Test anxiety: Is it something to worry about?
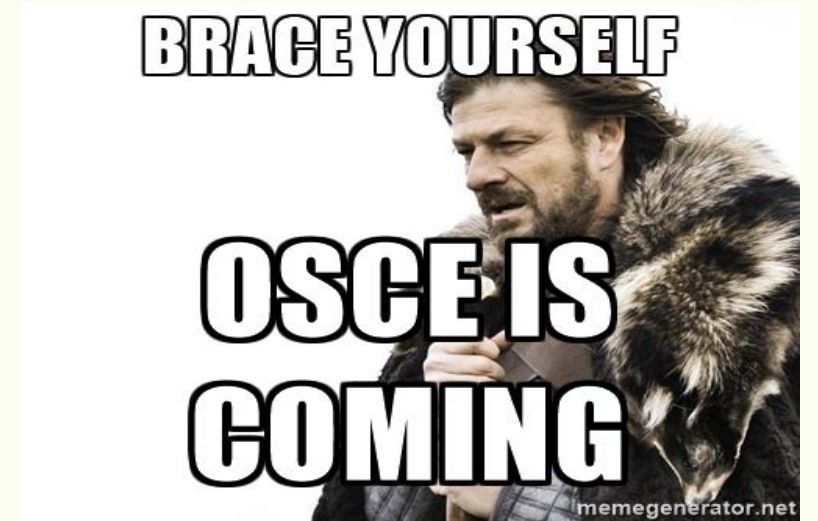
Learning lunch, 26th January 2022

Chris Huntley (C.Huntley@liverpool.ac.uk)

The Guardian *For 200 years*
News website of the year

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Education Schools Teachers Universities Students

Schools

Children 'in complete meltdown' over exams

Teachers in England seeing unprecedented levels of school-related anxiety, according to National Union of Teachers report
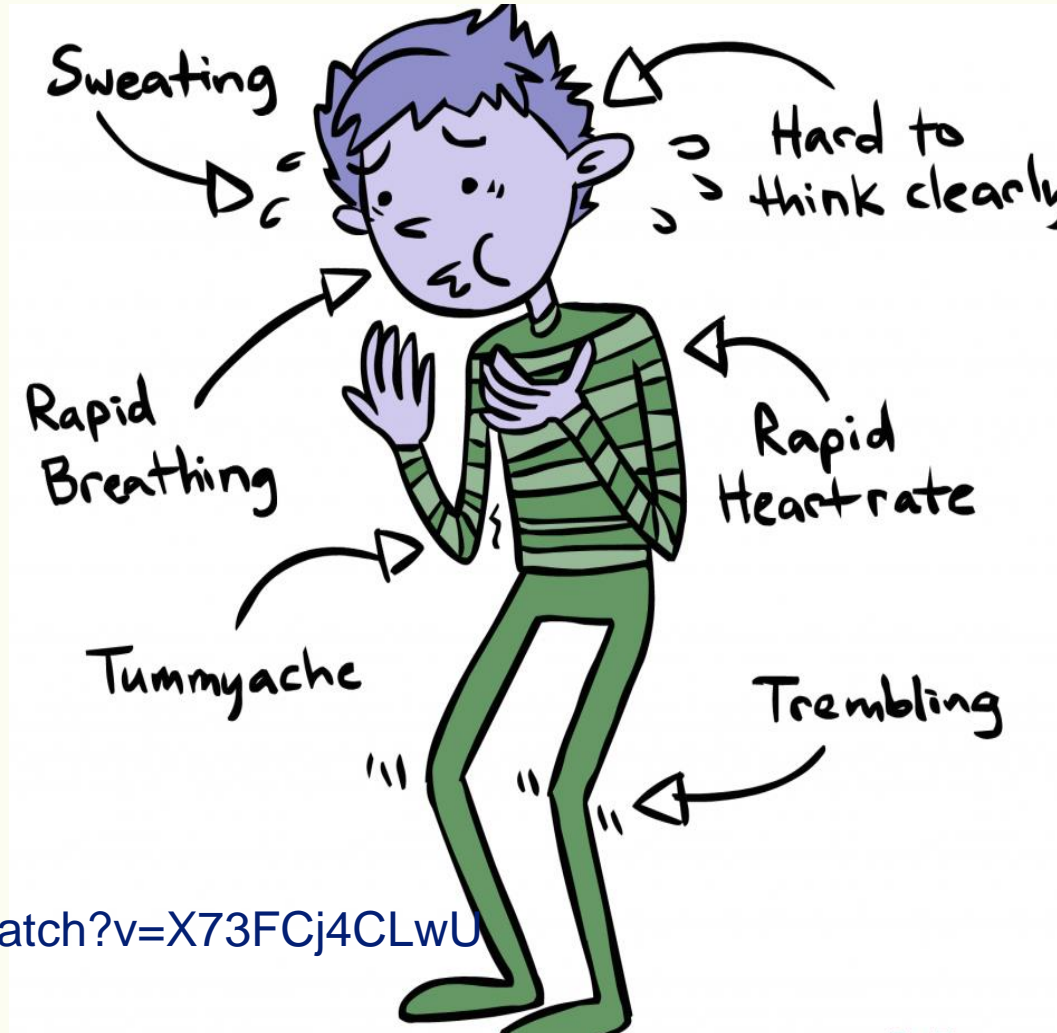
James Meikle

