

Interpersonal Emotion Regulation in Adolescence: An Enhanced Critical Incident Study

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Abstract : Given the increasing importance of peer relationships during adolescence, the present study aimed to examine peer interactions that facilitate or hinder adolescents' regulation of negative emotions. Using the Enhanced Critical Incident Technique, 1-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 junior high school adolescents. Participants were asked to recall situations when they experienced strong negative emotions during the past school year, indicate the peer interactions that helped or hindered their emotion regulation, and identify prospective interactions with the potential to help regulate their emotions. Data analysis extracted 182 critical incidents, including 109 helping incidents, 45 hindering incidents, and 28 wish list items, which generated 10 categories nested within four overarching themes: Positive Personal Support included (a) supportive presence, (b) expressing concern, (c) empathizing, and (d) encouraging and cheering up; while Strategy Transmission included (e) sharing perspective, and (f) giving advice; Activated Support included (g) taking action, and (h) distracting; while Negative Personal Interactions included (i) withdrawing and (j) punishing. Implications for mental health and service providers, as well as recommendations for future research, are presented.

Keywords : adolescence, emotion regulation, enhanced critical incident technique, peers

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