

DISGUST AND ITS DOMAINS ACROSS THE ANXIETY DISORDERS

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The emotion of disgust has been involved in various anxiety disorders, specifically in the etiology and maintenance of specific phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder. A sample of participants with a diagnosis of anxiety disorder, representing the six DSM-IV anxiety disorders (i.e., specific phobias, social phobia, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder), completed the Multidimensional Disgust Scale (MDS; see Sandin et al.) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988; Sandin et al., 1999). The MDS is a 30-item self-report measure that assesses a total of five different dimensions of disgust, i.e., hygiene (body products), moral, sexual, body transgression, small-animals, atypical food, and disease. Multivariate analyses of variance showed that MDS total scores associated with each anxiety disorder were greater than those of the control group. Relative to other diagnostic groups, specific phobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder were associated with greater levels of disgust. In addition, these two disorders were particularly related to elevated scores on the hygiene and small-animals disgust subscales. The content of such subscales of disgust imply possible transmission of contaminants and disease, and they correspond to the “core disgust” suggested by Rozin, Haidt and McCauley (2000). The pattern of results remained when negative affectivity was used as covariate (two main risk factors of anxiety disorders). The subscale of sexual disgust was not able to differentiate between individuals with anxiety disorders and the control group, nor between the diagnostic groups. The clinical implications of these findings are discussed.