

Distinguishing gains from nonlosses and losses from nongains: A regulatory focus perspective on hedonic intensity.

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Distinguishing Gains from Nonlosses and Losses from Nongains: A Regulatory Focus Perspective on Hedonic Intensity

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Abstract

We find that the pleasure of a gain is generally greater than the pleasure of a nonloss and that the pain of a loss is generally greater than the pain of a nongain. These patterns were found when participants reported both how they would feel if these outcomes were to happen (Studies 1 and 2) and how they actually felt when they happened (Study 3). Our results also suggest that it is stronger cheerfulness (rather than quiescence) that underlies the greater pleasure of a gain and stronger agitation (rather than dejection) that underlies the greater aversiveness of a loss. This set of findings is predicted by our regulatory focus conceptualization of how gain (promotion success) and nongain (promotion failure) versus nonloss (prevention success) and loss (prevention failure) differ in whether they are experienced in relation to a maximal goal or a minimal goal,

respectively. Implications for models of emotional experiences and prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) are discussed.



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