Anger and Sadness in Autobiographical Memories

Ute Kunzmann, Margund Rohr
University of Leipzig

The successful modulation of negative affect has been regarded as an important facet of successful aging. Given that negative affect is a multidimensional concept, however, questions regarding age differences in specific negative emotions remain. In individual sessions, we asked young (n = 85) and older (n = 79) adults to relive and think aloud about two situations in which they felt particularly sad or angry. The intensity of anger and sadness was assessed on two levels: subjective feelings during reliving phase and verbal expressions during the think-aloud interview. Our analyses suggest that the signs of anger decrease with age, whereas the signs of sadness remain stable or increase. We propose that these multidirectional age differences in anger and sadness have important implications for our understanding of successful development during adulthood and old age.