

Teenage depression linked with inability to recall specific memories

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Credit: University of Reading

Teenagers suffering with depression may struggle with recalling specific memories, according to new research from the University of Reading.

In a paper published in *Memory*, a team from the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences examined different mechanisms that are thought to interfere with the ability to retrieve specific personal memories, and found that the teenagers with high [depression](#) symptoms ruminated much more and displayed poorer working memory in tests compared to their low-depression peers.

Lead author Jeni Fisk, from the University of Reading said:

"It is essential to try to understand why teenagers with depression struggle with everyday tasks such as school work. Our research shows that important aspects of our thinking abilities are disrupted in depression and that these problems interfere with how we remember important memories and with our ability to learn. This is really important, and could help us support young people who are depressed in the classroom and in therapy."

The study is the first of its kind to test three components of a memory model (The CaR-FA-X model) in relation to depression symptoms in adolescents. The CaR-FA-X model consists of three mechanisms (rumination, reduced executive function and functional avoidance) that are thought to cause Overgeneralised Autobiographical Memory (OGM).

Teenagers with very high symptoms of depression were tested alongside another group with low levels of depression. Groups were measured on rumination (having thoughts go around and around in your mind), working [memory](#) (holding information in your mind while using that information to accomplish a task), inhibition (holding back when you have an urge to do something), and verbal fluency.

Fisk continued:

"It is important to understand OGM as it is associated with the development and persistence of depression. We observed that adolescents with elevated depression symptoms retrieved fewer specific memories, ruminated more, and displayed reduced executive function.

"These results confirm that there is a relationship between low mood and OGM in [young people](#) and that OGM may arise as consequence of reduced [executive function](#) and cognitive interference due to rumination."

More information: Jeni Fisk et al. A test of the CaR-FA-X mechanisms and depression in adolescents, *Memory* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/09658211.2018.1518457](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2018.1518457) Jeni Fisk et al. A test of the CaR-FA-X mechanisms and depression in adolescents, *Memory* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/09658211.2018.1518457](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658211.2018.1518457)

Provided by University of Reading

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