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“I feel better but I don’t know why”: The psychology of implicit emotion regulation

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Although emotion regulation has traditionally been conceived as a deliberative process, there is growing evidence that many emotion-regulation processes operate at implicit levels. This special issue of Cognition and Emotion showcases recent advances in theorising and empirical research on implicit emotion regulation. Implicit emotion regulation can be broadly defined as any process that operates without the need for conscious supervision or explicit intentions, and aims at modifying the quality, intensity, or duration of an emotional response. Implicit emotion regulation is likely to be pervasive in everyday life and may contribute considerably to the effectiveness of emotion regulation. Research in this area has developed several valid methods for measuring and manipulating implicit emotion. The contributions to this special issue highlight the significance of implicit emotion regulation in psychological adaptation, goal-directed behaviour, interpersonal behaviour, personality functioning, and mental health.

Keywords: Emotion regulation; Affect regulation; Implicit social cognition.

How do people go about managing their emotions? What are the basic processes and mental operations that underlie emotion regulation? Until recently, prevailing theoretical models emphasised conscious, deliberative, and resource-demanding processes in emotion regulation, such as ruminative thinking (Joormann & Gotlib, 2010), strategic reappraisal (Gross, 2001), effortful distraction (Van Dillen & Koole, 2007), and suppression of emotional responses (Richards & Gross, 2000). Although several scholars acknowledged the theoretical possibility that emotion regulation might operate on implicit levels (e.g., Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000; Gross, 1998), empirical research on implicit emotion regulation was virtually nonexistent.

But not anymore. Over the last decade, implicit emotion regulation has become an intense focus of empirical research. A growing number of studies have confirmed what theorists long suspected, namely, that a host of emotion-regulation processes operate at implicit levels (Bargh & Williams, 2007; Berkman & Lieberman, 2009; Brandtstädter, 2000; Eder, Rothermund, &
Proctor, 2010; Joormann & Gotlib, 2010; Koole, 2009; Mauss, Bunge, & Gross, 2007). In this special issue of Cognition and Emotion, we showcase recent advances in theory development and empirical research on implicit emotion regulation. The contributions to the special issue cut across many different content areas, including goal pursuit, action control, psychological health, attachment, the self, motivation, social-cognitive neuroscience, interpersonal relationships, attachment and emotional disorders. Taken together, these contributions highlight how research on implicit emotion regulation has wide-ranging implications for understanding people’s emotional lives.

In this editorial, we set the stage for this special issue by considering some general issues that surround the study of implicit emotion regulation. We start by addressing definitional questions regarding implicit emotion regulation. Next, we outline why implicit emotion regulation is important and consider the challenging question of what counts as evidence for implicit emotion regulation. Finally, we give a brief overview of the contributions to this special issue.

WHAT IS IMPLICIT EMOTION REGULATION?

The terms “emotion” and “emotion regulation” remain hotly debated within psychology (Gross, Sheppes, & Urry, in press; Kappas, 2010; Thompson, 2011), as has been the question what qualifies as an “implicit” versus an “explicit” mental process (De Houwer, Teige-Mocigemba, Spruyt, & Moors, 2009; Gawronski, LeBel, & Peters, 2007). This conceptual confusion is so great that it seems tempting to leave implicit what “implicit emotion regulation” really is.

For two reasons, we believe that it is more productive to address the definition of implicit emotion regulation head on. First, lack of clarity about a theoretical construct can easily lead to misunderstandings and ambiguities about the meaning of empirical findings. As such, having a precise definition of implicit emotion regulation is likely to promote scientific progress. Second, if researchers are clear about what they mean with a particular construct, they may discover points of agreement. Indeed, if we are not mistaken, there is an emerging consensus among researchers regarding the meaning of the term implicit emotion regulation. In the spirit of trying to capture this consensus, we offer the following working definition:

Implicit emotion regulation may be defined as any process that operates without the need for conscious supervision or explicit intentions, and which is aimed at modifying the quality, intensity, or duration of an emotional response. Implicit emotion regulation can thus be instigated even when people do not realise that they are engaging in any form of emotion regulation and when people have no conscious intention of regulating their emotions.

