INTERNALIZING SYMPTOMS AND FRIENDSHIPS IN ADOLESCENCE: 
CONSIDERING THE ROLE OF INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR 
IN REJECTION AND CONTAGION EFFECTS

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ABSTRACT

The present research considered associations among internalizing symptoms, interpersonal behaviors, and friendship adjustment in a sample of 642 seventh and tenth graders. Effects of youths’ internalizing symptoms on rejection were tested, as were contagion effects of internalizing symptoms within friendships. It was hypothesized that certain interpersonal behaviors would mediate both of these effects. Results indicated that depressed youth, especially girls, tended to report greater rejection by friends over nine months. Support was found for the depression contagion effect but not for the anxiety contagion effect. Little support was found for the hypothesis that interpersonal behaviors mediated these effects. Future research should explore whether some interpersonal behaviors are more likely to be exhibited in clinical samples and how these behaviors may have overlapping, additive, and/or interactive effects on socioemotional adjustment. Applied contributions of this research for the development of interpersonal interventions for youth with internalizing symptoms are discussed.