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Confidence Appraisals Protect against Anxiety in Response to a Transient Stressor

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ABSTRACT

Research suggests that cognitive appraisals regarding personal control and existential beliefs are important factors in the development of anxiety. These include mastery, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, self-esteem, attributional style, and optimism. It remains unclear, however, whether these appraisals add to the prediction of anxiety beyond what can be determined by individuals' generalized tendency to respond with anxiety in stressful situations. Moreover, researchers have begun to question whether measures of these appraisals represent truly distinct constructs or whether they are merely redundant aspects of a broad higher order construct. We sought to determine the empirical overlap of these six cognitive appraisals known to correlate with anxiety and whether identified factor(s) prospectively predicted anxiety in response to an ecologically valid stressor. The appraisals loaded onto one factor reflecting confidence in one's coping ability. This confidence factor significantly predicted future state anxiety after controlling for baseline levels of trait anxiety and other possible confounds. Results suggest that these cognitive appraisals may be causally linked to anxiety and used to identify those at risk.

KEYWORDS

Anxiety; Prospective; Longitudinal; Risk Factor; Cognitive Appraisal

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