoms. These findings suggest that depression may be a natural condition in which the mind concentrates involuntarily on a complex issue to the point where it allocates resources to analyzing the problem, diminishing concentration on other aspects of living. The researchers report that being able to measure analytical rumination is a step toward developing new and possibly more productive ways of reducing the harmful effects of depression.

HUGS HELP PROTECT AGAINST STRESS AND INFECTION

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/12/141217101316.htm>

A group of researchers at Carnegie Mellon University tested whether hugs act as a form of social support, protecting stressed people from getting sick. They found that greater social support and more frequent hugs protected people from the increased susceptibility to infection associated with being stressed and resulted in less severe illness symptoms.

In 404 healthy adults, perceived support was assessed by a questionnaire, and frequencies of interpersonal conflicts and receiving hugs were collected. Then, the participants were intentionally exposed to a common cold virus and monitored to assess infection and signs of illness. The results showed that perceived social support reduced the risk of infection associated with experiencing conflicts. Hugs were responsible for one-third of the protective effect of social support. Among infected participants, greater perceived social support and more frequent hugs resulted in less severe illness symptoms whether or not they experienced conflicts.



Happy New Year from the TMS Institute of Pennsylvania!