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Clearing the mind: a working memory model of distraction from negative mood.

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Source

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Abstract

The present research examined whether and how loading working memory can attenuate negative mood. In three experiments, participants were exposed to neutral, weakly negative, or strongly negative pictures followed by a task and a mood scale. Working memory demands were varied by manipulating task presence (Study 1), complexity (Study 2), and predictability (Study 3). Participants in all three experiments reported less negative moods in negative trials with high compared to low working memory demand. Working memory demands did not affect mood in the neutral trials. When working memory demands were high, participants no longer reported more negative moods in response to strongly negative pictures than to weakly negative pictures. These findings suggest that loading working memory prevents mood-congruent processing, and thereby promotes distraction from negative moods.

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