

# The Affective, Cognitive, and Physiological Effects of Implementing Antecedent-Focused Emotion Regulation Strategies in Childhood

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## Abstract

Different components of emotional responding may be affected by using specific emotion regulation strategies that enable children's volitional self-regulation. This study examined the affective, cognitive, and physiological effects of experimentally instructing children to deploy distraction and reappraisal to regulate negative emotion during an evocative film clip. One-hundred eighty-four 4- to 11-year-old children ( $M = 7.66$  years;  $SD = 2.33$  years; 94 girls) participated. Neither strategy affected observed distress or self-reported negative emotion. Relative to a control condition, children instructed to use reappraisal reported marginally less happiness after the emotional film and attenuated rumination. Distraction also predicted attenuated rumination, as well as a pattern of parasympathetic reactivity indicative of disengagement that correlated with parents' reported use of minimizing and punitive emotion socialization practices. Findings underscore the utility of multi-method approaches that examine parasympathetic activity in conjunction with volitional measures of self-regulation.

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