

Dissociable Effects of Hedonic Capacity, Depressive Symptomology, Mood, and Stress on Emotional Reactivity

Depression is characterized by alterations in positive and negative emotional processing/reactivity. Given the highly heterogeneous symptom presentation among depressed patients, differences in emotional reactivity may be specifically related to certain symptom types/clusters. Particularly, we hypothesize that the gateway symptoms of anhedonia and negative mood, though often co-morbid, may have differentiable effects on emotional reactivity. The current study examines the effect of individual differences in hedonic capacity and depressive symptomology on emotional reactivity in a non-clinical sample. Participants (N=107) performed an Emotional Picture Rating Task during which they rated the valence and arousal of their affective response to 100 emotional images (40 negative, 20 neutral, 40 positive images). Preliminary results suggest that reduced hedonic capacity (i.e. increased anhedonic symptomology) predicts blunted responses to positive and negative while higher depressive symptomology predicts potentiated responses to negative images. These findings suggest that characterizing specific depressive symptomology may be useful for better understanding alterations in emotion processing/reactivity. Follow-up analyses will test whether stress-related factors, like experience of and response to stress, and mood also explain individual differences in emotion reactivity.