

The Functions of Worry in Uncontrollable Situations – Perceived Effects of Worry and the Feeling of Being in Control

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Abstract

The current study investigated the correspondence between positive beliefs about worry and the actual functions of worry, as they are perceived on the spot, in a stressful, uncontrollable circumstance. Participants ($N = 79$) were immersed in a stressful and uncontrollable situation, that of an impromptu speech. Half of the participants were randomly assigned into the experimental condition and were instructed to worry in relation to the forthcoming presentation, while the others were allocated to a mental distraction task condition. Results showed that, while worrying, individuals did not report the expected effects of worry and did not obtain a higher sense of control. Therefore, even if individuals generally think that worry is beneficial, they do not experience such benefits while worrying.

Keywords

worry; positive beliefs about worry; functions of worry; sense of control.