The Dual Effect of Social Anxiety on Affective Emptahy
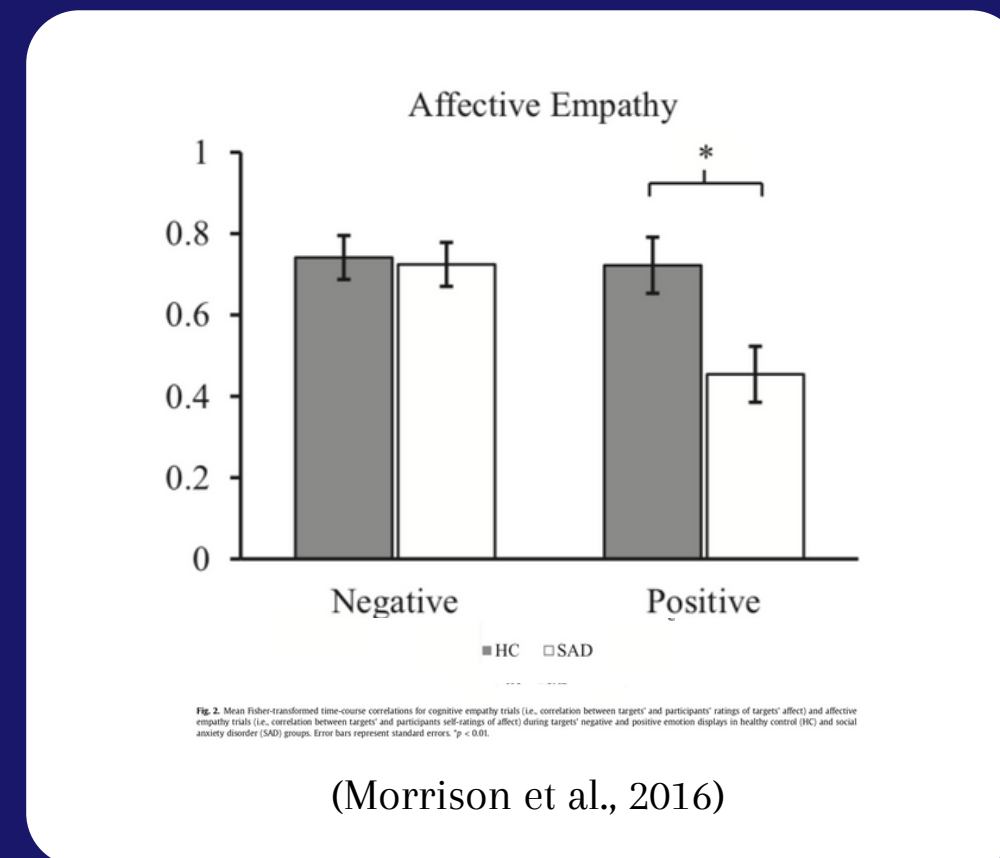
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Social Anxiety Amplifies Negative Empathy

- Someone who often experiences pain and negative emotions will be more understanding when another person goes through the same thing. (Nordgren et al., 2006)
- Emotions related to social exclusion are more recognizable for people with social anxiety who deal with those feelings on a daily basis. (Auyeung & Alden., 2020)
- Social anxiety makes people better at processing and understanding their own negative emotions and therefore others' too. (Hall et al., 2020).
- Socially anxious individuals feel threatened in social situations and become hyperaware of the people around them, making them more likely to pick up on others' emotional cues. (Pittelkow et al., 2021)

Social Anxiety Decreases Positive Empathy

- Individuals with Social Anxiety have a harder time sharing others' positive emotions. (Morrison et al., 2016)
- Socially anxious individuals tend to experience diminished positive emotions. (Kashdan, 2007)
- People with social anxiety are able to predict negative emotions but not positive emotions because they are less familiar with the associated cues. (Hall et al., 2020).

Fig. 2. Mean Fisher-transformed time-course correlations for cognitive empathy trials (i.e., correlation between targets' and participants' ratings of targets' affect) and affective empathy trials (i.e., correlation between targets' and participants self-ratings of affect) during targets' negative and positive emotion displays in healthy control (HC) and social anxiety disorder (SAD) groups. Error bars represent standard errors. *p < 0.01.

(Morrison et al., 2016)

Negative empathy is the understanding and/ or sharing of others' negative emotions, and positive empathy is the understanding and/ or sharing of others' positive emotions. (Morrison et al., 2016)

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