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Young women and the risk for psychopathology: The role of difficulties in emotion regulation

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Gender is a factor that carries profound implications for one's well-being, being important risk factor for psychopathology. In general, women are more likely to suffer from mood disorders over their lifetime, while men are more likely to develop antisocial behaviors and substance abuse. Contemporary research shows that gender influences the development of abilities to regulate one's own emotions and affects the extent and the way in which emotions are regulated; and emotion deregulation is considered important risk factor for emotional disorders. It is claimed that on the one hand regulation of the stress response systems might be different in women due to effects of sex steroids such as estrogen, but on the other the sex differences in vulnerability might be also influenced by different gender socialization (as indicated by e.g. greater female sensitivity to psychosocial stressors). In present study the attention was focused on general and specific difficulties in emotion regulation and the risk of various forms of psychopathology in a sample of 512 young women (18-25 years old), as heightened risk of psychopathology is observed particularly in young age. The major aim was to explore possible associations between difficulties in emotion regulation and different forms of psychopathology, i.e. general symptoms of psychopathology, post-traumatic symptoms and problem drinking. Results shows that problems in emotion regulation might constitute common risk factor for different forms of psychopathology in young women, and among them in particular limited access to emotion regulation strategies and impulse control difficulties.

Biography

Malgorzata Dragan is an Associate Professor of Department of Clinical Child and Family Psychology at Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw. She is also Cognitive-Behavioral Therapist and a Board Member of European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

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