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Please don't compliment me! - The role of fear of positive evaluation in social anxiety

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Fear of positive evaluation has recently been associated with a variety of features related to social anxiety, such as submissive behaviors and increased negative affect in social situations, above and beyond fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, various maladaptive emotion regulation strategies, such as expressive suppression, are frequently employed by socially anxious individuals. The present study aims to examine the prospective relationships between fear of positive evaluation, emotion regulation, and social anxiety in adolescents. German and Austrian adolescents aged 14–18 years will be assessed three times over a 6-month period by means of an online survey. Data will be analyzed using random-intercept cross-lagged panel models, in order to control for between-unit differences and to examine lagged relations between the variables of interest that relate exclusively to within-unit fluctuations. I expect fear of evaluation to predict emotion regulation and the longitudinal associations between fear of evaluation and social anxiety to be mediated by emotion regulation. Implications of the findings pertaining to the development and treatment of social anxiety will be discussed.

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