

Title: The Enigma of Emotional Expression: An Examination of the Relationship between Expressing Emotion and Mood Improvement

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Throughout life we face the inevitable that are frustrating situations, but what is the best way to cope with that anger? Prior research suggests that venting your anger makes one even angrier and more aggressive rather than relieving it (Hornberger, 1959; Mallick & McCandless, 1966; Bushman et al., 1999, Bushman, 2002). However, with most of the research being done on physical aggression, this begs the question, is expressing anger through talking/ranting or writing effective? In the present study, participants were asked to flip through a packet with prompts that generated frustration and were then asked to either talk or write about their frustrations or do nothing at all. Participants' mood (measured through positive and negative affect) and frustration levels were measured before and after the packet, and after the condition to examine how each method impacted their mood. The results found that the packet was successful in increasing frustration ($p < .001$) and worsening participants' moods ($p < .01$). When examining the effects of talking, writing, or doing nothing, it was found that participants in all three groups saw both decreases in frustration and negative affect ($p < .01$), but saw no changes in positive affect. This demonstrates that all methods were effective for improving mood, but from a negative state to a neutral state. Prior research indicates venting anger does not improve mood but worsens it. However, the present study indicates otherwise, showing that all three methods are beneficial, potentially suggesting that non-physically aggressive methods of release are helpful.

References

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