Sat 4 Jul 2015 00.01 BST

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X73FCj4CLwU

Test anxiety & performance

- TA is associated with worse exam & academic performance (~.21)

- Worry much stronger than emotionality (W ~ -.31, E ~ -.15)

- Not just down to lack of preparedness or study skills

- TA has proximal and distal effects

- Associated with perfectionism, procrastination etc.

- TA associated with poorer mental health

- High TA students more likely to drop out or repeat year

- TA associated with greater alcohol and substance abuse

- TA associated with 'cognitive enhancers' (e.g., Adderall)

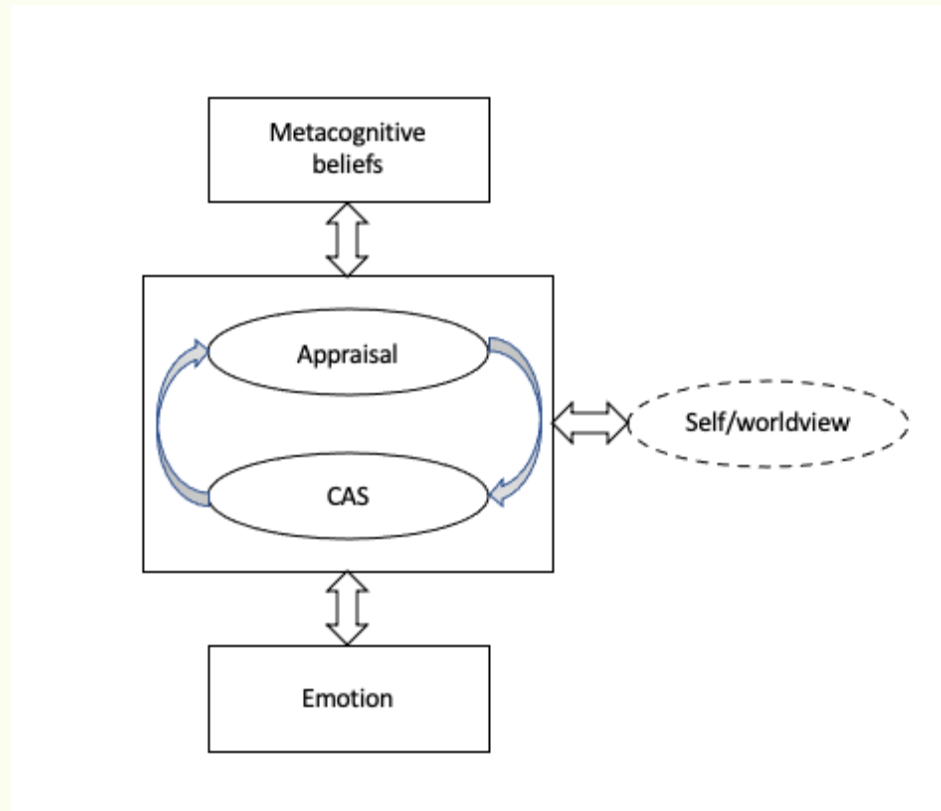- Risk of suicide much greater in young people around exams

