

# Do Unto Others: People Use Similar Strategies to Regulate Their Own Emotions and the Emotions of Others

Shir Ginosar Yaari<sup>1</sup>, Lisanne Pauw<sup>2</sup>, Anne Milek<sup>3</sup>, Yaakov Greenwald<sup>1</sup>, Dana Katsoty<sup>1</sup>,  
Katharine H. Greenaway<sup>4</sup>, and Maya Tamir<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

<sup>2</sup> Department of Social, Health and Organizational Psychology, Utrecht University

<sup>3</sup> Department of Psychology and Psychotherapy, Witten/Herdecke University

<sup>4</sup> Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, The University of Melbourne

Do people use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions (i.e., intrapersonal or self-oriented emotion regulation) and to regulate the emotions of others (i.e., interpersonal or other-oriented emotion regulation)? By answering this question, we try to shed light on why people regulate the emotions of others the way they do. We reasoned that because people imagine themselves as the target when deciding how to regulate others' emotions (Ball et al., 2013), they would use similar emotion regulation strategies to regulate their own and targets' emotions (Hypothesis 1). People are more likely to imagine a target is similar to them, the better their relationship is with the target (e.g., Murray et al., 2002). Thus, we expected people who have better relationships with the target to use more similar emotion regulation strategies to regulate their own and the target's emotions (Hypothesis 2). To test these ideas, we ran a cross-cultural study (Study 1,  $N_{\text{participants}} = 3,960$ , 19 countries), a survey study on close relationships during wartime (Study 2,  $N_{\text{participants}} = 530$ ) and an ecological momentary assessment study on close relationships in daily life (Study 3,  $N_{\text{participants}} = 136$ ). Across all studies, we found that people used similar emotion regulation strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others. In Studies 2 and 3, we further found that people do so to a greater extent when they felt their relationship with the target was better.

**Keywords:** emotion regulation, interpersonal emotion regulation, strategies, social support, relationship quality

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People often try to influence their own emotions (self-oriented emotion regulation) and the emotions of others (other-oriented emotion regulation; Reeck et al., 2016).<sup>1</sup> Both forms of regulation are commonly used in daily life and are crucial for personal well-being and interpersonal relationships (Gross & John, 2003; Morelli et al., 2015; Tran, Greenaway, & Kalokerinos, 2024). In both cases, to regulate emotions, people must implement strategies that influence the trajectory of emotions (Gross, 2015; Reeck et al., 2016). These

<sup>1</sup> The process of regulating one's own emotions without social means is sometimes described as (intra)personal emotion regulation; the process of regulating one's own emotions by turning to or involving others is called *intrinsic* interpersonal emotion regulation (Zaki & Williams, 2013). We refer to both concepts as "self-oriented emotion regulation," given they both involve changing one's own emotions. The process of regulating the emotions of other people is called *extrinsic* interpersonal emotion regulation (Zaki & Williams, 2013). We refer to this as "other-oriented emotion regulation" to distinguish it from self-oriented emotion regulation.

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Shir Ginosar Yaari  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4125-7921>

The code and measures for Studies 1–3 are available at [https://osf.io/x57fh/?view\\_only=7fe64d93c989482f89e85ac1fd659f40](https://osf.io/x57fh/?view_only=7fe64d93c989482f89e85ac1fd659f40). The methods for Study 1 were preregistered at [https://aspredicted.org/SYG\\_NY9](https://aspredicted.org/SYG_NY9). The hypotheses and analyses for Study 2 were preregistered at [https://aspredicted.org/6P5\\_CMH](https://aspredicted.org/6P5_CMH). The methods for Study 3 were preregistered at [https://osf.io/cjwgr/?view\\_only=8462dd68158649cc9bc478e2f3bf9822](https://osf.io/cjwgr/?view_only=8462dd68158649cc9bc478e2f3bf9822), and the hypotheses and analyses for Study 3 were preregistered at [https://aspredicted.org/Q3Z\\_X3N](https://aspredicted.org/Q3Z_X3N).

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Shir Ginosar Yaari or Maya Tamir, Department of Psychology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, 9190500 Jerusalem, Israel. Email: [shir.ginosaryaa@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:shir.ginosaryaa@mail.huji.ac.il) or [tamirm@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:tamirm@mail.huji.ac.il)

strategies can determine whether attempts at emotion regulation are beneficial or detrimental (Gross, 2015; Jurkiewicz et al., 2023; Matthews et al., 2021). While considerable research has examined what underlies strategy use in self-oriented emotion regulation (Matthews et al., 2021), we know less about the factors that determine strategy use in other-oriented emotion regulation (see Niven, 2017; Nozaki & Mikolajczak, 2020; Reeck et al., 2016; Zaki & Williams, 2013).

Self- and other-oriented emotion regulation have been mostly studied in isolation (Zaki, 2020), with research focusing *either* on the strategies people use to regulate their own emotions (e.g., Webb et al., 2012) *or* on the strategies people use to regulate others' emotions (e.g., Nozaki & Mikolajczak, 2023). This means we do not know how, or even whether, the choices people make about regulating the emotions of other people are related to the choices they make for self-regulation. If strategies used in self-oriented emotion regulation are unrelated to those used in other-oriented emotion regulation, this would mean that independent factors shape the selection of strategies to regulate emotions in the self and in others. However, if strategies used in self-oriented emotion regulation are related to those used in other-oriented emotion regulation, this could point to common factors that contribute to both forms of emotion regulation. To generate this knowledge, we tested the extent to which people use similar strategies to regulate themselves and to regulate others. Furthermore, to explore the possible mechanism of such potential associations, we tested whether the strength of these associations varies as a function of the quality of the relationship between the regulator and the target.

### Choosing Strategies for Self- and Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation

Regulators can employ emotion regulation strategies to change emotions in themselves or in others (i.e., targets; Gross, 1998; Nozaki & Mikolajczak, 2020). For example, to decrease emotional intensity, people could use distraction, which involves directing (one's own or another's) attention away from an emotional situation (Wolgast & Lundh, 2017). Alternatively, to change the emotional impact of a situation, people could use cognitive reappraisal, which involves changing one's own or another's interpretation of the situation (Gross, 1998). Though some strategies used in other-oriented emotion regulation are unique to this form of regulation (e.g., giving a hug), most strategies used to regulate emotions in others can also be used to regulate emotions in oneself (Nozaki & Mikolajczak, 2020).

People differ in which strategies they commonly used to regulate emotions, and the strategy people use has implications for the success of emotion regulation (Gross, 2015; Matthews et al., 2022). Certain strategies may be generally beneficial, regardless of whether the target is oneself or another person. For example, cognitive reappraisal can be beneficial for people who use it to regulate their own emotions and beneficial for targets whose emotions are being regulated by someone else (Gross & John, 2003; Jurkiewicz et al., 2023). However, it is presently unclear whether people who are more likely to use a particular strategy (e.g., cognitive reappraisal) to regulate their own emotions are also more likely to use that strategy to regulate the emotions of another.

Whereas choosing strategies to regulate one's own emotions can be relatively easier, choosing strategies to regulate the emotions of another may be more challenging (Matthews et al., 2022). This is

because regulators do not always know what the target is currently feeling or what they want to feel (Murray et al., 2002). Thus, other-oriented emotion regulation often takes place under conditions of uncertainty, in which the regulator has to try to understand the target and discover how to best help them.

How do regulators overcome such uncertainty? One possibility involves a process of simulation (Davies & Stone, 1995). In this process, regulators try to understand the target by imagining themselves as the target and considering which strategy they would find helpful themselves (Ball et al., 2013; Davies & Stone, 1995). If people rely on a process of simulation when regulating others, regulators may think of the target as similar to themselves. Indeed, when trying to identify what another person is feeling, people consider what they personally might feel in the situation and assume the other is experiencing emotions similar to what they themselves would feel (Clark et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2002). Moreover, people regulate others' emotions to help those others achieve goals that regulators would themselves set when regulating their own emotions (i.e., people who regulate their own emotions in order to improve their performance also regulate the emotions of others in order to improve the targets' performance; Springstein et al., 2023). This could indicate regulators simulate themselves as targets when choosing which goals they try to achieve in other-oriented emotion regulation. Therefore, regulators may also engage in a process of simulation when deciding which strategies to use to regulate the target's emotions and choose the same strategies to regulate others as they choose to regulate themselves.

Regulators use simulation to try and understand the experiences of the target in a given moment (Ball et al., 2013; Davies & Stone, 1995). Simulation allows them to understand the experiences of the target by relying on the experiences and responses they *tend* to feel themselves (see Barrick et al., 2024; Gordon, 1986; Nichols, 2006). In the present context, this means that people might regulate the emotions of others using strategies they typically use to regulate their own emotions, but not necessarily strategies they most recently used. This distinction is important, because although one's emotion regulation strategies are somewhat stable at the trait level, they are also influenced by context and vary across situations (for review, see Matthews et al., 2021). Hence, we hypothesized that participants would regulate the emotions of others using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions (i.e., trait-level strategies).

To our knowledge, no research has directly tested this hypothesis. However, several studies provided indirect evidence that is potentially consistent with it. Matthews et al. (2022) found that regulators' distress affected strategy choice in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation in a similar way. Similarly, Sahi et al. (2023) showed that targets benefit more from strategies they tend to use to regulate others' emotions. These findings, however, do not show that the more a person tends to use a particular strategy to regulate their own emotion, the more likely that person is to use the same strategy to regulate the emotions of another.

Consistent with our hypothesis, other studies found that people who were more likely to use adaptive (or maladaptive) emotion regulation strategies to regulate their emotions were also more likely to use adaptive (or maladaptive) emotion regulation strategies to regulate the emotions of others (Kwon & López-Pérez, 2022; Little et al., 2012). However, in these studies, each self-oriented strategy that was measured was positively correlated with almost all other-oriented strategies. These results suggest that the more one regulates one's own emotions, the more one regulates the emotions of others,

but they do not necessarily imply that people who use a specific self-oriented strategy more frequently are more likely to use this strategy to regulate the emotions of others. Gurera et al. (2022) tried to address this question but only assessed cognitive reappraisal (a relatively adaptive strategy) and expressive suppression (a relatively maladaptive strategy). They found a correlation between self- and other-oriented use of cognitive reappraisal and self- and other-oriented use of expressive suppression. As they only focused on one adaptive and one maladaptive strategy, their findings might be specific to the tendency to use adaptive versus maladaptive strategies to regulate oneself and others. In this investigation, therefore, we tested whether participants tend to regulate the emotions of others using the same specific strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions, focusing on a wide range of strategies that are considered adaptive or maladaptive.

