

When and Why Unhappy People Avoid Enjoyable Experiences

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Abstract : Across four studies, we show people in a negative mood avoid anticipated enjoyable experiences because of the subjective difficulty in simulating those experiences, and they misattribute these feelings of difficulty to reduced pleasantness of the anticipated experience. We observe the avoidance of enjoyable experiences only for anticipated experiences that involve smile-like facial-muscular simulation. When the need for facial-muscular simulation is attenuated, or when the anticipated experience relies on facial-muscular simulation to a lesser extent, people in a negative mood no longer avoid enjoyable experiences, but rather seek such experiences because they fit better with their ongoing mood-repair goals.

Keywords : emotion regulation, mood repair, embodiment, anticipated experiences

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