- Meta-analysis of interventions for TA for university students

- 44 studies

- Moderate effects for reducing TA, small effects for improving exam/academic performance

- Most support for BT

- Lack of long-term data, small samples, RoB, publication bias
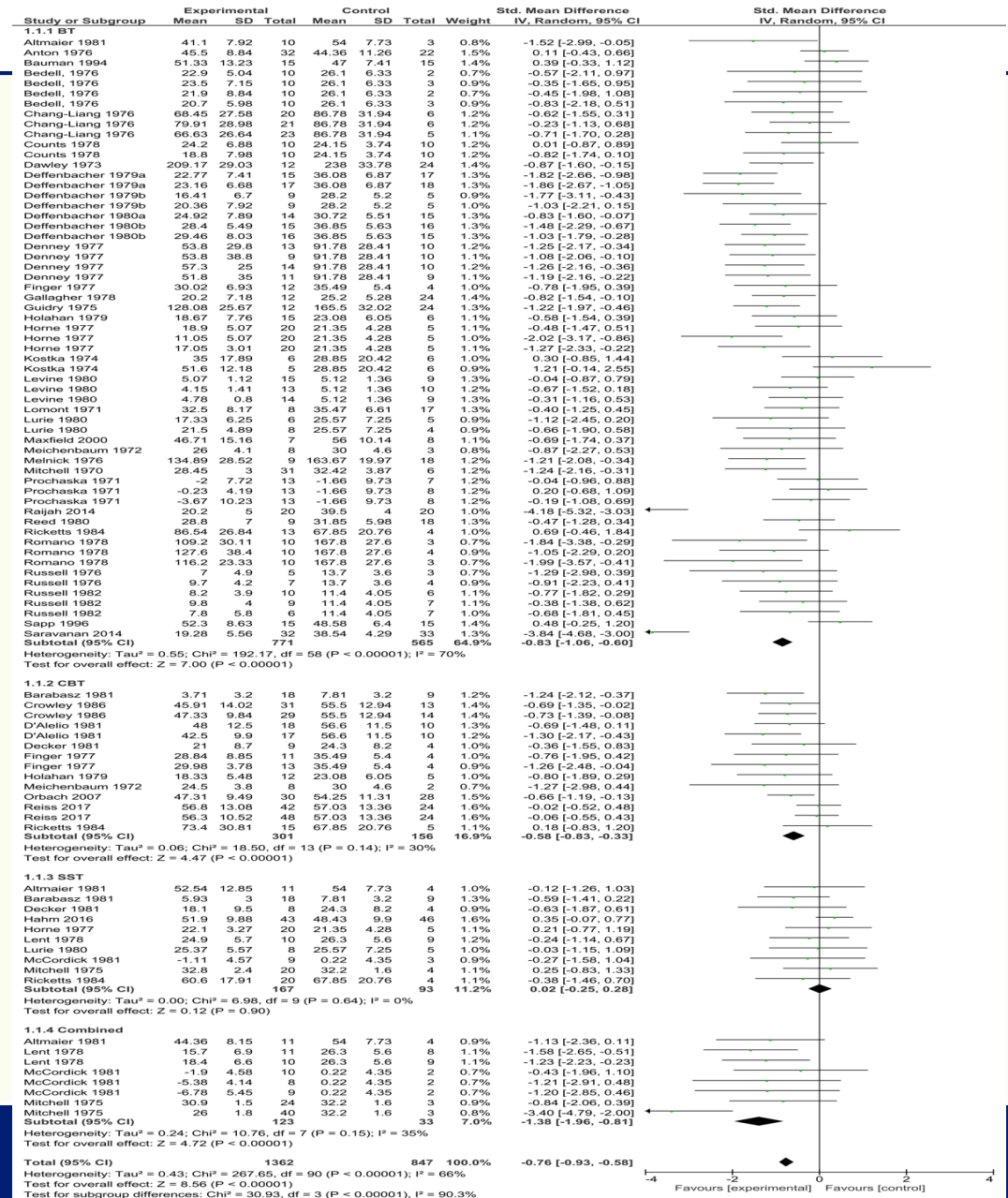
Summary

