Investigating Self-Control Resource Depletion as a Situational Risk Factor for Aversive Interpartner Communication by Young Adults With ADHD

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:
Adults with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have more conflictual relations with their romantic partners than adults without ADHD. This study investigated whether adults with ADHD are differentially susceptible to conflict when self-control resources are depleted.

METHOD:
Heterosexual adult couples (20 including at least one adult with ADHD; 12 including no adults with ADHD) were randomly assigned to have resources temporarily depleted or not. Positive and negative communication was assessed during a subsequent problem-solving task with their partners.

RESULTS:
Adults with ADHD whose self-control resources were depleted communicated less positively and more negatively with their romantic partners than adults without ADHD whose resources were depleted.

CONCLUSION:
Adults with ADHD appear to have a differential susceptibility to interpartner discord when their self-control resources have been depleted. Clinicians seeking to remediate discordant romantic relationships of adults with ADHD should consider evaluating how often their resources needed to manage their impulses are depleted.