

## ***Instructions for Emotion Regulation task***

### **Intro screen**

In this task, what we are really interested in is people's ability to change how they are feeling. And the way we are going to ask you to change how you are feeling is by changing the way you think about something that we show you. So what's going to happen is that you will see a series of pictures, and some of them are going to make you feel somewhat negative or very negative, and some pictures might not make you feel very negative at all.

### **"Look" green screen**

Before each picture, you are going to see one of two instructions which tells you what you are going to do while the picture is on the screen. The first instruction you might see is the "*look*" instruction, and it will have a green background like this. When you see the instruction to *look*, we want you to look at the picture, keep your eyes on it the whole time, and allow yourself to respond naturally to it. So have whatever thoughts and feelings you would naturally have in response to that picture.

### **"Decrease" blue screen**

The other instruction you will see is to "*decrease*"; it will have a blue background like this. When you see the instruction to *decrease* we want you to think of something to tell yourself that helps you to feel less negative about the picture. So for example, you could tell yourself something about the outcome, so that whatever is going on will soon be resolved, or that help is on the way. You could also focus on a detail or aspect of the situation that isn't quite as bad as it first seemed. But we want you to stay focused on the picture and not think of random things that make you feel better, but rather to change something about the picture that helps you to feel less negative about it. Does that make sense? We'll do some practice in a few seconds so you can do it for yourself.

### **Rating screen**

So after the picture is on the screen you will see a scale like this which will ask you to indicate how negative you feel. It goes from 1 to 5, where 1 will be your thumb and means that you don't feel negative at all, and 5 will be your pinkie and means that you feel strongly negative. 2, 3, 4 are in between. We realize that sometimes you won't feel negative at all, sometimes you might have started to feel negative and then tried to decrease how negative you felt and that worked really well, and sometimes you attempt to decrease how negative you feel but couldn't think of something in time or it didn't really work that well. So no matter what happened through the course of looking at the picture, try to rate at the end how negative you feel when all is said and done, so where you ended up after all you tried to do. Does that make sense? Try to be as honest as you can about how you feel.

Here are how the trials will actually go when you are in the scanner.

### **Look Cue screen**

Since the instruction is *look* and the background is green, do you remember what you are supposed to do?

Keep looking at the picture the whole time, pay attention to the picture and respond as you naturally would. [always restate this - some people say to just 'stare at it', but we want them to take it in and pay attention]

### **Look Picture screen, Rating screen**

So that's one of the pictures you might see, then honestly rate about how negative you feel.

### **Decrease1 Cue screen**

So then when you see the instruction to *decrease* with a blue background, do you remember what you are supposed to do?

Right, try to think of the picture in a way that helps you to feel less negative. [always restate this in these words]

### **Decrease1 Picture screen**

So for this picture, what might you tell yourself to feel less negative?

Great, so it looks like he's got some sort of tube in. He's probably already being helped, he's being treated, he will be better by tomorrow. That's a great way to think about it differently to help you feel less negative. So the whole time the picture is up with the blue background, once you think of something that helps you feel less negative, really try to convince yourself of that and really believe it so that you decrease how negative you feel as much as you can while the picture is on the screen. Hopefully that will come to you fairly quickly.

Just to give you an idea of the range of things that some other people have said in response to this picture "maybe it's not as painful as it looks, maybe they are giving him drugs that make him numb so it doesn't hurt, maybe it's just a Hollywood make-up job or a Halloween mask, so he isn't actually in any sort of pain". Any of those kinds of things would also work.

You might end up reusing some of the kinds of things that you tell yourself, so there might be other pictures where it also works to tell yourself, "oh it looks like they're getting help and they'll be better soon". And that's ok, you can reuse those general categories of things to tell yourself, but every time a picture comes on the screen take a moment to think of the very best thing to tell yourself for that particular picture. We just don't want you to get to the point where you are applying the exact same change to every picture with the blue background. We really want you to actively think of the best way to change how you're feeling and then really try to convince yourself of that for the rest of the time the blue screen is up.

### **Rating screen**

So again, when you see the 1 to 5 scale, indicate how negative you feel when all is said and done and you've tried as hard as you can to convince yourself the way you were thinking about it was true.

### **Decrease2 Picture screen**

So now here's another example of *decrease*. So what could you tell yourself to feel less negative?