### Choosing Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation Strategies and Relationship Quality

Assuming self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies are associated, we propose that this association may depend on the perceived quality of the relationship between the regulator and the target. Relationship quality is defined as how positive one feels about their relationship (Farooqi, 2014). We propose that the association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies is moderated by how regulators perceive the quality of their relationship with the target.

On the one hand, when regulators have better relationships with the target (i.e., higher perceived relationship quality), they may know targets better. Such knowledge could potentially lead regulators to pick strategies that best fit the target's needs, rather than their own. This could lead us to expect a weaker association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies when regulators' relationship with the target is better.

On the other hand, the better regulators' relationship is with the target, the more likely they are to assume the target is *similar* to themselves, above and beyond the actual similarity between them (Lutz-Zois et al., 2006; Montoya et al., 2008). This has also been shown in prior work focusing on emotions and goal achievement. Specifically, the better one's relationship with another person, the more they assume that person's emotional experiences are similar to one's own (Murray et al., 2002), and the more likely they are to set similar goals for the other as they would for themselves (Fitzsimons et al., 2015). This led us to expect that the better regulators' relationship with the target, the more likely regulators would be to assume the target is similar to them, and accordingly, the more likely they would be to use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the target's emotions (Hypothesis 2).

Testing whether perceived relationship quality moderates the association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategy use could help us identify in which relationships people are more likely to use similar strategies to regulate their own and others' emotions. Moreover, evidence showing that perceived relationship quality moderates the association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategy use would be consistent with and provide indirect and preliminary support to the possibility that regulators use similar strategies to regulate their own and other's emotions when they consider the other more similar to them.

### The Current Research

In three studies, we tested two key hypotheses. First, we tested whether regulators tend to use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of another person. In Study 1, we tested whether people use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of another unspecified person, and whether this association is present across diverse cultural contexts. If people generally select strategies to regulate the emotions of others by simulating the process of selecting strategies to regulate their own emotions, such an association may be evident across cultural contexts (Harris, 1990).

In Study 2, we tested whether people use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of their romantic partner. In this study, where hypotheses and analyses were preregistered after data collection, we tested whether the association between self- and other-oriented strategies exists not only when regulating unspecified "others," but when regulating a specific and close target—namely, one's romantic partner. In Study 3, where hypotheses and analyses were also preregistered after data collection, we assessed emotion regulation as it occurs in daily life in an ecological momentary assessment (EMA) study. We then tested whether people regulate the emotions of their romantic partner in daily life, using strategies they typically use to regulate their own emotions. Testing our hypothesis in an EMA study allowed us to track regulation as it occurs across diverse everyday contexts and in response to real-life situations.

Because regulators commonly engage in self- or other-oriented emotion regulation to influence unpleasant emotions (e.g., Ruan et al., 2024), in all three studies, we focused on emotion regulation enacted in order to respond to one's own or another's unpleasant emotions. We predicted that people who are typically more likely to use a strategy to regulate their own unpleasant emotions would also be more likely to use that strategy to regulate others' unpleasant emotions (Hypothesis 1).

Second, in Studies 2 and 3, we also tested whether people are likely to use more similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of a target when their relationship is better. In Study 2, using a cross-sectional survey, we examined this hypothesis at the trait level by testing whether regulators who generally report better relationships with their romantic partner use more similar strategies to regulate their own and their partner's emotions. In Study 3, using an EMA study design, we tested this hypothesis using a combination of state- and trait-level data. We tested whether in moments when regulators report that their relationship with their partner is better, they were more likely to regulate their partner's emotion using strategies they typically used to regulate their own emotions. We predicted that the association between self-oriented and other-oriented strategies would be stronger when regulators' relationship with the target is better (Hypothesis 2).

To capture a range of emotion regulation strategies, we targeted seven emotion regulation strategies that have been studied regularly in both self-oriented and other-oriented contexts. Six of these strategies feature in theories of emotion regulation (Gross & Thompson, 2007) and are commonly employed in daily life (Brans et al., 2013). These include situation selection (selecting situations likely to induce desired emotions), distraction (redirecting attention away from the emotional event and the feelings it elicits), rumination (bringing an emotional event repeatedly to mind), cognitive

reappraisal (thinking about an event in a way that changes its emotional impact), expressive suppression (inhibiting the expression of emotion), and emotional support seeking (turning to others to help influence one's emotions). We also included acceptance (engaging with emotions in a nonjudgmental manner), social sharing (sharing one's emotions with others), and avoidance (ignoring one's emotions) as additional strategies that have emerged as distinct forms of emotion regulation (Pauw et al., 2024; Wojnarowska et al., 2020).

We propose that people regulate the emotions of others using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions, because they consider the other similar to themselves. However, there are other potential explanations for why people might use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others. To address some of these potential explanations, we included several control variables. First, the extent to which one uses a specific self- or other-oriented emotion regulation strategy could be linked to the overall tendency to engage in emotion regulation. To rule out this explanation, we repeated our analysis, controlling for each participant's total use of self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies. Second, people who feel more intense unpleasant emotional experiences may have fewer cognitive resources, impairing the use of certain emotion regulation strategies for self- and other-oriented emotion regulation (Inzlicht & Schmeichel, 2016). To rule this possibility out, we controlled for the regulator's unpleasant emotional experiences. Third, given that gender is associated with differences in emotion regulation strategy use (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012), which may affect both self- and other-oriented emotion regulation, we controlled for the regulator's gender.

Fourth, it is possible that people regulate targets' emotions using strategies targets use to regulate their own emotions. If the target and regulator use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions, this would lead to an association between strategies regulators use to regulate their own emotions and the targets' emotions. To test this possibility, we controlled for strategies targets used to regulate their own emotions. Also, if regulators and targets use more similar self-oriented emotion regulation strategies when their relationship is better, the association between regulators' self- and other-oriented strategies would be stronger when their relationship is better. To test this possibility, we also controlled for strategies targets use to regulate their own emotions when testing Hypothesis 2. Finally, it is possible that people use more similar strategies in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation when their relationship is better, because they are more motivated to regulate the targets' emotions. To test this possibility, we controlled for regulators' motivation to regulate the target when testing Hypothesis 2. We conducted our analyses with and without including these control variables and expected our predicted effects to hold across analyses.

### Study 1: Associations Between Strategies in Self- and Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation Across Cultures

In Study 1, we tested whether self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies are associated. Because this is the first large-scale test of the correspondence between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies, we aimed to test this association across cultures. This has the benefit of testing the key relationship at scale, as well as exploring its generalizability. Therefore, to test the consistency of the association between self- and other-oriented emotion

regulation strategies, we assessed this relationship in multiple and diverse cultural contexts that vary in individualism–collectivism.

We focused on the individualism–collectivism divide, because this cultural dimension explains differences between cultures in how people think of emotions and their relationships with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Whereas individualist countries prioritize the well-being of the individual, collectivist countries prioritize social harmony (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). If associations between self-oriented and other-oriented emotion regulation strategy use vary by individualism–collectivism, this would imply the process that underlies this link depends on cultural values. For instance, it could be that in more individualist countries, people are more likely to project their own preferences onto others. Alternatively, if associations between self-oriented and other-oriented emotion regulation strategy use do not vary by individualism–collectivism, this might imply that people generally use their own experiences as a starting point when selecting strategies to regulate others' emotions.

We tested these possibilities in a study that assessed emotion regulation during COVID-19, as people were experiencing and regulating emotional distress (Lades et al., 2020), often in the presence of others. This context rendered self- and other-oriented emotion regulation potentially relevant (Moeck et al., 2023). To examine whether the association between self- and other-oriented strategy use was consistent across cultures, we also tested whether the strength of this potential association varied as a function of individualism–collectivism.

### Method

For an overview of methods used in Studies 1–3, see Table 1. We established partial metric invariance of all our key measures (for more information, see Supplemental Table S1). This justifies comparing associations between measures across cultures. Below, we report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions, and all measures.

### Participants

We used a sample of 3,960 university students (56.8% female,  $M_{\text{age}} = 22.95, SD = 4.91$ ) from 19 countries, including English-speaking (United States, United Kingdom), European (Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia), Middle Eastern (Turkey, Israel), South Asian (India, Nepal, Bangladesh), East Asian (China, Japan, South Korea), South or Central American (Brazil, Mexico, Peru, and Ecuador), and African nations (Ghana). Participants were recruited from local student communities, by posting on notice boards or via local student experiment registration systems (e.g., Sonar), or via survey companies (i.e., Prolific). The sample size was determined based on a power analysis conducted to answer other questions, regarding cross-cultural differences.<sup>2</sup> Prior to deriving our final sample size reported above, we excluded 597 participants from the study (450 failed both attention checks included in the study, 56 were not native born, 79 were underage, 11 completed the survey in less than 300 s,

<sup>2</sup> To measure observed power, we conducted post hoc power analyses for key analyses using bootstrap simulation. We were sufficiently powered in Studies 1 (Hypothesis 1:  $M_{\text{observed power}} = 94.4\%$ ), 2 (Hypothesis 1:  $M_{\text{observed power}} = 98.9\%$ ; Hypothesis 2:  $M_{\text{observed power}} = 88.0\%$ ), and 3 (Hypothesis 1:  $M_{\text{observed power}} = 86.4\%$ ; Hypothesis 2:  $M_{\text{observed power}} = 92.8\%$ ).