Although implicit emotion regulation is presumably unintentional, several lines of research emphasise the goal-directed nature of implicit emotion regulation. For instance, Hopp, Troy, and Mauss (2011 this issue, p. 553) propose that, “Despite this variety of unconscious emotion-regulation processes ... one common pathway may underlie many of them: unconscious goal pursuit, or, implicitly represented values regarding emotion regulation”. The latter statement may seem to contradict the unintentional nature of implicit emotion regulation, given that goals and intentions are often treated as synonyms in popular discourse. However, this contradiction is more apparent than real. Modern theories of action control (Kuhl, 1984) define intentions as explicit linguistic representations of intended actions that are maintained in working memory (see also Kuhl & Kazén, 1999). Intentions are thus distinct from goals, which are defined as mental representations of desired outcomes. Implicit emotion regulation can thus be goal directed (i.e., aimed at achieving a desired emotional state) even though it is by definition not intentional, i.e., not instigated or guided by explicit intentions.

The aspect of non-intentionality distinguishes the study of implicit emotion regulation from
most studies of explicit emotion regulation, in which participants are instructed to strategically modify their emotional responses. Because implicit emotion regulation does not require such explicit instructions, it is more spontaneous than explicit emotion regulation. Nevertheless, implicit emotion regulation cannot be equated with spontaneously occurring emotion regulation (Berkman & Lieberman, 2009; Egloff, Schmukle, Burns, & Schwerdtfeger, 2006). This is because even in the absence of instructions to do so, people might come up with the intention of modifying their emotions on their own. The latter would be a case of spontaneously occurring explicit emotion regulation rather than implicit emotion regulation.

Implicit emotion regulation involves automatic processes, given that lack of consciousness and intentionality are both core aspects of automaticity (Bargh, 1994; Moors & De Houwer, 2006). However, the notion of automaticity is broader and also relates to efficiency (the degree to which a mental process is dependent upon limited attentional resources) and uncontrollability (the degree to which a mental process can be stopped once it has started; Bargh, 1994). These additional features can be important to further characterise implicit emotion regulation. However, they are less central to its definition. Although many forms of implicit emotion regulation may be efficient, some forms may be relatively effortful. For instance, derogation of attractive alternatives among committed partners is a form of emotion regulation that is not mediated by conscious intentions (Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1990) but nonetheless demands effortful attention (Ritter, Karremans, & van Schie, 2010; see also Meyer, Berkman, Karremans, & Lieberman, 2011 this issue). Likewise, some forms of implicit emotion regulation may be uncontrollable, such as avoidance of painful experiences among chronic repressors (Derakshan, Eysenck, & Myers, 2007). However, other forms of implicit emotion regulation are likely to be flexible and dynamically adjustable (see Freytag, Bluemke, & Fiedler, 2011 this issue; Rothermund, Gast, & Wentura, 2011 this issue).

**WHY IS IMPLICIT EMOTION REGULATION IMPORTANT?**

In their daily lives, people are almost continually bombarded with emotionally charged stimuli, ranging from the evening news to the temper tantrums of one’s family members, not to forget encounters with tempting situations and stimuli like sweets and attractive interaction partners. Emotional responses thus need to be regulated almost constantly to keep them from interfering with people’s ongoing activities, situational demands, and long-term goals. It seems unlikely that controlled, resource-demanding emotion regulation strategies would be sufficient to deal with the permanent and ongoing requirements of emotion regulation. As such, it would be highly adaptive if people could regulate their emotions implicitly, without the need for conscious supervision. In short, a first reason why implicit emotion regulation is important is that it may be a vital resource in offsetting the impact of emotional responses that are triggered automatically by environmental events.

A quick look at current research confirms that implicit emotion regulation may be activated by circumstances that are pervasive in daily life. Among other things, research indicates that implicit emotion regulation may be triggered by demanding situations (Koole & Fockenberg, 2011 this issue), negative affect (Quirin, Bode, & Kuhl, 2011 this issue), threats to close relationships (Jostmann, Karremans, & Finkenauer, 2011 this issue; Meyer et al., 2011 this issue), positive or negative feedback (Moore, Ferguson, & Chartrand, 2011 this issue; Rothermund et al., 2011 this issue), and primes referring to attachment figures (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Rom, 2011 this issue). Even this cursory list suffices to show that the triggers of implicit emotion regulation are manifold and likely to be common in everyday life.

