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Learning from Failure and Success: Children's Achievement Emotions and Learning Choices

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Abstract

Failure is an unavoidable part of learning, and how to manage it influences children's future learning and success (Eskreis-Winkler and Fishbach, 2019). Whereas children can experience both negative and positive emotions following failure (Nelson et al., 2018), it remains unclear how children's achievement emotions change following both failure and success, and whether emotional change aligns with future learning choices. A total of 107 preschool children attempted three unsolvable puzzles without help, then successfully completed one solvable puzzle with guidance as needed. ANOVA results showed a significant negative linear trend in children's affective responses, with no rebound after the success experience. When selecting a future learning task, children exhibited a strong preference for the prior successful rather than any of the incomplete puzzles; yet, logistic regression indicated that this decision was not predicted by changes in emotion. Findings suggest that children showed an adaptive emotional response following both failure and success.

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