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**Table 1**  
*Summary of Methods (Studies 1–3)*

Study	Type	N	Target	Prompt	Emotion regulation strategy		Relationship quality	
					Number of item per strategy	Example item	Number of item	Example item
1	Cross-sectional	3,960	Another person	During the past week, to what extent did you try to decrease negative emotions in another person (yourself), by doing each of the following	4	I distracted myself/the person from the situation		
2	Cross-sectional	530	Partner	Since the beginning of the war in Israel, to what extent did you try to decrease your partner's (your own) unpleasant emotions, by doing each of the following?	2	I distracted myself/my partner from the situation	2	Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship
3	Ecological momentary assessment (42 assessments)	136	Partner	Since this morning/the last beep, how did you respond to your partner's (your own) negative emotions?	1	I tried to distract myself/them	1	How close do you feel to your partner right now

*Note.* N refers to number of participants after exclusions.

and one was not a native speaker). Further information about the sample is available in Tamir et al. (2024).

**Procedure**

Surveys were translated into the native languages and back-translated following recommended procedures (Chen & Boore, 2010). Participants completed the survey online in their native language or language of instruction between April and December 2021. Participants rated their use of self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies during the past week. Participants first rated their use of self-oriented emotion regulation strategies and then their use of other-oriented emotion regulation strategies. Other measures were collected to address different research questions (see Supplemental Materials).

**Measures**

Information on the reliability of each measure (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) is available in Table 2.

**Emotion Regulation Strategies.** Self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies were measured using 28 items each (e.g., "I distracted myself from the situation" or "I distracted the person from the situation"). Participants rated how much they tried to decrease their own and another person's unpleasant emotions using each strategy in the past week (e.g., "During the past week, to what extent did you try to decrease negative emotions in another person, by doing each of the following") from 1 (*I did not do this at all*) to 5 (*I did this a lot*). Each strategy was calculated by averaging items assessing it (four items per strategy). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranged from .74 (situation selection) to .86 (emotional support) for self-oriented emotion regulation strategies ( $M = 0.80$ ), and from .81 (rumination) to .86 (expressive suppression) for other-oriented emotion regulation strategies ( $M = 0.84$ ). Strategies included distraction, rumination, situation selection, reappraisal, expressive suppression, emotional support, and acceptance (see Tamir et al., 2024).

**Unpleasant Emotional Experiences.** Participants completed the experienced emotions subscale of the Experienced and Desired Emotions Scale (Tamir et al., 2016), which included 11 unpleasant emotion terms (e.g., "sadness," "anger"). Unpleasant emotions were calculated by averaging these items ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Participants rated how much they experienced each emotion (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *a lot*) in the past week.

**Individualism Versus Collectivism.** Country-level ratings of individualism–collectivism were adopted from Vishkin et al. (2023), who averaged across scaled indices of individualism–collectivism measures, including Hofstede's individualism index (Hofstede, 2011), Schwartz's (1994) scores for autonomy versus embeddedness, and Welzel's (2014) scores for emancipative values.

**Data Cleaning**

The data included a small number of outliers for self- and other-oriented strategies, and this violated assumptions required for running a multilevel regression ( $\pm 2.5$  SDs from the mean; Osborne & Overbay, 2004). Each model was run while excluding datapoints that were outliers for that strategy, so that each analysis excluded a different number of outliers. Specifically, for other-oriented expressive suppression and rumination, some participants reported using

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability (Study 1)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	Outlier
Self-oriented situation selection	3.09	0.85	.74	0
Self-oriented rumination	3.10	1.06	.85	0
Self-oriented expressive suppression	2.81	1.05	.84	0
Self-oriented distraction	3.09	0.89	.75	0
Self-oriented cognitive reappraisal	2.87	0.93	.82	0
Self-oriented acceptance	2.95	0.88	.75	0
Self-oriented emotional support	2.59	1.09	.86	0
Self-oriented total strategy use	2.93	0.6	.89	0
Other-oriented situation selection	2.92	0.98	.84	0
Other-oriented rumination	1.82	0.87	.81	53
Other-oriented expressive suppression	1.70	0.89	.86	102
Other-oriented distraction	2.78	0.96	.82	0
Other-oriented cognitive reappraisal	2.88	0.98	.83	0
Other-oriented acceptance	2.93	1.05	.85	0
Other-oriented emotional support	3.46	1.08	.88	0
Other-oriented total strategy use	2.64	0.71	.94	0
Unpleasant emotions	2.57	0.8	.79	0

Note. All ratings were completed on a 1–5 scale.

these strategies more than 2.5 *SDs* above the mean level (53 and 102 participants, respectively, constituting 1.3% and 2.8% of participants).<sup>3</sup>

### Transparency and Openness

This investigation was part of a larger project, and the methods were preregistered ([https://aspredicted.org/SYG\\_NY9](https://aspredicted.org/SYG_NY9)). The code and material for all studies in this article have been made publicly available on the Open Science Framework and can be accessed at [https://osf.io/x57fh/?view\\_only=7fe64d93c989482f89e85ac1fd659f40](https://osf.io/x57fh/?view_only=7fe64d93c989482f89e85ac1fd659f40). As the data used in this article are parts of larger projects and variables used in this investigation are also used to address other questions in other investigations that are not yet published, the data are not yet publicly available in the attached link. Access to the data would be granted upon request. The current hypotheses were not preregistered in Study 1.

## Results

### Similarity in Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies

To test whether people use similar strategies in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation, we ran a maximal multilevel model for each strategy, nesting participants within countries (Model 1). Maximal models include the maximum number of slopes the model allows while being able to converge. For each strategy, we report the model that converged with the maximum number of slopes. Each other-oriented strategy was predicted from the matching self-oriented strategy, so that the maximal model that was tested was as follows:

$$\text{other}_{i,c} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self}_{i,c} + \mu_{0c} + \mu_{1c} \text{self}_{i,c} + e_{0ic}, \quad (1)$$

where, *i*: individual; *c*: country; other: other-oriented strategy; self: self-oriented strategy;  $\beta$ : fixed effects/intercept;  $\mu$ : random effects/intercept; *e*: error term.

We tested a second model for each strategy (Model 2), controlling for the total use of other-oriented emotion regulation strategies and gender, with the following equation for the maximal model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{other}_{i,c} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self}_{i,c} + \beta_2 \text{total use of self}_{i,c} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{gender}_{i,c} + \mu_{0c} + \mu_{1c} \text{self}_{i,c} \\ & + \mu_{2c} \text{total use of self}_{i,c} + \mu_{3c} \text{gender}_{i,c} + e_{0ic}. \quad (2) \end{aligned}$$

We then tested a third model for each strategy (Model 3), also controlling for total use of self-oriented strategies, with the following equation for the maximal model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{other}_{i,c} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self}_{i,c} + \beta_2 \text{total use of other}_{i,c} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{total use of self}_{i,c} + \beta_4 \text{gender}_{i,c} + \mu_{0c} \\ & + \mu_{1c} \text{self}_{i,c} + \mu_{2c} \text{total use of other}_{i,c} \\ & + \mu_{3c} \text{total use of self}_{i,c} + \mu_{4c} \text{gender}_{i,c} + e_{0ic}. \quad (3) \end{aligned}$$

We ran a fourth model for each strategy (Model 4), also controlling for the level of unpleasant emotions the participant felt, with the following equation for the maximal model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{other}_{i,c} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self}_{i,c} + \beta_2 \text{total use of other}_{i,c} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{total use of self}_{i,c} + \beta_4 \text{gender}_{i,c} \\ & + \beta_5 \text{unpleasant emotions}_{i,c} + \mu_{0c} + \mu_{1c} \text{self}_{i,c} \\ & + \mu_{2c} \text{total use of other}_{i,c} + \mu_{3c} \text{total use of self}_{i,c} \\ & + \mu_{4c} \text{gender}_{i,c} + \mu_{5c} \text{unpleasant emotions}_{i,c} + e_{0ic}. \quad (4) \end{aligned}$$

We adjusted all hypothesized *p* values according to the false discovery rate (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995) to account for multiple comparisons. All hypothesized *p* values in Study 1 were adjusted together, including *p* values from the following analyses.<sup>4</sup>

Our predictions were supported. We found that people who were more likely to use a strategy to regulate their own unpleasant emotions were also more likely to use that strategy to regulate others' unpleasant emotions (Table 3 and Figure 1;  $M_{\text{standardized } \beta} = 0.31, ps < .001$ ; see Supplemental Table S2 for full models). The association was significant in almost all models and strategies ( $M_{\text{standardized } \beta} = 0.13, ps < .028$ ). The only exceptions were the associations between self- and other-oriented strategies tested in Model 2, which were not significant for rumination and expressive suppression. The associations between self- and other-oriented use of rumination, and self- and other-oriented use of expressive suppression were significant in Models 1, 3, and 4, but not in Model 2 ( $p_{\text{rumination}} = .051, p_{\text{expressive suppression}} = .050$ ).

<sup>3</sup> The association between self- and other-oriented strategies remained significant when outliers were included. This was also true for results for associations described in Studies 2 and 3.

<sup>4</sup> For predicting other-oriented emotion regulation strategies, *p* values for the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategies were corrected together in the following models: Model 1, Model 2, Model 3, Model 4, and the model testing interactions between self-oriented emotion regulation strategies and individualism–collectivism (one *p* value per model for each of the seven strategies across five models, totaling 35 *p* values).