A second reason why implicit emotion regulation is important can be derived from an appraisal perspective on emotion. Several influential theories have proposed that emotions are shaped by (fast and automatic) appraisals of a situation or object and of its personal implications (Ortony,
Clore, & Collins, 1988; Scherer, 2009). A major way in which emotions can be regulated thus consists of changing how a given situation is evaluated. Importantly, however, appraisals of a situation cannot be deliberately chosen (e.g., by simply reflecting on which interpretation is hedonically most positive). Instead, in order to become a personal belief, an appraisal has to be perceived as an adequate interpretation of a given situation. A change in what one believes, and what appears to be a convincing interpretation of a given situation, requires a change in perspective or focus, and in the accessibility of relevant information.

People’s deliberate attempts at changing beliefs and appraisals tend to have limited success. As long as an appraisal is perceived as being the result of an arbitrary attempt at changing the interpretation of a situation, it is not perceived as being characteristic of the “true” situation as it really is (e.g., “I am/you are telling me this just to console me”). To transform a new appraisal into a personal belief, implicit and non-conscious processes may come into play. Automatic processes of selective attention and affective processing biases can change the personal evaluation of a situation by influencing which aspects of a situation become salient or accessible. In this case, people are not aware of any strategic attempts to create the reappraisal, which is why people may easily perceive it as a true picture of the given situation. Reappraisals resulting from automatic processes and biases may thus have a much higher chance to change personal beliefs and resulting emotions.

Finally, a third reason why implicit emotion regulation is important can be derived from a functional analysis of emotion regulation. A number of theorists have observed that abstract and self-focused forms of conscious thought may lead to experiential neglect, or loss of cognitive access to inner experiences, such as bodily sensations, feelings and emotions (Baer, 2007; Hayes, Wilson, Gifford, Follette, & Strosahl, 1996; Watkins, 2008). Research indicates that experiential neglect may reduce the effectiveness of emotion regulation (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007; Watkins, 2004), presumably because emotion regulation depends on efficient mind–body interactions (Koole, 2009). Explicit forms of emotion regulation are more likely to involve abstract self-focused thought than implicit forms of emotion regulation. Indeed, implicit motivational-emotional processes are more closely aligned with embodied experiences than explicit goals (Schultheiss & Brunstein, 1999). Consequently, an important function of implicit emotion regulation may be to facilitate the efficiency of the mind–body interactions that underlie effective emotion regulation.

WHAT CONSTITUTES EVIDENCE FOR IMPLICIT EMOTION REGULATION?

Possibly due to their pervasiveness and broad significance, processes of implicit emotion regulation have been studied using a wide variety of methods. Social-cognitive theories and methods of priming goals and affect, along with measures such as the Implicit Association Test have proven highly generative (Jostmann, Koole, van der Wulp, & Fockenberg, 2005; Mauss, Evers, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2006; Williams, Bargh, Nocera, & Gray, 2009). Other researchers have adapted paradigms from cognitive science, such as the Stroop colour-naming task (Etkin, Egner, Peraza, Kandel, & Hirsch, 2006) or the affective Simon task (Eder, 2011 this issue) to the study of implicit emotion regulation. Important progress has further been achieved by investigating implicit emotion regulation using tools from affective neuroscience, such as fMRI (Berkman & Lieberman, 2009; Etkin et al., 2006) and EEG (Schweiger Gallo, Keil, McCulloch, Rockstroh, & Gollwitzer, 2009).

Effects of explicit emotion regulation are typically assessed by comparing one condition in which people are instructed to adopt a certain emotion regulation strategy with another condition in which people are not given such instructions. The difference in the emotional response between the two conditions can then be attributed to the use of a specific emotion-regulation
strategy. The situation is more difficult with regard to implicit emotion regulation because there is no obvious baseline against which the automatic occurrence of implicit emotion regulation processes should be compared. Nevertheless, researchers have used three main strategies to garner evidence for implicit emotion regulation. It should be noted that these strategies are not mutually exclusive and may hence be used in combination.