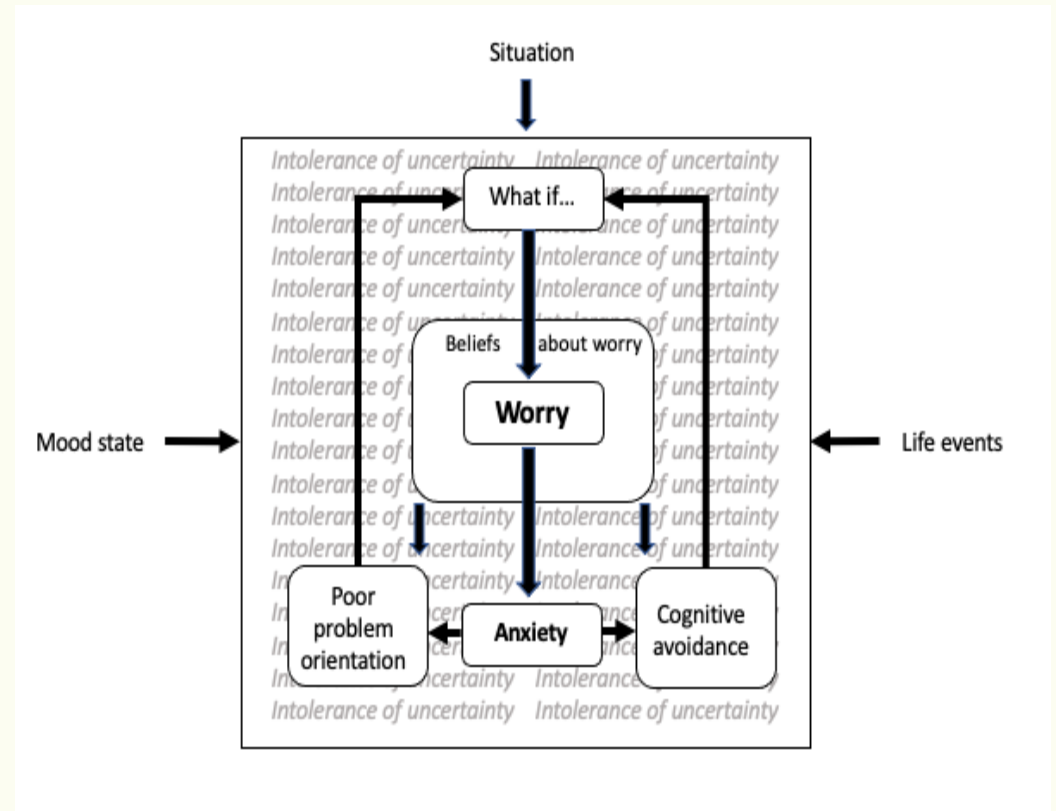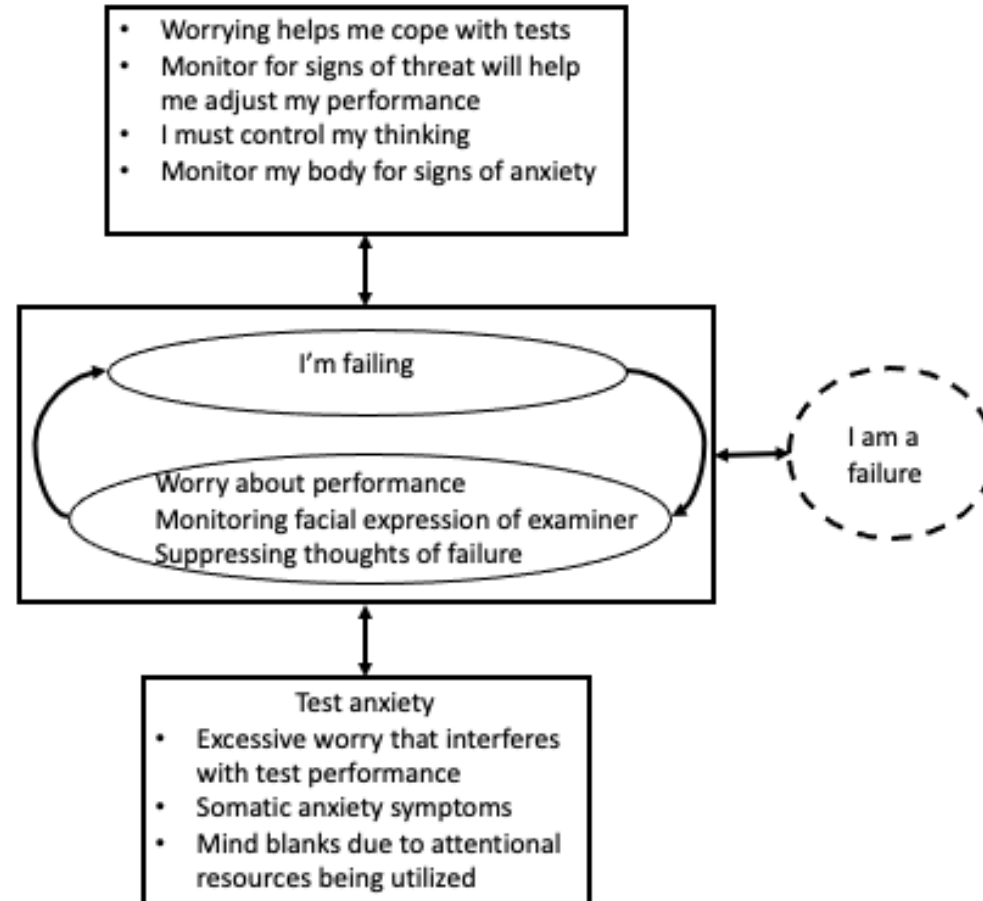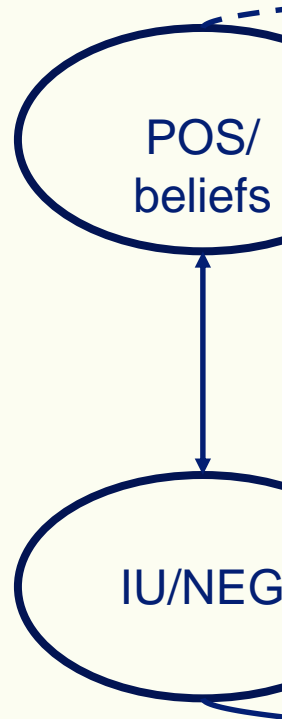| Intervention	Test anxiety				Academic performance	
	Post	Follow-up	State		Post	Follow-up
BT	-0.83 (-1.06, -0.60)	-1.15 (-1.38, -0.91)	-1.52 (-2.06, -0.97)		0.22 (0.05, 0.40)	0.20 (-0.17, -0.56)
CBT	-0.58 (-0.83, -0.33)	-0.31 (-0.64, 0.02)	-		-0.24 (-0.98, 0.49)	0.54 (-0.41, 1.50)
SST	0.02 (-0.25, 0.28)	-0.95 (-2.24, 0.34)	-0.73 (-2.57, 1.12)		0.34 (-0.16, 0.84)	-
Combined	-1.38 (-1.96, -0.81)	-	-0.85 (-1.77, 0.08)		1.58 (0.41, 2.76)	-
Overall	-0.76 (-0.93, -0.58)	-0.87 (-1.06, -0.68)	-1.20 (-1.66, -0.75)		0.37 (0.14, 0.61)	0.23 (-0.11, 0.56)