**Table 3**  
*Predicting Each Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation Strategy From the Matching Self-Oriented Strategy*

Strategy	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3		M
	β	SD	β	SD	β	SD	
<b>Model 1</b>							
Distraction	.38***	0.02	.41***	0.04	.42***	0.08	0.40
Cognitive reappraisal	.43***	0.03	.40***	0.04	.41***	0.08	0.41
Acceptance	.46***	0.02	.30***	0.04			0.38
Emotional support	.33***	0.03	.19***	0.04			0.26
Situation selection	.42***	0.02					0.42
Sharing					.68*** (F)	0.13 (F)	0.62
					.56*** (M) <sup>a</sup>	0.13 (M)	
Expressive suppression	.10***	0.02	.15***	0.03	.13	0.09	0.13
Rumination	.11***	0.02	.15***	0.04			0.13
Avoidance					.35***	0.06	
M	0.32		0.27		0.39		0.32
<b>Model 4</b>							
Distraction	.23***	0.01	.29***	0.03	.36***	0.09	0.30
Cognitive reappraisal	.17***	0.02	.16***	0.04	.50***	0.08	0.28
Acceptance	.20***	0.02	.24***	0.03			0.23
Emotional support	.05*	0.02	.12**	0.04			0.09
Situation selection	.13***	0.01					0.13
Sharing					.33***	0.08	0.33
Expressive suppression	.08**	0.02	.12***	0.03	.10	0.07	0.10
Rumination	.04*	0.02	.18***	0.04			0.12
Avoidance					.44***	0.08	0.44
M	0.13		0.19		0.35		0.21

*Note.* βs are standardized (all variables were z-scored around the mean of the entire sample). Model 1: The use of each partner-oriented regulation strategy is predicted from the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategy. Model 4: The use of each partner-oriented emotion regulation strategy is predicted from the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategy, while controlling for gender, each participant’s total use of partner-oriented emotion regulation strategies, each total use of self-oriented emotion regulation strategies, and the level of unpleasant emotions each participant felt. F = female; M = male.

<sup>a</sup>This model did not converge in its simplest form; thus, separate models were conducted on female and male participants.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Similarity in Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies Across Cultures**

To test whether the association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies varied by culture, we predicted each other-oriented emotion regulation strategy from the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategy and an interaction with collectivism (vs. individualism). The maximal model tested for each strategy was,

$$\text{other}_{ic} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self}_{ic} + \beta_2 \text{IC}_c + \beta_3 \text{self}_{ic} \times \text{IC}_c + \mu_{0c} + \mu_{1c} \text{self}_{ic} + \mu_{2c} \text{IC}_c + \mu_{3c} \text{self}_{ic} \times \text{IC}_c + e_{0ic}, \quad (5)$$

where, IC: individualism (vs. collectivism).

The association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies was positive and significant across cultures and was not moderated by individualism–collectivism ( $M_{\text{interaction } \beta} = -0.002$ ;  $.118 \leq p \leq .826$ ; see Supplemental Table S2 for full models).

**Discussion**

Supporting our hypotheses, we found that people used similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others during COVID-19. This association was not moderated by individualism–collectivism, implying that people use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others across cultures. Nonetheless, the study does suffer from some limitations.

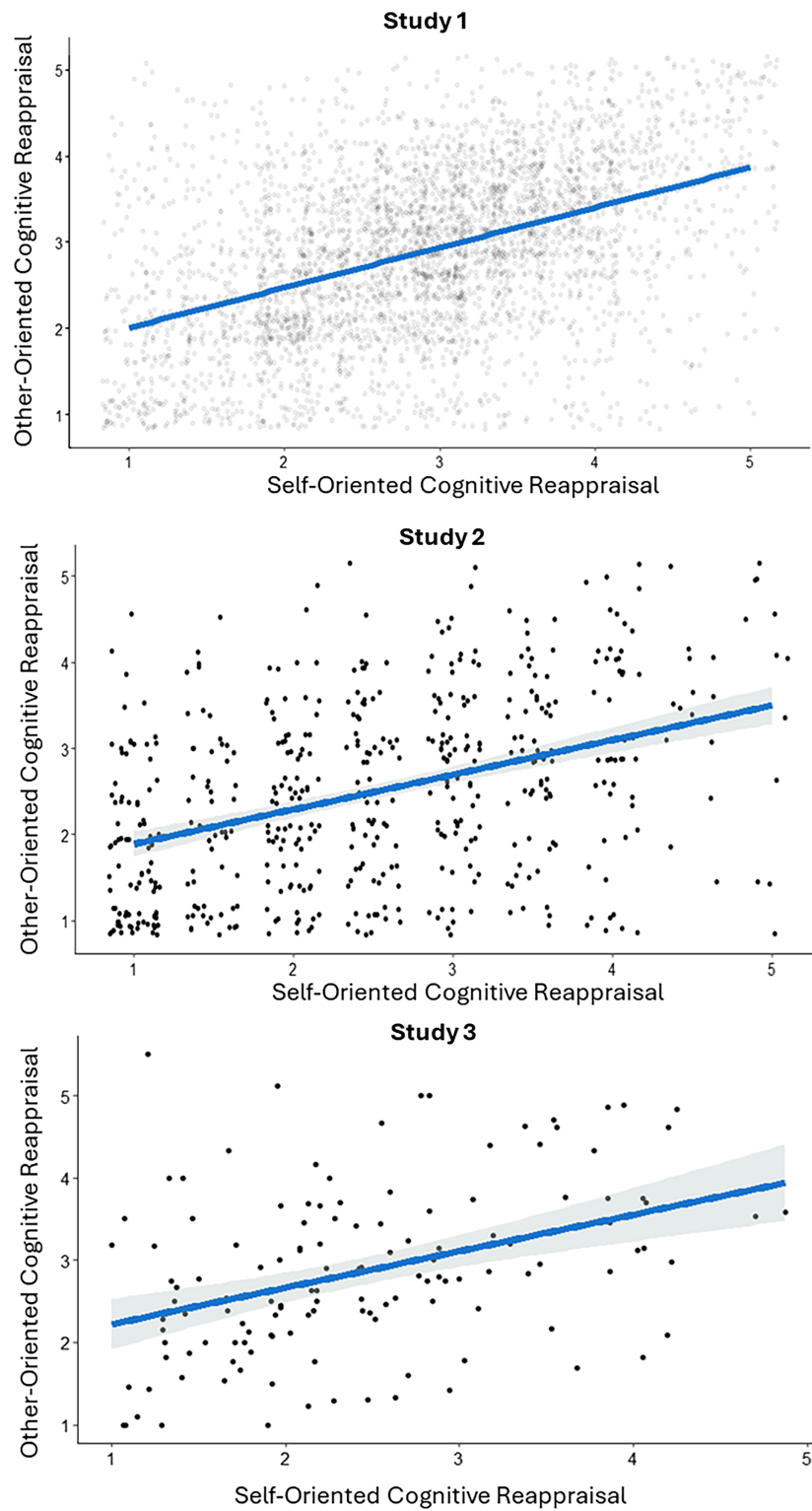
Participants reported on the strategies they used to make targets feel better, without identifying the targets. It is possible that people reported on specific targets they regulated using strategies they tend to use for themselves. If this is true, once all participants report on the same type of target, strategies used for self-oriented and other-oriented emotion regulation may no longer be associated. In addition, in Study 1, regulators did not indicate how good their relationship was with the target. Thus, we could not test whether people were more likely to choose similar self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies when they felt their relationship was better. Finally, the order in which participants rated the use of self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies was not counterbalanced in Study 1, so reported other-oriented emotion regulation strategies may have been influenced by participants’ reports of self-oriented emotion regulation strategies. We sought to overcome these limitations in Study 2 by having participants report on strategies they used to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of their romantic partner in a counterbalanced order and on the quality of their relationship with their partner.

**Study 2: Strategies in Self- and Partner-Oriented Emotion Regulation and Relationship Quality**

Study 2 assessed emotion regulation in an Israeli sample collected at the beginning of the Israel– Hamas war of 2023. During this period, participants and their partners were distressed (Levi-Belz et al., 2024), rendering other-oriented emotion regulation especially

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**Figure 1**  
*Self- and Other-Oriented Cognitive Reappraisal Are Positively Associated*



*Note.* This figure displays the association between self- and other-oriented cognitive reappraisal. Each datapoint is a single participant, standard errors are presented in gray. To present results from all participants, datapoints were jittered in Studies 1 and 2 and made slightly transparent in Study 1 (darker indicates more datapoints). See the online article for the color version of this figure.

relevant. We assessed whether participants used similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of a specific target—namely, their romantic partner. We chose to focus on regulation of romantic partners (partner-oriented emotion regulation), because this is a common and significant form of other-oriented regulation that can carry important implications for personal and social well-being (Horn et al., 2019; Ruan et al., 2024). We predicted that people regulate the emotions of their partners using similar strategies to those they tend to use for themselves (Hypothesis 1). We further tested whether the strength of this association was moderated by the perceived quality of the couple's relationship (Hypothesis 2). We predicted that people who reported better relationships with their partner would use more similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and their partner's emotions. As people in better relationships may be more motivated to regulate their partner's emotions, we also tested Hypothesis 2 while controlling for regulators' motivation to regulate the targets' emotions. Our methods, hypotheses, and key analyses were preregistered.

## Method

### Participants

We used a sample of 530 participants (74.3% female, 0.9% non-binary;  $M_{\text{age}} = 41.3$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.1$ ). We collected data from 1,064 participants using social media ( $n = 809$ , using Facebook and WhatsApp) and a panel company ( $n = 255$ , using Panel4all panel company). Of these, 677 were in a romantic relationship and reported on strategies they used to regulate their own emotions and their partner's emotions. Of those, we excluded participants who failed attention checks (11 participants) or had a romantic partner who was serving in the military when the data were collected, making it impossible to engage in other-oriented emotion regulation (136 participants).

### Procedure

This investigation was part of a larger project on psychological function, risk, and resilience during the Israel–Hamas war of 2023. Participants completed a survey online during October and November 2023. Participants reported on their use of self-oriented and partner-oriented emotion regulation strategies in a counterbalanced order<sup>5</sup> and on the quality of the relationship with their romantic partner. Other measures were collected to address different research questions (see [Supplemental Materials](#)).

### Measures

Information on the reliability of each measure is provided in [Table 4](#).