A first strategy is to trace the time course of an emotional response to an emotion eliciting event. If the intensity (or direction) of an emotion changes over time, although the emotion eliciting stimulus remains the same, and no instruction regarding emotion regulation is given, then it is likely that spontaneous or implicit emotion regulation processes are responsible for the change (this is the basic rationale of opponent-process accounts of emotion regulation; e.g., Solomon & Corbit, 1974). A fundamental problem with this approach is that researchers need to separate the unregulated form of an emotional response from the automatically regulated one. This problem may be resolved by comparing the time course of different types of emotions, some of which are more likely to be regulated (negative emotions) than others (positive emotions; Taylor, 1991). Another possibility is to compare the time course of emotions for participants that differ systematically with regard to implicit emotion-regulatory abilities (e.g., Linville, 1985; Quirin et al., 2011 this issue; Rothermund & Meiniger, 2004).

A second methodological strategy consists of manipulating implicit regulatory processes. One way in which this can be done is through social-cognitive priming procedures (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). For instance, Moore et al. (2011 this issue) used a subliminal priming procedure to activate goals that regulate subsequent affective responses. In a related vein, Mikulincer et al., 2011 this issue) examined the effects of subliminally priming attachment security on creative problem solving. Moreover, Quirin et al. (2011 this issue) primed self-related stimuli to examine implicit emotion-regulatory processes. Effects of implicit emotion regulation can be assessed by comparing these priming conditions to neutral baseline conditions without a corresponding motivational activation. In addition, the effects of such procedures can be compared with the effects of explicit goals or instructions, to determine similarities and differences between implicit and explicit processes in emotion regulation. Priming methods presume that people already have pre-existing skills at implicit emotion regulation, which may not always be the case. An alternative method that does not make such assumptions is to repeatedly train emotion-regulatory processes. For instance, Tran, Siemer, and Joormann (2011 this issue) trained their participants in automatic appraisal patterns.

Manipulating implicit regulatory processes (e.g., through priming or training) is a powerful way to learn more about implicit emotion regulation. However, a potential disadvantage of this methodological strategy is that processes that are instigated implicitly may at some point become explicit. For instance, Bongers and Dijksterhuis (2009) showed that implicitly primed goals are prone to surface in consciousness when people encounter difficulties in goal pursuit. Such considerations point to the utility of using implicit measures to trace the influence of implicit emotion-regulatory processes.

A third methodological strategy is therefore to assess implicit processes in emotion regulation directly. Indeed, many contributions to this special issue use measures or paradigms that allow for an assessment of automatic processes (“implicit” measures of semantic or affective processing, of attentional biases, or of physiological or neurological responses). It should be noted that none of these measures is completely free from strategic influences. Additional measures therefore have to be taken in order to guarantee the automatic nature of the processes that underlie the observed effects (e.g., subliminal stimulus presentation, blocking cognitive resources; De Houwer et al., 2009).

In assessing implicit emotion regulation, researchers should make sure that the implicit processes are not part of the emotional response itself that is evoked by an emotion-eliciting
situation. For instance, showing that negative feedback automatically increases the accessibility of those aspects of the situation that allow for a palliative reappraisal of the failure (e.g., external attribution) can be interpreted as a case of implicit emotion regulation (Wentura & Greve, 2005; Wentura, Rothermund, & Brandstätter, 1995). Identifying an emotion-induced change in attention, affective processing, or memory that counteracts the original emotional response is a clear case in which the process in question reflects implicit emotion regulation, rather than being part of the original emotional response. In principle, however, implicit emotion regulation can also consist in processes that tend to amplify the intensity of an initial response (e.g., catastrophising). Indeed, such amplification processes may play an important role in the development of self-regulatory difficulties such as “state orientation” (Koole & Fockenberg, 2011 this issue) and may contribute to the involuntary persistence of negative emotional states such as depression (Joormann & Gotlib, 2010).

CONTENTS OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

In the preceding paragraphs, we have outlined the recently emerging scientific consensus on implicit emotion regulation, the growing recognition of its importance, and how it can be studied. These developments have led to a rapidly growing literature on implicit emotion regulation. In their opening article of this special issue, Gyurak, Gross, and Etkin (2011 this issue) provide a theoretical review of this literature. Because research on implicit emotion regulation has grown in “leaps and bounds” (Gyurak et al., 2011 this issue, p. 407), integrative theoretical efforts such as those of Gyurak et al. are particularly timely and welcome. We applaud these authors’ efforts to face the considerable conceptual and empirical challenges in understanding the nature of explicit and implicit emotion regulation and their interplay.

