



Influence of Depression on beliefs about future life events Study Debriefing

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking time to participate in this study. This form outlines the main information about the study, its measures and hypotheses as well as contact details of researchers and study supervisors.

What was the background of the study?

In this study we looked at people's beliefs of the likelihood of experiencing different life events, and whether this could be related to depression symptoms.

Previous studies have found that people tend to take positive information into account more than negative information when thinking about negative future life events. For example, if someone initially believed that they had a 10% chance of experiencing a negative life event and they were then told it was actually 5% (i.e. it was a lesser chance), they would be more likely to change their belief. However, if they were told it was actually 15% (i.e. it was a greater chance) they would be less likely to change their belief.

In contrast previous research has found that people with depression tend to take both positive and negative information equally into account. We were interested in whether we would repeat these findings, and whether they would also be present for both positive and negative life events.

How was this tested?

In this study, you were asked to estimate your chances of experiencing various positive and negative events in the future. After each estimation, you received information about how likely these events are to occur to someone similar to you. We then asked you to again estimate your chances of experiencing these events. We were interested in how your estimates changed between your first and second ratings.

What were the hypotheses?

We hypothesised that participants with low levels of depression would be more likely to update their beliefs after receiving positive information, and less likely to update their beliefs after receiving negative information. In contrast we hypothesised that participants with higher levels of depression would be equally likely to update their beliefs after receiving both positive and negative information.

Were the presented average likelihoods for each of the life events accurate?

The average estimates we showed you in this study are based on validated statistics, and are therefore accurate. However, these represent the *average* likelihood of experiencing the event across people in the United Kingdom. Based on your individual characteristics your own probability of experiencing these events will vary. If you feel distressed by any of the information in this study you can access support services.

Mental Health Resources

You can seek help from your GP if you think you may be depressed or anxious.

If you are feeling suicidal, there are people you can talk to who want to help:

- Call the Samaritans 24-hour support service on 116 123
- Go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department and tell the staff how you are feeling
- Contact NHS 111
- Make an urgent appointment to see your GP

Other Sources of Support:

- Mind (www.mind.org.uk, 0300 123 3393) A charity providing information on mental health, sources of help and advocacy
- Samaritans (www.samaritans.org, 116 123) A 24-hour telephone helpline for people struggling to cope.
- NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression or <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/>) Provides information on treatments for depression and anxiety available through the NHS.

Who can I contact in case of any questions?

If you would like to raise any issues or ask any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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