**Emotion Regulation Strategies.** Self- and partner-oriented emotion regulation strategies were measured using a shortened version of the measure used in Study 1, with two items per strategy. Participants indicated how much they tried to decrease their own (or their partner's) unpleasant emotions using each strategy since the beginning of the war. Scores for each strategy were calculated by averaging across items assessing that strategy. Cronbach's  $\alpha$ s ranged from .59 (acceptance) to .86 (expressive suppression) for self-oriented emotion regulation strategies ( $M = 0.75$ ), and from .59 (rumination) to .84 (emotional support) for other-oriented emotion regulation strategies ( $M = 0.70$ ). Given that we used only two items per strategy, the reliability for some strategies was relatively low but still acceptable

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability (Study 2)*

Variable	Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	Outlier
Self-oriented distraction	1–5	3.11	1.09	.72	0
Self-oriented rumination	1–5	2.93	1.21	.81	0
Self-oriented cognitive reappraisal	1–5	2.50	1.07	.72	0
Self-oriented emotional support	1–5	2.86	1.18	.80	0
Self-oriented expressive suppression	1–5	2.54	1.17	.86	0
Self-oriented acceptance	1–5	3.62	0.94	.59	0
Self-oriented total strategy use	1–5	2.93	0.63	.57	0
Partner-oriented distraction	1–5	2.77	1.1	.70	0
Partner-oriented rumination	1–5	1.74	0.86	.59	20
Partner-oriented cognitive reappraisal	1–5	2.49	1.09	.69	0
Partner-oriented emotional support	1–5	3.78	1.08	.84	17
Partner-oriented expressive suppression	1–5	1.36	0.7	.62	19
Partner-oriented acceptance	1–5	3.24	1.22	.75	0
Partner-oriented total strategy use	1–5	2.56	0.69	.76	0
Relationship quality	1–6	4.88	1.05	.89	0
Unpleasant emotions	1–10	3.99	1.04	.89	0

for measuring emotion regulation strategies (e.g., [Coo et al., 2022](#)). Strategies included distraction, rumination, reappraisal, expressive suppression, emotional support, and acceptance.

**Relationship Quality.** Participants completed a shortened version of the Relationships Assessment Scale ([Hendrick et al., 1998](#)). The scale included the following two items “Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship?” rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*entirely*), and “How good is your relationship compared to most relationships” rated from 1 (*worse than all other relationships [very bad]*) to 6 (*better than all other relationships [very good]*). These items were averaged ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

**Unpleasant Emotions.** Participants rated how much (1 = *not at all*; 10 = *a lot*) they experienced sadness and nervousness in the past week, and these items were averaged ( $\alpha = .59$ ).

**Motivation to Engage in Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation.** Participants rated two items indicating how motivated (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *a lot*) they were to decrease their partners' unpleasant emotions since the beginning of the war (“How much did you want to decrease your partners unpleasant emotions?”), and these items were averaged ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

### Data Cleaning

Following our preregistration, outliers (2.5 *SDs* over or under the mean) were removed for self- or partner-oriented strategies when this allowed the distribution of that variable to be closer to a normal distribution (maximized the *p* value in the Shapiro–Wilks test so that it is close to insignificance). Outliers were removed for analyses that used these variables. Specifically, some participants (18 and 20 participants, respectively, constituting 3.4% and 3.8% of participants) reported using other-oriented expressive suppression and rumination more than 2.5 *SDs* above the mean level, and some

<sup>5</sup> We did not find evidence for order effects on the association between self- and other-oriented strategies in all strategies ( $p > .17$ ), except acceptance. The association between self- and other-oriented acceptance was significant, regardless of order. However, for acceptance, it was stronger when participants first reported on self-oriented emotion regulation ( $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than when they first reported on other-oriented emotion regulation ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p = .011$ ).

participants (18 participants, constituting 3.4% of participants) reported using other-oriented emotional support more than 2.5 *SDs* below the mean level.

### Transparency and Openness

The hypotheses for this study were preregistered after the data were collected but before any analyses were conducted to address our research questions ([https://aspredicted.org/6P5\\_CMH](https://aspredicted.org/6P5_CMH)). Hypotheses 1 and 2 were preregistered. The analyses for Models 1–3 were preregistered (for Hypothesis 1). Model 4 (for Hypothesis 1), and the analyses used to test Hypothesis 2 were not preregistered.<sup>6</sup> The data were previously analyzed to test other questions, specifically, whether parents differed from nonparents in the strategies they use to regulate their partner and whether this was mediated by relationship quality. None of these analyses overlap with the present study.

## Results

### Similarity in Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies

To test whether people used similar strategies in self- and partner-oriented emotion regulation, we ran four linear regressions separately for each partner-oriented strategy (Models 1–4; see the Results section in Study 1 for full formulas). As in Study 1, all hypothesized *p* values were adjusted according to the false discovery rate (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995).<sup>7</sup>

Our predictions were fully supported, as in all models tested, people who were more likely to use a strategy to regulate their own unpleasant emotions were also more likely to use that strategy to regulate their partner's unpleasant emotions (*ps* < .001, Table 3 and Figure 1; see Supplemental Table S3 for full models). This finding remained significant when controlling for the general tendency to regulate emotions or to feel stronger emotions, as well as gender (Models 2–4; *ps* ≤ .010, Table 3).

### Similarity in Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies and Relationship Quality

Do people who report better relationships with their partner use more similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and their partner's emotions? To answer this question, we ran a multilevel model, predicting each partner-oriented strategy from an interaction between the matching self-oriented strategy and perceived relationship quality with one's partner, including both variables as independent predictors. Strategies were nested within participants so that all strategies were predicted in one maximal model, including the maximum number of slopes the model allows while being able to converge. Each datapoint was one participant's average use of one strategy, and this model included six datapoints per participant, one datapoint for each strategy. The maximal model that was tested was as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{other ER}_{m,i} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \beta_2 \text{RQ}_i + \beta_3 \text{RQ}_i \\ & \times \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \mu_{0i} + \mu_{1i} \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \mu_2 \text{RQ}_i \\ & + \mu_3 \text{RQ}_i \times \text{self ER}_{m,i} + e_{0m,i}, \end{aligned} \quad (6)$$

where, *m*: measurement; *RQ*: relationship quality.

To control for regulators' motivation to regulate their partners' emotions, we repeated this analysis, including an interaction between the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategy and regulators' motivation to regulate their partners' emotions. The maximal model that was tested was as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{other ER}_{m,i} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \beta_2 \text{RQ}_i + \beta_3 \text{RQ}_i \\ & \times \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \beta_4 \text{other ER motivation}_i \\ & + \beta_5 \text{other ER motivation}_i \times \text{self ER}_{m,i} \\ & + \mu_{0i} + \mu_{1i} \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \mu_2 \text{RQ}_i \\ & + \mu_3 \text{RQ}_i \times \text{self ER}_{m,i} + \mu_4 \text{other ER motivation}_i \\ & + \mu_5 \text{other ER motivation}_i \times \text{self ER}_{m,i} + e_{0m,i}, \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

where, other ER motivation: regulators' motivation for other-oriented emotion regulation.

The results from these analyses supported our predictions. We found a significant interaction between self-oriented emotion regulation and relationship quality with one's partner in predicting partner-oriented emotion regulation (interaction  $\beta = .05$ ,  $p = .004$ , Figure 2; see Supplemental Table S4 for full models). Follow-up analyses revealed that in high-quality relationships (top 33% of relationship quality), the association between self- and partner-oriented emotion regulation strategies was stronger ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than in medium- and low-quality relationships (medium quality  $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ , low quality  $\beta = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results remained significant when controlling for the interaction between self-oriented emotion regulation strategies and regulators' motivation to regulate targets' emotions (interaction  $\beta = .05$ ,  $p = .011$ ).

## Discussion

In a preregistered study, we found that people used similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of their partner (supporting Hypothesis 1). This association was found in both low- and high-quality romantic relationships but was stronger in people who reported better relationships with their partners (supporting Hypothesis 2). These findings suggest that when choosing how to regulate the emotions of a target, people may assume they are similar to the target and thus use the same strategies to regulate the emotions of the target as those they typically use to regulate their own emotions. In romantic relationships, this process is more likely when regulators feel their relationship with the target is better.

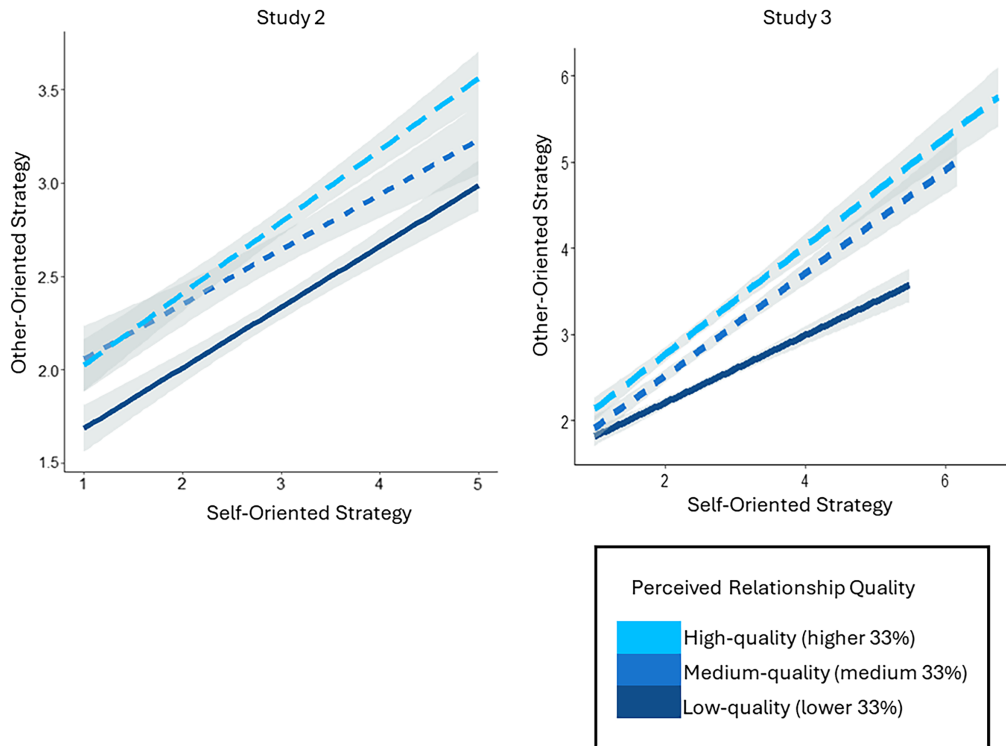
Nonetheless, Study 2 suffers from some limitations. Most importantly, these results—as well as the results from Study 1—were based

<sup>6</sup> Another analysis was preregistered to test Hypothesis 2. After the data were collected we identified several limitations of this analysis, rendering it less appropriate. We replaced it with the current analysis, which is more suitable to test our hypotheses. A full description of the preregistered analysis, its limitations, and results, is included in the Supplemental Materials.