Self-Regulatory Executive Function (S-REF) model

Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU) model

POS/ beliefs

IU/NEG

- Worrying helps me cope with tests
- Monitor for signs of threat will help me adjust my performance
- I must control my thinking
- Monitor my body for signs of anxiety

I'm failing

Worry about performance
Monitoring facial expression of examiner
Suppressing thoughts of failure

I am a failure

Test anxiety
- Excessive worry that interferes with test performance
- Somatic anxiety symptoms
- Mind blanks due to attentional resources being utilized

Validity of assessment scales

Assessing metacognitive beliefs in test anxiety: Psychometric properties of the metacognitions questionnaire, 30 (MCQ-30) among university students

Check for updates

Christopher D. Huntley[1] · Bridget Young[2] · Catrin Tudur Smith[3] · Vikram Jha[4] · Peter L. Fisher[2]

Abstract
The Metacognitions Questionnaire-30 (MCQ-30) measures maladaptive metacognitive beliefs considered central to the metacognitive model of psychopathology. However, the psychometric properties of the MCQ-30 in test anxiety (TA) among university students are unknown. This study examined the MCQ-30 factor structure and concurrent validity in both trait and state TA. Confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses support the previously established five-factor structure of the MCQ-30 in both state and trait TA, with factors having good internal consistency. Structural equation modeling of the relationships between MCQ-30 subscales and TA found 'Negative beliefs about uncontrollability and danger of worry' to have the strongest association. The MCQ-30 appears a robust measure of metacognitive beliefs in TA and provides a basis for further testing of the validity of the metacognitive model in TA. Extending the reach of metacognitive therapy, which is based upon the metacognitive model, to TA could help to improve both student wellbeing and academic performance.

Uncertainty and test anxiety: Psychometric properties of the Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale – 12 (IUS-12) among university students

Christopher D. Huntley *, Bridget Young, Catrin Tudur Smith, Peter L. Fisher

University of Liverpool, UK

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Test anxiety is common among university students and more effective interventions are needed. The Intolerance of Uncertainty (IU) model underpins an effective intervention for anxiety. IU is the propensity to react negatively to uncertainty. The Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale – 12 (IUS-12) is the most common scale for measuring IU. This study examined for the first time the factor structure of the IUS-12 in UK samples, and explored the relationship between IU and trait and state test anxiety. Factor analyses supported a bifactor model with a robust and reliable general IU factor, which was replicated across two samples. IU was strongly associated with both trait and state test anxiety.
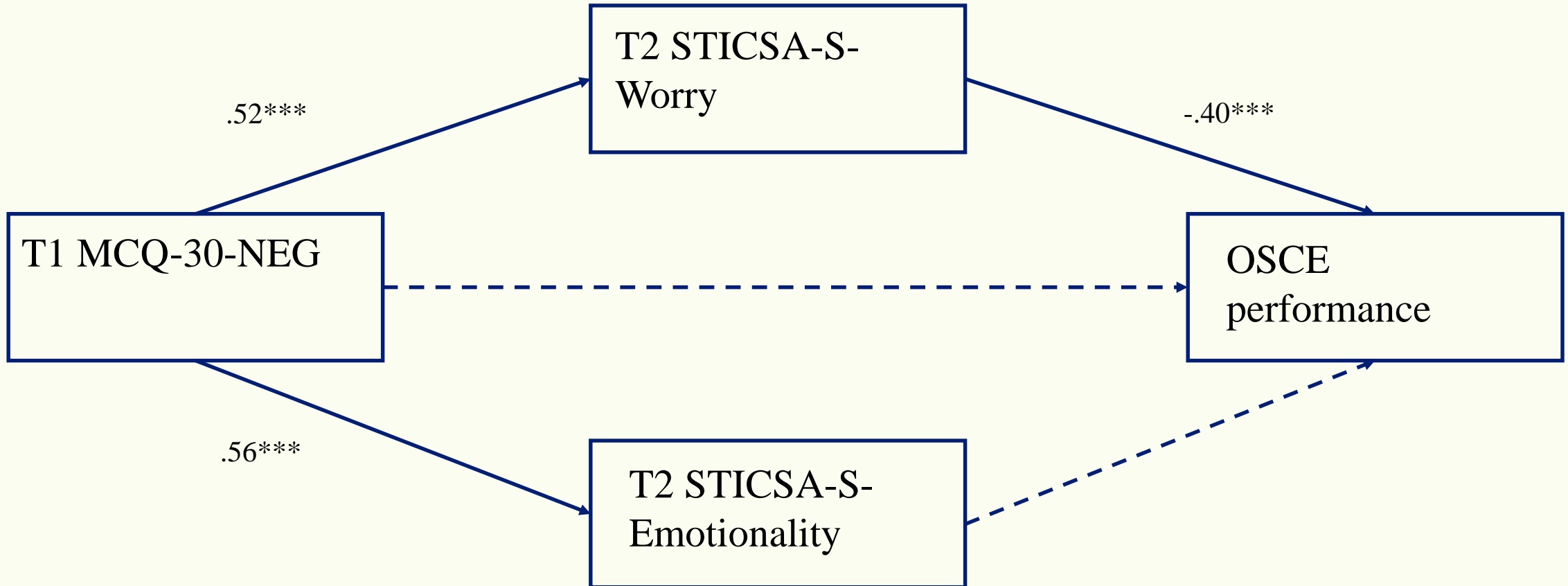
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Cross-sectional ($n = 668$)

