

Processing and Acceptance of Threatening Health Information

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Guido van Koningsbruggen

the impact of self-affirmation under
different levels of self-threat

When people are faced with information that links their specific behaviors to increased risk for health problems, they often respond defensively and are less likely to accept the threatening health information. Previous research has shown that a self-affirming activity, such as reflecting upon a personally important value unrelated to the provoking threat, reduces defensiveness and increases acceptance of threatening health information. Whereas earlier research has primarily investigated how self-affirmation influences the acceptance of threatening health information, this dissertation focuses on how self-affirmation affects the processing of threatening health information, and examined the moderating role of self-threat level. The results from the empirical studies presented in this dissertation consistently show that self-affirmation may promote or impede extensive, careful processing of threatening health information depending on the level of self-threat. When people feel moderately threatened, self-affirmation may have positive effects on message processing and persuasion. When people feel highly threatened, however, self-affirmation seems to be a risky strategy. The coherent pattern of findings has important theoretical and practical implications.

The research reported in this dissertation was conducted at the VU University Amsterdam. Guido van Koningsbruggen currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Social and Organizational Psychology of Utrecht University.

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Uitnodiging

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om 15.45 uur in de aula van de
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
De Boelelaan 1105
te Amsterdam

Aansluitend eten en drinken in
Café-restaurant Badhuis,
Javaplein 21, Amsterdam

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