<sup>7</sup> When predicting other-oriented emotion regulation strategies, *p* values for the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategies were corrected together in the following models: Model 1, Model 2, Model 3, Model 4, and the model testing interactions between self-oriented emotion regulation strategies with relationship quality (one *p* value per model for each of the six strategies, and one additional *p* value for relationship quality, totaling 25 *p* values).

**Figure 2**

*The Association Between Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies Is Higher When Regulators Perceive Their Relationship With the Target as Better*



*Note.* This figure displays the association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies for participants with low, medium, and high perceived relationship quality. Standard errors are presented in gray. In Study 2, all variables are measured once (at the trait level). In Study 3, self-oriented emotion regulation strategies are used at the trait level and relationship quality and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies are used at the state level. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

on survey responses that required participants to retrospectively recall which emotion regulation strategies they used in the previous week and the overall quality of their relationships. Such retrospective responses may be biased (Sato & Kawahara, 2011). Thus, these results might not reflect how most people regulate their own and others' emotions in everyday life. Moreover, in Studies 1 and 2, participants reported on the strategies they used during times of stress (pandemic and war). In such times, people tend to experience a higher level of anxiety, boredom and sadness (during the pandemic; Sun et al., 2024), or sadness, depression and anger (during war; Lahav et al., 2025). Thus, these results may not reflect how people regulate emotions during mundane times. To address these limitations, in Study 3, we tested the associations between strategies used in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation as emotion regulation occurred in real time in normal daily life.

### Study 3: Self- and Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation Strategies in Daily Life

In Study 3, we sought to replicate the findings of Studies 1 and 2, by assessing the use of emotion regulation strategies as it naturally occurs in daily life. Assessing emotion regulation in daily life allowed us to test our hypotheses in an ecologically valid setting, in

which responses were less likely to be biased by retrospective recall (Sato & Kawahara, 2011). Participants took part in an EMA study, where they reported on strategies they used to regulate their own emotions or the emotions of their romantic partner six times per day for a week. We measured momentary relationship quality, by asking participants how close they felt to their partner, a state-dependent index of relationship quality (Timmons et al., 2023). We predicted that participants would regulate the emotions of their romantic partners in daily life using similar strategies to those they typically use to regulate their own emotions (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, we expected this association to be moderated by how good the regulator perceived their relationship with their partner is in the moment of regulation (Hypothesis 2). We predicted that during instances when regulators report better relationships with their partner, they would be more likely to regulate their partner's emotions using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions.

To test Hypothesis 1—whether people would regulate the emotions of their romantic partners in daily life using the strategies they use to regulate their own emotions—we assessed regulators' trait-level use of each strategy. We used the trait level of emotion regulation strategies because we assumed that when trying to understand the target's experience, regulators think about the strategies they typically

use, rather than the strategies they used most recently (for theories consistent with this notion, see [Barrick et al., 2024](#); [Gordon, 1986](#); [Nichols, 2006](#)). We also ran an exploratory analysis to test whether trait and state self-oriented emotion regulation strategies were associated with partner-oriented strategies, using a combination of state and trait measures in the same model. To test Hypothesis 2—whether people are more likely to regulate their partner’s emotions using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions in instances when they report their relationship is better, we used a combination of state- and trait-level data. State-level (momentary) partner-oriented strategy use was predicted from trait-level self-oriented strategy use, so the analysis reflects whether regulators used strategies they tend to use for themselves (rather than whether they used these strategies more than they usually do since the last measurement). We used state-level (momentary) perceived relationship quality, so the analysis reflects whether the association between self- and other-oriented strategies is stronger in instances when regulators felt their relationship with their partner was better (rather than in regulators who generally perceive their relationship with their partners as better). Using a combination of state- and trait-level data allowed us to directly test whether in instances when regulators’ relationships with their partners are better, they were more likely to regulate their emotions using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions.

In Study 3, we also tested Hypotheses 1 and 2, controlling for strategies targets tend to use to regulate their own emotions. This analysis tested the possibility that the reason self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies are associated is that regulators regulate targets’ emotions using strategies targets tend to use to regulate their own emotions. This analysis also tested the possibility that the reason the association between self- and other-oriented strategies is stronger when regulators have better relationships with targets is that regulators and targets whose relationship is better may use more similar self-oriented emotion regulation strategies.

In Study 3, we also conducted an exploratory analysis to test whether using similar self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies was associated with how beneficial the regulation was. On the one hand, regulation might be more beneficial when this association is stronger, as regulators might be better at implementing strategies they tend to use for themselves. On the other hand, regulation may be less beneficial, as regulators may be less attentive to the targets’ unique needs. To examine this question, we estimated how beneficial emotion regulation was by assessing the extent to which unpleasant emotions decreased from the previous timepoint and by examining how responsive targets felt the regulator was to their needs. We then tested whether the extent to which regulators used similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of the target was associated with how beneficial regulation was for that target (at the trait level).

In Studies 1 and 2, measures that assessed self-oriented emotion regulation strategies were adapted to assess other-oriented emotion regulation strategies. This allowed us to directly pair and compare strategies used to regulate the self and others, but it may have introduced shared method variance that could have inflated the predicted association. In contrast, in Study 3, different measures were used to assess specific self- and other-oriented strategies. In our analysis, we examined only strategies that were measured for both self- and other-oriented emotion regulation, targeting five strategies in total. While the overall number of strategies compared was lower than the

number in Studies 1 and 2, this decreased the shared method variance. Our methods, hypotheses, and analyses were preregistered.

## Method

### Participants

A total of 142 participants (71 couples) took part in the study. Recruitment was conducted via social (i.e., Facebook, couple, and family blogs), popular German psychology magazines (e.g., “TK,” “Psychologie Heute”), via podcasts and radio interviews in regional radio stations promoting the study, via flyer distribution (e.g., at local markets, doctors’ offices, etc.), and by snowball sampling. The inclusion criteria were, understanding and speaking German fluently, being 18 years or older, owning a smartphone, being in a romantic relationship for at least 6 months and both partners agreeing to participate in the study. Three couples dropped out of the study. This resulted in a final sample of 136 participants (68 couples, 62 different-gendered couples; 52.9% female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 26.0$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 5.5$ ). On average, partners have been in a relationship for 3.3 years ( $SD = 2.4$ ), and 55.9% of the couples were living together. The sample size was determined based on a power analysis conducted to answer other questions, with small to medium effect sizes.

### Procedure

Participants could sign up for the study online by filling out a contact form. Those who did not fulfill the inclusion criteria were automatically screened out. Those who were eligible for the study could sign up for an intake Zoom call, in which the recruiter provided information and instructions about the study. Then, participants took an intake questionnaire, in which participants gave informed consent and answered several demographic questions and trait questionnaires. This survey took about 30–45 min. Couples were screened out if one or both partners did not fill out the questionnaire by midnight the day before the start of the experience sampling method period.

Then, over a period of 7 days, romantic partners were simultaneously beeped six times per day. Participants received a text message with the link to the questionnaire (programed in formR; [Arslan et al., 2020](#)). In each questionnaire, participants reported on their experienced emotions, self-oriented strategy use, and the perceived quality of their relationship with their partner. When participants had been in contact with their romantic partner since the last measurement, and they had the impression that their partner had experienced unpleasant emotions since the last beep, they also reported on other-oriented strategies they used to regulate their partner’s negative emotions (1,771 measurements; 31% of measurement). Moreover, when participants were in contact with their partner since the last measurement, they reported how responsive their partner was to their needs. Participants first reported on their self-oriented strategies and then on their other-oriented strategies.

Each beep was received simultaneously by both partners. The first six beeps included the same survey and were administered semi-randomly between 9:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. The seventh beep included a short evening questionnaire (administered at 9:30 p.m.), with several (other) questions about the entire day. We opted for a semirandom sampling design because the relative unpredictability of the beeps reduces the likelihood of participants adapting their behavior and enhances the representativeness of the data, thereby

ensuring high ecological validity (Dejonckheere & Erbas, 2022). Moreover, the differences in the intervals typically equal out due to the semirandom sampling scheme (Dejonckheere & Erbas, 2022). Compliance with the experience-sampling protocol ranged between 33.0% and 100% ( $M = 86.0\%$ ,  $SD = 12.0\%$ ).

At the end of the experience sampling method period, participants answered a final questionnaire, including several postmeasures (i.e., a few trait scales), and questions about their experience with the study. At the end of the study, participants were thanked and reimbursed on a pro-rata basis, up to 43 euros per person, contingent upon their completion of the experience-sampling protocol and other study components. Alternatively, participants could receive course credits. Participants received a 10€ bonus when they completed over 80% of the beeps. Furthermore, participants could receive individualized feedback on their personality, burnout, emotions, emotion regulation strategy use, sleep quality and mood, partner contact, and relational well-being. Other measures were collected to address different research questions (see Supplemental Materials). The study procedure was approved by the local ethics committee.

## Measures

**Emotion Regulation Strategies.** Self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies were measured using one item per strategy, adapted from Heij and Cheavens (2014), Pauw et al. (2019), and Swerdlow and Johnson (2022) to fit experience-sampling methods (Pauw et al., 2024). Participants reported how much they used each strategy since the last beep (“since the last beep, how did you respond to your partner’s [your own] negative emotions?”), or since they woke up, for the first beep of the day. They rated how much they used each strategy on a scale of 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Only strategies that were measured for both self- and other-oriented emotion regulation were used in this analysis. These included expressive suppression, distraction, cognitive reappraisal, avoidance, and sharing.

**Momentary Relationship Quality.** As an index of momentary perceived relationship quality, in each measurement, participants rated how close they felt to their partner (“How close do you feel to your partner right now?”) on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*; Pauw et al., 2024).

**Unpleasant Emotions.** In each measurement, participants reported on the extent to which they currently felt six unpleasant emotions from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*), including “sad,” “angry,” “worried,” “tired,” “depressed,” and “stressed” (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .77$ ).

