

Rumination, distraction, and mindful self-focus in depressed patients.

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Abstract

Rumination has been proposed as a cognitive risk factor for the onset and maintenance of depression. In parallel, mindfulness interventions have shown to reduce the risk for recurrence of depressive episodes. This study aimed to investigate effects of short periods of induced rumination, distraction, and mindful self-focus on sad mood in depressed patients and to assess possible moderator effects of habitual variables on respective mood changes. Seventy-six depressed patients 3.5 years after discharge from inpatient treatment were subjected to negative mood induction and subsequently randomly assigned to a rumination, distraction, or mindful self-focus induction. Habitual aspects of rumination, distraction, and mindfulness were assessed by questionnaires. Compared to rumination, the induction of a mindful self-focus and of distraction showed clear beneficial effects on the course of negative mood. While habitual distraction predicted better mood outcomes across all conditions, patients high in habitual mindfulness tended to show stronger negative mood reduction specifically after the induction of a mindful self-focus. This study indicates that - similar to distraction - an experimentally induced mindful self-focus is able to reduce negative mood in depressed patients. Implications regarding possible subgroups of patients who might particularly benefit from mindfulness-based interventions are discussed.

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