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Does Expressive Writing About Negative Emotions Influence Divergent Thinking?

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Abstract

Many researchers claim that negative emotions inhibit creativity. However, describing emotions in a safe environment has beneficial effects: it allows for the restructuring of difficult experiences, as a result, we discover the world again, which can influence creativity. The classic method of writing about emotions is long-term one. The hereby study was an attempt to verify, if one session of expressive writing improves creative thinking. This hypothesis was tested in an experimental study by exposing participants (N = 60) to emotionally laden content. Participants viewed unpleasant images. The first group wrote about their emotions in connection with the images. The second described their typical day. At the end all participants solved creativity measure (Alternative Uses Task). After each stage, emotions of respondents were measured. The conducted analyses had shown that, performance was better in the unpleasant emotions describing condition. At the same time, negative emotions persistence has been observed.