**Perceived Partner Responsiveness.** In each measurement, participants rated one item measuring the extent to which they felt supported by their partner since the last beep (“Since the last beep, to what extent did you feel supported by your partner?”), from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

## Data Cleaning

Following our preregistration, outliers (2.5  $SD$ s over or under the mean) for self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies were removed. Outliers were only removed for analyses that used these variables. Specifically, in each analysis, between zero and five participants were removed because they reported using a strategy more than 2.5  $SD$ s above the mean level (between 0% and 3.7% of participants; see exact numbers in Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Descriptive Statistics (Study 3)*

Variable	Scale	$M$	$SD$	Outlier
Self-oriented expressive suppression	1–7	2.15	0.78	2
Self-oriented distraction	1–7	2.55	0.94	1
Self-oriented cognitive reappraisal	1–7	2.47	0.98	2
Self-oriented avoidance	1–7	1.89	0.7	1
Self-oriented sharing	1–7	2.66	1.03	4
Self-oriented total strategy use	1–7	2.34	0.63	0
Partner-oriented expressive suppression	1–7	2.86	1.22	2
Partner-oriented distraction	1–7	2.76	1.12	1
Partner-oriented cognitive reappraisal	1–7	2.92	1.12	2
Partner-oriented avoidance	1–7	1.6	0.7	5
Partner-oriented sharing	1–7	3.37	1.17	2
Partner-oriented total strategy use	1–7	2.7	0.79	0
Relationship quality	1–7	2.03	0.65	0
Unpleasant emotions	1–7	4.63	0.97	0

## Transparency and Openness

The methods for this study were preregistered before data collection ([https://osf.io/cjwgr/?view\\_only=8462dd68158649cc9bc478e2f3bf9822](https://osf.io/cjwgr/?view_only=8462dd68158649cc9bc478e2f3bf9822)), and the analyses and hypotheses were preregistered after data were collected, but before any analyses were conducted to answer these questions ([https://aspredicted.org/Q3Z\\_X3N](https://aspredicted.org/Q3Z_X3N)). Hypotheses 1 and 2, and the analyses used to test these hypotheses, were preregistered. The analyses used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 while controlling for targets’ self-oriented strategies, and the analyses used to test whether similarity in self- and other-strategy use was associated with emotion regulation benefits were suggested by reviewers and hence not preregistered. We thank the anonymous reviewers for these suggestions. The analyses used to test whether state and trait self-oriented strategies are associated with partner-oriented strategies were also not preregistered. The data were previously analyzed to test other questions. Specifically, prior work has examined the association between self-oriented emotion regulation strategies and responsiveness and the association between other-oriented emotion regulation strategies and partner’s well-being (Pauw et al., 2024).

## Results

### *Similarity in Trait-Level Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies in Daily Life*

To test whether people use similar strategies to regulate themselves and their partner, we ran a series of multilevel regressions predicting each other-oriented strategy from the matching self-oriented strategy. For a description of Models 1–4, see Results section in Study 1 for covariates included in each model. In Model 5, we included all covariates in Model 4 and controlled for the extent to which targets tended to use the matching strategy to regulate their own emotions. We used such multilevel models to account for the nested structure of the data, treating the couples as indistinguishable dyads. We used regulators’ trait-level self- and partner-oriented emotion regulation strategies in all models, which were calculated by averaging each participant’s use of that strategy across all measurements. Each datapoint was one participant’s average use of a strategy. Participants were nested within dyads. Each strategy was tested in a separate model. After trait-level emotion regulation

strategies were calculated, they were  $z$ -scored around the mean of the entire sample, as were all other variables used in the model. Maximal models were tested, including the maximum number of slopes the model allows while being able to converge (see [Supplemental Material](#) for random slopes included in each model). We adjusted all hypothesized  $p$  values according to the false discovery rate (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995), to account for multiple comparisons.<sup>8</sup> The formula for Model 5 was as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{other}_{i,d} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{reg self}_{i,d} + \beta_2 \text{reg total use of other}_{i,d} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{reg total use of self}_{i,d} + \beta_4 \text{reg gender}_{i,d} \\ & + \beta_5 \text{reg unpleasant emotions}_{i,d} + \beta_6 \text{tar self}_{i,d} \\ & + \mu_{0d} + \mu_{1d} \text{reg self}_{i,d} + \mu_{2d} \text{reg total use of other}_{i,d} \\ & + \mu_{3d} \text{reg total use of self}_{i,d} + \mu_{4d} \text{reg gender}_{i,d} \\ & + \mu_{5d} \text{reg unpleasant emotions}_{i,d} + \mu_{6d} \text{tar self}_{i,d} \\ & + e_{0i,d}, \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

where,  $d$ : dyad; reg: variable in the regulator (e.g., reg self is regulator's self-oriented strategies); tar: variable in the target (e.g., tar self is target's self-oriented strategies).

Our predictions were supported for distraction, reappraisal, avoidance, and sharing, but not for expressive suppression. For these strategies, in all models tested, we found that people who were more likely to use a strategy to regulate their own unpleasant emotions were also more likely to use that strategy to regulate their partner's unpleasant emotions ( $ps < .001$ , [Table 3](#) and [Figure 1](#); see [Supplemental Table S5](#) for full models). However, contrary to our expectation, one's use of self-oriented expressive suppression was unrelated to partner-oriented expressive suppression ( $.147 \leq p \leq .368$ ).<sup>9</sup>

### Similarity in Trait and State Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies in Daily Life

We ran additional exploratory models to test whether people regulate their partner's emotions using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions (trait self-oriented strategies), as well as strategies that are similar to strategies they recently used to regulate their own emotions (state self-oriented strategies). For each strategy, we ran four multilevel regressions, predicting each momentary other-oriented strategy from the matching trait-level self-oriented strategy and state-level self-oriented strategy simultaneously. Trait-level strategies were calculated by averaging each participant's use of that strategy across all measurements and  $z$ -scoring each strategy around the entire sample, and state-level strategies were calculated by mean-person centering and  $z$ -scoring each strategy use around the mean use of that participant. Thus, trait-level strategies reflect whether participants used a strategy more or less over the study period compared to other participants, and state-level strategies reflect whether, in a particular instance, participants used the strategy more or less than they usually do. Different covariates were included in each model (Models 1–5; see the Results section in Study 1 for covariates included in Model 1–4 and the Results section in Study 3 for covariates included in Model 5). Momentary other-oriented strategies were  $z$ -scored around the entire sample, so that presented betas would be standardized. To account for dependency within

measurements of the same momentary assessment in a dyad, and multiple assessments within a dyad, each measurement was nested within that dyad's observation and within the dyad. A compound symmetry covariance structure was used, with uncorrelated random slopes and intercepts within each dyad, using diagonalized random slopes for trait and state self-oriented strategies.

In all but one model, trait self-oriented distraction, reappraisal, avoidance, and sharing were associated with the matching partner-oriented strategy. For these strategies, we found that people who were more likely to use a strategy to regulate their own unpleasant emotions, were also more likely to use that strategy to regulate their partner's unpleasant emotions ( $ps < .040$ , [Table 6](#); see [Supplemental Table S6](#) for full models). These results indicate that the more regulators generally tend to use a strategy to regulate their own emotions, the more likely they are to use that strategy to regulate the emotions of their partner, regardless of whether regulators recently used this strategy to regulate their own emotions. The only exception was the association between trait self-oriented and partner-oriented sharing in Model 2, which was not significant ( $p = .058$ ). Contrary to our expectations, trait self-oriented expressive suppression was unrelated to partner-oriented expressive suppression in all models tested ( $.171 < p < .385$ ).

Some state self-oriented strategies were also associated with partner-oriented strategies. State self-oriented sharing and avoidance were significantly and positively associated with partner-oriented sharing and avoidance ( $p < .001$ ). Moreover, state self-oriented cognitive reappraisal was positively associated with partner-oriented cognitive reappraisal in Models 1, 3, 4, and 5 ( $p < .001$ ) but not Model 2 ( $p = .294$ ). Finally, state self-oriented distraction was positively associated with partner-oriented distraction in Model 1 ( $p = .002$ ), but not Models 2, 3, 4, and 5 ( $.080 < p < .148$ ). These results indicate that for these strategies, the more regulators recently used a strategy to regulate their own emotions, the more likely they were to use that strategy to regulate the emotions of their partner, regardless of whether they generally tend to use this strategy to regulate their own emotions. This is true for sharing and avoidance and to a lesser extent for cognitive reappraisal and distraction. For reappraisal and distraction, the associations between state-level self- and other-oriented emotion regulation are partly driven by the extent to which people generally regulated their partners' emotions. For distraction, this association was also driven by the extent to which people generally regulated their own emotions and experienced unpleasant emotions.

In sum, both state- and trait-level self-oriented strategies tend to be associated with partner-oriented strategies. Trait-level self-oriented strategies are positively associated with partner-oriented strategies in most cases ( $M_{\text{standardized } \beta} = 0.17$ ). For some strategies, state-level self-oriented strategies are also positively associated with partner-oriented strategies, although these associations tend to be

<sup>8</sup> When predicting other-oriented emotion regulation strategies,  $p$  values for the matching self-oriented emotion regulation strategies were corrected together in the preregistered models (models using trait-level emotion regulation strategies). These include, Model 1, Model 2, Model 3, Model 4, Model 5, and the models testing interactions between self-oriented emotion regulation strategies with relationship quality (one  $p$  value per model for each of the five strategies, and two additional  $p$  value for the interaction with relationship quality, totaling 27  $p$  values).

<sup>9</sup> For results on associations between self- and other-oriented strategies variability, see [Ginosar Yaari et al. \(2025\)](#).

