Support is not in the eye of the supporter
The impact of social support interactions on acquired threat
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Conclusion
• Pavlovian conditioning elicited intrusive memories (intrusions) of the Conditioned Stimuli (CS)
• Levels of social support did not differentially influence fear extinction or number of intrusions of the CSs.
• Instead, the perception of support influenced number of intrusions. This effect was even greater for those reporting no intrusions at all.

Background
• Social support works as a “buffer” by having a moderating effect on stress (1), cardiovascular reactivity (2) and experience of pain (3) during aversive experiences.
• Unclear how social interactions after fear conditioning impact expression of emotional memory.
• Our research could have implications for how to optimize preventive tools for clinical interventions for anxiety disorders such as PTSD.

Research Questions
• How do social interactions affect fear extinction, fear reinstatement and number of intrusions of the CS?
• Can CS (images of neutral objects) (differently?) generate intrusive memories?

Method (N= 77)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>DAY 1 to 7</th>
<th>DAY 8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acquisition</td>
<td>(6 x CS)</td>
<td>(9 x CS)</td>
<td>(9 x CS)</td>
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<td>2. Social interaction</td>
<td>(4 min)</td>
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<td>3. Extinction</td>
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<td>4. Intrusion Diary</td>
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<td>5. Reinstatement</td>
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Results
• Pavlovian Conditioning

![Skin conductance results for the three experimental phases of Pavlovian Conditioning, by Social Support conditions](image)

![Average Number of intrusive memories throughout the week, for both CS.](image)

Future Perspective
• The absence of intrusions during the first week after an aversive experience is an indicator of decrease risk of later developing PTSD symptoms.
• Therefore, it is important to identify protective factors helping decrease the risk of developing intrusions.

References:

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