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The relation between sleep spindle power and emotion regulation across development

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Changes in sleep might be involved in the development and/or persistence of mood and anxiety disorders. Most recently, it has been shown that spindle activity is associated with emotion regulation (ER) in youths suffering from affective disorders. However, less is known about the direction of effects between sleep spindles and ER in healthy young subjects. Therefore, we analyzed longitudinal data where we recorded sleep EEG as well as several measures of ER (*Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*; *Child Behavior Checklist*) from 27 subjects (18 females) at two time points (T1 mean age: 9.48 ± 0.75 , T2 mean age: 16.00 ± 0.92). We aimed to investigate the reciprocal association between sleep spindles and ER across development. At T2 higher slow spindle power was associated with better ER. There were no associations between spindles and ER at T1. Changes in spindles and ER from T1 to T2 were not related. Our results support previous findings from clinical samples and suggest that stronger sleep spindles might protect young individuals from developing anxiety and mood disorders due to a higher capacity of sleep at restoring and maintaining a healthy ER.

Primary authors: HOEDLMOSER, Kerstin (University of Salzburg); WILHELM-GROCH, Ines (University of Lübeck); BOTHE, Kathrin (University of Salzburg)

Presenters: HOEDLMOSER, Kerstin (University of Salzburg); WILHELM-GROCH, Ines (University of Lübeck); BOTHE, Kathrin (University of Salzburg)

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