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DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS AND EMOTION IN ADOLESCENCE: A DEVELOPMENTAL-FUNCTIONALIST VIEW

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Adolescent depressive symptoms are recognized as having number of consequences on academic and social achievement (Glied & Pine, 2002). Many studies highlighted the specific implication of emotion regulation deficits to explain depression or affective disorders (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2006). Despite these findings, little studies focused on the relations between emotional deficits (such as low emotional awareness) and subjective emotional intensity in adolescent depressive symptoms. The aim of this study was to examine the relationships between emotion awareness as defined by Lane & Schwartz (1987), subjective emotional intensity, and depressive symptoms. We hypothesized that lack of emotional awareness associated to strong emotional intensity may explain depressive symptoms among adolescents.

448 adolescents (age: 15.54 years 0.66) were administered the following self report questionnaires:

- The Level of Emotional Awareness Scale (Lane & al. 1990).
- The Differential Emotion Scale (Izard & al. 1991).
- The Centre for Epidemiological Study Depression scale (Radloff, 1977).

Statistical analysis shows significant negative correlations between emotional awareness and depression ($r = -.23$, $p = .004$), and positive correlations between subjective emotional intensity and depression ($r = .44$, $p < .0001$). Moreover, multiple regressions revealed that level of emotional awareness ($t = -4.75$, $\beta = -.20$, $p < .0001$) and emotional intensity ($t = 9.71$, $\beta = .41$, $p < .0001$) were each related to depression in a significant model ($R^2 = .25$, $F = 48.01$, $p < .001$). Lack of emotional awareness may lead to high level of subjective emotional intensity, and constitute a real vulnerability for affective disorders. This suggests that emotional awareness skills training could be an effective intervention for depressive symptoms at adolescence.