

Neither self-affirmations nor trait resilience buffer the powerful immediate experiences of ostracism.

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Ostracism is the painful experience of being ignored and excluded from a group and has been shown to effect overall social well-being (sense of belonging, self-esteem, sense of control and meaningful existence) (Williams, 2001). Few studies have found evidence of buffers to the painful effects of ostracism. Literature on resilience suggests that engaging in self-affirming tasks helps reduce the implications of negative occurrences on self-integrity (Sherman, 2006). This study examines the buffering effectiveness of resilience building through self-affirmations as well as resilience as an inherent trait on the immediate pain of social-rejection. 127 African American students wrote self-affirming or neutral statements prior to being ostracized or included by co-players in the virtual ball toss game, Cyberball (Williams, Cheung & Choi, 2000). Participants then completed questions regarding their social well-being and their perception of the co-players. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that being ostracized significantly impacted social well-being. While the self-affirmation manipulation had a main effect on self-esteem and sense of control, it did not interact with ostracism to effect social well-being. Results suggest that those that were self-affirmed reported lower levels of self-esteem and sense of control than those that were not, indicating that self-affirmation may have resulted in a rebound effect. Additionally, participants' self-reported levels of trait resilience did not interact with ostracism to affect social well-being. The results of this study suggest that the initial experience of ostracism is so painful that positive reminders of belongingness play little role in buffering these effects.