

REAPPRAISAL MEDIATES THE LINK BETWEEN 5-HTTLPR AND SOCIAL ANXIETY SYMPTOMS

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Mounting evidence suggests that social anxiety symptoms are related to

- (1) polymorphisms in the serotonin transporter gene promoter region (*5-HTTLPR*) and
- (2) reduced use of adaptive forms of emotion regulation such as reappraisal.

It is not known, however, whether reappraisal mediates the link between *5-HTTLPR* and social anxiety. Participants to this study were unselected community volunteers, all Caucasians from a circumscribed geographical area. They were genetically tested for *5-HTTLPR* status, and self-report measures of social anxiety symptoms and reappraisal use were obtained. The results indicated that participants with one or two low-expressing alleles displayed increased social anxiety symptoms and reduced levels of cognitive reappraisal. Cognitive reappraisal significantly mediated the influence of *5-HTTLPR* on social anxiety symptoms, and this effect was evident on two different measures of reappraisal. Therefore, this study shows that cognitive reappraisal is a major intermediate phenotype of the social anxiety spectrum. Our correlational results suggest that individuals with low-expressing *5-HTTLPR* genotypes may benefit the most from cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy because they do not appear to engage as frequently as others in reappraisal.