Variable	β	p
Gender	-.16	< .001
IUS-12	.18	< .001
MCQ-30-POS	.01	.773
MCQ-30-NEG	.42	< .001
MCQ-30-CC	.15	< .001
MCQ-30-NC	-.05	.255
MCQ-30-CSC	-.02	.526

Prospective ($n = 134$)

Variable	β	p
Gender	-.07	.438
T1 IUS-12	.14	.154
T1 MCQ-30-POS	-.02	.791
T1 MCQ-30-NEG	.61	< .001
T1 MCQ-30-CC	.03	.669
T1 MCQ-30-NC	-.15	.150
T1 MCQ-30-CSC	.02	.780

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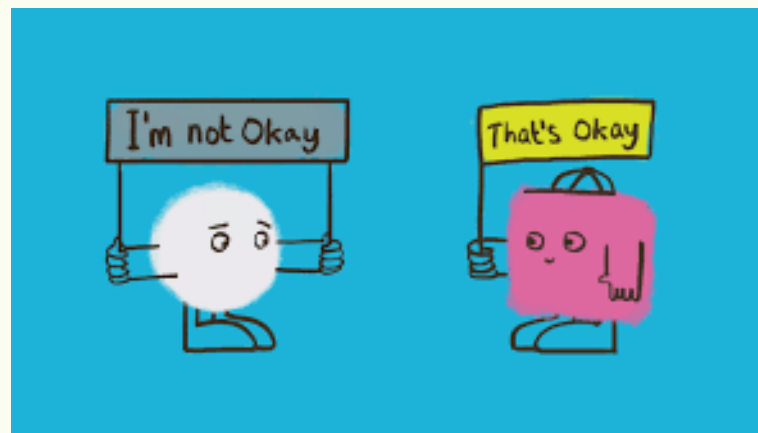
- Self-referrals
- Academic advisors
- Failing exam

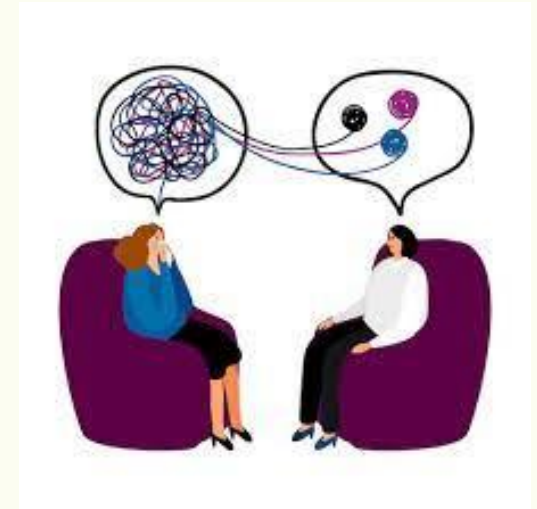- Anything else?

- Should we screen?

- Framing of exams

- Study skills training

- Raising awareness

- One-stop shop for resources

- Self-help (e.g., muscle relaxation or breathing protocol)

- Anything else…?

- TAU

- Current best evidence for BTs

- Advantage of BTs – easy to deliver by staff, easy to remember and practice by students

- Medium-to-longer term…

- New intervention based on S-REF

- 'Universal' online?

- F2F?

Thank you.

Any questions?