Evidence suggests that children with depression experience high levels of negative affect (NA) and low levels of positive affect (PA). Poor emotion regulation (ER) may help explain why some children are more prone to these problematic patterns of affect. Several researchers have identified emotion regulation problems related to children’s depression. This research suggests that depressed youth’s high NA is due to ineffective skills for managing (i.e., minimizing or down regulating) NA. One largely unexplored question is the extent to which PA and its regulation (e.g., savoring or maximizing) contribute to risk for depression as well. The current longitudinal study examines the role of PA, NA and their regulation in the development of depression symptoms.

Participants for the study were 5-8th grade students recruited from public schools who completed self-report measures of study variables during 2 group administrations 6-months apart. Results indicate that RPE, RNE, PA, and NA were found to predict depression symptoms in children both concurrently and at a 6-month follow up.

Overall, this study suggests that is helpful to not only consider children's symptoms of distress, but also their experience of positive emotions as well. Further study is indicated in order to understand how regulation of positive emotions influences the development of depression as well as how teaching skills aimed at improving emotion regulation can be incorporated into interventions for children at risk for developing depression.