To organise the literature, Gyurak et al. (2011 this issue) propose a dual-process model of emotion regulation that distinguishes between explicit and implicit forms of emotion regulation. This model assumes that the boundaries between explicit and implicit are porous, in that “processes may vary in explicitness or implicitness over time or across situations and adaptive emotional responses depend on the interplay between explicit and implicit processing” (p. 402). Gyurak et al. further identify five forms of emotion regulation involving implicit regulatory processes: Emotional conflict adaptation; habitual emotion regulation; emotion-regulatory goals and values; emotion regulation as a result of affect labelling; and error-related regulation. Finally, Gyurak et al. outline some of the most fruitful avenues for future research, which include the development of new measurement techniques, the adaptive consequences of implicit emotion regulation, and the ways in which implicit emotion regulation can be modified through training.

The remainder of the special issue is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on the role of implicit emotion regulation in psychological adaptation. Early psycho-analytic approaches emphasised the maladaptive aspects of implicit emotion regulation, which might lead people to adopt a distorted view of reality and cause immature defensive behaviours such as regression or projection (Freud, 1915/1961; see Baumeister, Dale, & Sommer, 1998; Derakshan et al., 2007, for modern research). By contrast, current theories have drawn attention to the potential benefits of implicit emotion regulation, which might lead people to adopt a more adaptive perspective that can promote a speedy and effortless recovery from unwanted emotions. Consequently, modern work suggests that an important function of implicit emotion regulation lies in enhancing psychological adaptation.

Rothermund, Gast, and Wentura (2011 this issue) focus on counter-regulation, or automatic attentional mechanisms that allocate attention to stimuli of the opposite valence to people’s current motivational or emotional state (Rothermund, Voss, & Ventura, 2008). In a critical test of the counter-regulation model, Rothermund et al. show that incongruency effects in automatic affective processing emerge in response to people’s
affective-motivational states but not in response to a cognitive activation of affective-motivational concepts. These findings offer strong support for a motivational function of attentional counter-regulation. Next, Freytag, Bluemke, and Fiedler (2011 this issue) introduce an adaptive-learning approach to the regulation of implicit affective responses. Freytag et al. show that affective priming effects can be eliminated and even reversed by the distribution and structure of the affective primes and targets, particularly when participants were led to actively respond to the affective primes. Third, Koole and Fockenberg (2011 this issue) report evidence that, under demanding conditions, action-oriented individuals display reduced affective priming effects of negative stimuli relative to state-oriented individuals. These findings suggest that implicit emotion regulation may promote flexible and efficient action control.

The second section of this special issue highlights the role of goals in implicit emotion regulation. Goal constructs are common in modern psychology (Moskowitz & Grant, 2009) and have had a major influence on current theories of emotion regulation (Erber & Erber, 2000; Mauss et al., 2007; Tamir, 2009). Although goals are conventionally linked to conscious and deliberate behaviour, modern research has shown that many processes that guide goal-directed behaviour operate at unconscious, implicit levels (Custers & Aarts, 2010). Consequently, goals may play a key role in various processes of implicit emotion regulation.

Moore, Ferguson, and Chartrand (2011 this issue) analyse how goals regulate implicit emotional responses. Drawing on social-cognitive theories of automatic goal pursuit (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000), Moore et al. hypothesise and find that positive feedback during goal pursuit leads to more implicit positivity toward goal-relevant stimuli, whereas negative feedback reduces implicit positivity of the goal. These regulatory effects were obtained for conscious and nonconsciously activated goals alike, indicating that motivational regulation of implicit affective responses to goal-related stimuli operates automatically. In a related vein, Vogt, Lozo, Koster, and De Houwer (2011 this issue) consider the role of goals in regulating automatic attention allocation to emotional stimuli. In their study, experimentally inducing disgust led to automatic attention towards pictures representing cleanliness in a dot-probe task. Aversive emotional states may thus automatically guide people's attention towards stimuli that can provide emotional relief. Finally, Eder (2011 this issue) examines how people can enhance or override impulsive emotional responses with implementation intentions. Explicit instructions on how to respond to positive and negative stimuli influenced approach and avoidance tendencies in a situation that was unrelated to the instructions. These findings suggest that implementation intentions may help people to shift the balance between reflective and impulsive emotional behaviour (Strack & Deutsch, 2004).