Exactly, so it looks a little artistic, it's a scene from a movie or photograph. Just to give you other ideas, others have said maybe the man in the grave died peacefully and he's being lovingly buried by a family member in his hometown, or that the man has uncovered the remains of a person whose family is now relieved and at peace, or that this is a scene from a movie.

Once you've come up with a way to feel less negative, keep repeating it to yourself when the blue screen is up. Then be honest about how negative you feel when you make your rating.

### **Get Ready screen**

Now what will happen is we will go through some trials exactly as they will appear in the scanner. So they will move along at a fixed pace. The two things to keep in mind are 1) that the rating scale will only be on the screen for a certain amount of time. So be sure to press the button when you actually see the scale from 1 to 5 on the screen. If you press it slightly before or after we might not get your response. Then the other thing to keep in mind is 2) that the pictures are up there for a good amount of time but not forever. So again you really want to try to think of something relatively quickly that is the best fit for that picture and then apply it for the rest of the time. And sometimes when the instruction is "decrease" you might not be able to think of something in time, some of them might just be a little bit overwhelming, and we understand that. Just be honest when the rating scale comes up.

Any questions?

### Emotion Regulation Post-Task Questions

(1) Please describe the primary strategy that you used to decrease your emotional responses to the negative photos in the '**decrease**' condition (i.e., the strategy that you used most frequently and seemed most effective at decreasing your emotions to the negative pictures). In other words, what sorts of things did you tell yourself to try to help you feel differently in response to the negative pictures?

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(2) About how often would you say that you normally use this strategy in everyday life to change the way you feel? Please check one:

None of the time (or never) \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the time \_\_\_\_\_

Most of the time \_\_\_\_\_

Almost all of the time \_\_\_\_\_

(3) What percentage of time did you spend using your primary strategy to change the way you felt in response to the negative pictures when you were asked to decrease your negative emotions? This can range from 0 to 100% of the time: \_\_\_\_\_%

(4) About how successful were you at using your primary strategy when you were asked to change the way you felt in response to the negative pictures?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	very successful

(5) About how difficult was it for you to use your primary strategy to change the way you felt in response to the negative pictures??

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	very difficult

(6) What did you think about during the '**look**' condition, when the pictures were negative?

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(7) About how successful were you at just looking and responding naturally to how you were feeling when you were asked to just look at the negative pictures?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	very successful

(8) How difficult was it for you to switch your mental strategy between the '**look**' and '**decrease**' conditions? In other words, how difficult was it for you to go from feeling naturally to changing the way you felt?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	very difficult

(9) During the trials when we asked you to respond naturally and NOT change how you were feeling, did you find yourself trying to change the way you felt anyway, using your primary strategy that you described above or even another strategy?

Never \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occasionally \_\_\_\_\_  
 About half the time \_\_\_\_\_  
 More than half the time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Almost always \_\_\_\_\_

(10) What percentage of the time did you completely fail when you were asked to change the way you felt while looking at the negative pictures? This can range from 0 to 100%. \_\_\_\_\_%

(11) Is there anything else you'd like us to know about what you were doing during the experiment?

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(12) Were any pictures harder to change how you felt about than others? If so, please describe which ones.

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(13) If applicable, please describe your second main strategy that you may have used to decrease your emotional responses to the negative photos in the '**decrease**' condition (i.e., a strategy that you may have used less often than your primary strategy that you described in the first question above). If you didn't have one, please write "none."

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(14) About how often would you say that you normally use this other kind of strategy in everyday life to change the way you feel? Please check one:

None of the time (or never) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Some of the time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Most of the time \_\_\_\_\_  
 Almost all of the time \_\_\_\_\_

(15) What percentage of time did you spend using this other strategy to change the way you felt in response to the negative pictures when you were asked to decrease your negative emotions? This can range from 0 to 100% of the time: \_\_\_\_\_%

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(16) Have you seen any of these pictures in previous experiments/research studies?

Yes or No: \_\_\_\_\_

(17) Have you ever been in a research study that involved changing the way you thought about something to change your emotions?

Yes or No: \_\_\_\_\_

(18) If you answered "Yes" to either or both of the previous two questions, please describe as many details of the experiment as you can recall.

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