The third section of this special issue focuses on the interpersonal dimension of implicit emotion regulation. The emotion-regulatory significance of interpersonal relations has long been recognised by attachment theorists (Bowlby, 1982; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), who observed that supportive others have a formative influence on people's capacity for managing their emotions. As such, interpersonal relationships may provide the main natural setting in which people acquire the resources and experiences for acquiring implicit emotion-regulatory skills. In addition, most people are highly invested in their interpersonal relationships. People must therefore actively maintain and protect their relationships against internal threats, such as negative behaviours from one's relationship partner, and external threats, such as the temptation from other attractive potential-relationship partners. In short, interpersonal relationships represent an important arena in which people engage in implicit emotion regulation.

Meyer, Berkman, Karremans, and Lieberman (2011 this issue) introduce a social-cognitive neuroscience approach to implicit emotion regulation in romantic relationships. Past research has shown that people often derogate attractive others in order to maintain committed to their current relationship partner, and that this process is implicit (Simpson, Gangestad, & Lerma, 1999)
although it does require self-regulatory resources (Ritter et al., 2010). In a neural imaging study, Meyer et al. observed that successful derogation of attractive others is associated with neural activations that are similar to those observed during explicit emotion regulation. In a related vein, Jostmann, Karremans, and Finkenauer (2011 this issue) examine how individual differences in rumination moderate responses to implicit and explicit relationship threats. Chronic ruminators harboured more negative feelings towards their relationship partners under conditions of relationship threat than non-ruminators. Notably, this pattern emerged even if relationship threat was created implicitly with a subliminal evaluative conditioning procedure, indicating that ruminators and non-ruminators differ in automatic tendencies to counter-regulate relationship-threatening emotions. Finally, Mikulincer et al. (2011 this issue) propose that attachment security may implicitly stimulate people to think in new and creative ways. Supraliminally or subliminally priming secure attachment led to more creative problem solving. These findings confirm the important link between attachment processes and implicit emotion regulation.

The fourth and last section of this special issue links implicit emotion regulation to personality processes and mental health. It is well established that there are important individual differences in emotion regulation, and that these individual differences are systematically related to personality functioning (Gross & John, 2003; Kuhl, 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Wilkowski & Robinson, 2010; Wood, Heimpel, & Michela, 2003) and psychological health (Cisler, Olatunji, Feldner, & Forsyth, 2010; Etkin, Prater, Hoeff, Menon, & Schatzberg, 2010; John & Gross, 2004; Joorman & Gotlib, 2010; Taylor & Liberzon, 2007). In the fourth section of the special issue, researchers introduce various conceptual and methodological approaches that address implicit processes at the interface between emotion regulation, personality, and psychological health.

Hopp, Troy, and Mauss (2011 this issue) demonstrate that positive implicit evaluations of emotion regulation, in conjunction with reappraisal habits, are associated with greater well-being, fewer depressive symptoms, and better social adjustment. Psychological health may thus be shaped by the interplay between implicit and explicit emotion regulation processes. Tran, Sie, and Joormann (2011 this issue) investigate the effects of training automatic appraisal patterns. Their training task effectively changed participants’ interpretive bias in new situations, and rendered participants’ self-esteem less vulnerable to failure feedback. Given that automatic interpretation biases are found in many emotional disorders, Tran et al.’s findings may help in the design of more effective clinical interventions. Finally, Quirin, Bode, and Kuhl (2011 this issue) examine implicit emotion regulation from the perspective of personality systems interactions (PSI) theory (Kuhl, 2000). PSI theory proposes that self-representations play a key role in implicit emotion regulation, by integrating positive and negative emotional information. Consistent with this, priming self-related stimuli led to increases in implicit emotional counter-regulation, as indicated by increases in implicit positive affect after watching a threatening film clip. Quirin et al. thus provide evidence for the causal significance of the self in implicit emotion regulation.

Taken together, this special issue features a host of theoretical and methodological advances in the study of implicit emotion regulation. In so doing, the special issue highlights the broad significance of implicit emotion regulation for psychological adaptation, goal-directed behaviour, interpersonal behaviour, personality functioning, and mental health. We hope that this special issue will draw attention to the exciting new developments in implicit emotion regulation research and to the new intellectual horizons that this work is opening up.

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