**Table 6**

*Predicting Partner-Oriented Emotion Regulation Strategies From the Matching Self-Oriented Emotion Regulation Strategy in Daily Life (Study 3)*

Strategy	Model 1				Model 4			
	Trait		State		Trait		State	
	$\beta$	<i>SD</i>	$\beta$	<i>SD</i>	$\beta$	<i>SD</i>	$\beta$	<i>SD</i>
Expressive suppression	.06	0.07	.02	0.02	-.04	0.04	.03	0.02
Distraction	.32***	0.06	.07**	0.02	.12***	0.03	.03	0.02
Cognitive reappraisal	.28***	0.06	.13***	0.04	.17***	0.03	.09***	0.02
Avoidance	.21***	0.05	.09***	0.02	.19***	0.04	.11***	0.02
Sharing	.32***	0.08	.28***	0.02	.09***	0.04	.14***	0.02

*Note.*  $\beta$ s are standardized. Trait strategies are z-scored around the entire sample, and state are z-scored around each participant’s mean. Model 1: The use of each partner-oriented regulation strategy is predicted from the matching trait and state self-oriented emotion regulation strategy. Model 4: The use of each momentary partner-oriented emotion regulation strategy is predicted from the matching trait and state self-oriented emotion regulation strategy, while controlling for gender, each participant’s momentary total use of partner-oriented emotion regulation strategies, total use of momentary self-oriented emotion regulation strategies, and momentary level of unpleasant emotions (z-scored around the entire sample). \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

smaller than the associations observed for trait-level self-oriented strategies ( $M_{\text{standardized } \beta} = 0.10$ ).

**Similarity in Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies and Relationship Quality in Daily Life**

Are people more likely to regulate their partner’s emotions using strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions, particularly when they experience their relationship to be better? To answer this question, we ran a multilevel model, predicting the use of each partner-oriented strategy from an interaction between the matching self-oriented strategy and regulators’ perceived relationship quality, including both variables as independent predictors. Momentary partner-oriented strategy use was predicted from regulators’ trait-level self-oriented strategy use and momentary relationship quality. All strategies were predicted in one model, and measurements were nested within dyadic observations. Each datapoint was one participant’s momentary partner-oriented strategy use, and this model included five datapoints per participant per measurement, one datapoint for each strategy, so that each datapoint was a measurement of a partner-oriented emotion regulation strategy use. Relationship quality, self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies were z-scored around the mean of the entire sample.<sup>10</sup> To account for dependency within measurements of the same momentary assessment in a dyad, and multiple assessments within a dyad, each measurement was nested within that dyad’s observation and within the dyad. A compound symmetry covariance structure was used, with uncorrelated random slopes and intercepts within each dyad, using diagonalized random slopes for all variables.

The maximal model that was tested was as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{reg other ER}_{m,i} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{reg self ER}_i + \beta_2 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \times \text{reg self ER}_i + \mu_{0i} \\ & + \mu_{1i} \text{reg self ER}_i + \mu_2 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \\ & + \mu_3 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \times \text{reg self ER}_i + e_{0m,i}. \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

To control for the similarity between regulators’ and targets’ self-oriented emotion regulation strategies, we repeated this analysis,

controlling for strategies targets used to regulate their own emotions. We predicted the use of each partner-oriented strategy from an interaction between the matching self-oriented strategy and regulators’ relationship quality, and an interaction between the targets’ use of the matching self-oriented strategy and regulators’ relationship quality, including these variables as independent predictors. We included targets’ trait-level self-oriented strategies as predictors. The maximal model tested was,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{reg other ER}_{m,i} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{reg self ER}_i + \beta_2 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \times \text{reg self ER}_i + \beta_4 \text{tar self ER}_i \\ & + \beta_5 \text{RQ}_{m,i} + \beta_6 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \times \text{tar self ER}_i \\ & + \mu_{0i} + \mu_{1i} \text{reg self ER}_i + \mu_2 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \\ & + \mu_3 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \times \text{reg self ER}_i \\ & + \mu_{4i} \text{tar self ER}_i + \mu_5 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \\ & + \mu_6 \text{RQ}_{m,i} \times \text{tar self ER}_i + e_{0m,i}. \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

We found that when the better regulators’ relationship with their partner is, the more they regulated them using strategies they tended to use for themselves (interaction  $\beta = .05, p = .002$ , Figure 2; see Supplemental Table S7 for full model). Specifically, at times when people felt their relationship with their partner was moderately or very good, the association between average use of self- and partner-oriented strategies was stronger ( $\beta$  high quality = .35,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta$  medium quality = .35,  $p < .001$ ) than it was at times when they felt the quality of their relationship was lower ( $\beta$  low quality = .24,  $p < .001$ ). This was also true when controlling for an interaction between targets’ self-oriented strategies and relationship quality (interaction  $\beta = .03, p = .029$ ).

<sup>10</sup> To test whether an interaction between relationship quality and self-oriented strategy use remained significant for person mean-centered relationship quality, we conducted a similar analysis, using person mean-centered (z-scored) relationship quality, instead of relationship quality, which was centered around the mean of the entire sample. The results of the model did not change.

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### Similarity in Self- and Other-Oriented Strategies and Emotion Regulation Benefits

Is other-oriented emotion regulation more beneficial for targets, when regulators use other-oriented strategies they tend to use to regulate their own emotions? To address this question, we ran a maximal multilevel model, predicting how beneficial emotion regulation was for each target (trait level), from how much their partner used similar strategies in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation (trait level), nesting participants within dyads.

To compute how much each participant used similar strategies in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation, we calculated each participant's correlation between the strategies they tended to use to regulate themselves and their partner. Each participant's trait-level strategy was used as one datapoint for calculating a correlation (five datapoints per correlation). Correlations were then transformed using Fisher's  $Z$ , so that they could be used as measurements. We used two measurements of how beneficial other-oriented emotion regulation was for the target—namely, how effective regulation was and how responsive targets felt their partners were. To calculate how effective regulation was, we subtracted each target's unpleasant emotions in each timepoint, from their unpleasant emotions in the previous timepoint. We assumed that the greater the decrease in unpleasant emotions, the more effective regulation was. Targets reported how responsive they felt their partner was in each measurement. To focus on benefits of other-oriented emotion regulation, we only used assessments in which regulators reported they responded to their partners' unpleasant emotions. We then used these assessments to calculate the average effectiveness and average responsiveness for each target (trait level). Each index was tested in a different model. All variables were then  $z$ -scored around the mean of the entire sample.

The model that was tested was as follows:

$$\text{benefit}_{i,d} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{cor}_{i,d} + \mu_{0d} + \mu_{1d} \text{cor}_{i,d} + e_{0i,d}, \quad (11)$$

where,  $d$ : dyad; benefit: targets' ER benefit (effectiveness or responsiveness); cor: correlation between regulators' self- and other-oriented strategies.

We found that the use of similar self- and other-oriented strategies by regulators was unrelated to how beneficial emotion regulation was for targets. Similarity between self- and other-oriented strategies was unrelated to how effective regulation was ( $\beta = -.01, p = .925$ ) and to how responsive targets felt regulators were ( $\beta = .02, p = .792$ ; see Supplemental Table S8 for full model).

### Discussion

In a preregistered study, using data from daily life, we found that people used similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of their partner. We found this is true even when controlling for strategies targets used to regulate their own emotions. Furthermore, we found that people were more likely to regulate their partner's emotions using strategies they tended to use to regulate their own emotions, at times when regulators felt their relationship with their partner was better. This association was also detected in instances when regulators perceived their relationship with their partner as worse. Moreover, for some strategies, in instances when regulators used a strategy more frequently than usual to regulate

their own emotions, they were also more likely to use that same strategy to regulate their partner's emotions. When people regulate their partner's emotions, they try to regulate their emotions using strategies they most commonly use. The extent to which regulators used similar self- and other-oriented strategies was unrelated to how beneficial emotion regulation tended to be for the target. In romantic relationships, regulators were more likely to use similar self- and other-oriented strategies when they perceived their relationship as better.

### General Discussion

Do we help others cope with their emotions using similar strategies as we use to cope with our own emotions? Unpacking this question holds the key to understanding what underlies emotion regulation strategy choice in other-oriented emotion regulation. In three studies, we found that people use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others (supporting Hypothesis 1). Moreover, we found that the better people report their relationship is, the more similar the strategies they use to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of the target (supporting Hypothesis 2). One possible explanation for these findings is that when regulating the emotions of a target, regulators might imagine themselves as the target (Ball et al., 2013)—a process that is more likely, the better regulators' relationship is with the target (Montoya et al., 2008)—and so choose strategies they would use to regulate their own emotions. When trying to understand the experience of another, regulators can rely primarily on information from the target or they can infer what might be true for the target from what is true for themselves (Barrick et al., 2024; Kenny & Acitelli, 2001). When regulating the emotions of others, regulators use strategies they commonly used to regulate their own emotions. Moreover, for some strategies, they also use strategies they most recently used to regulate their own emotions. Our results suggest other-oriented emotion regulation is more strongly and consistently linked to the self-oriented strategies regulators tend to use, than to whether they recently used a strategy more than they usually do.

Our studies allowed us to test the generalizability of the association between self-oriented and other-oriented emotion regulation strategy use. We found support for this predicted association in diverse cultural contexts which was not moderated by country-level individualism–collectivism (Study 1). We found support in favor of our hypotheses in studies in which regulators regulated a non-identified other (Study 1) or a specific target whom regulators knew well and regulated in everyday life (Studies 2 and 3). We found support in favor of our hypotheses using cross-sectional surveys (Studies 1 and 2) and using EMAs that tracked regulation in daily life (Study 3). Our hypotheses were supported during times of stress (Studies 1 and 2) and during normal everyday life (Study 3). Moreover, our hypotheses were supported even when accounting for strategies targets tended to use to regulate their own emotions (Study 3). As a final strength, we used exploratory (Study 1) and confirmatory (Studies 2 and 3) studies. Taken together, these design characteristics allowed us to establish the replicability and generalizability of our effects.

### Implications for Understanding Self-Oriented and Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation

Most of the research on emotion regulation to date has focused on self-oriented emotion regulation (Petrova & Gross, 2023). Although

other-oriented emotion regulation is important for personal and social well-being (Morelli et al., 2015; Tran, Greenaway, Kostopoulos, et al., 2024), little research so far has examined what underlies the selection of other-oriented emotion regulation strategies (for exceptions, see Matthews et al., 2022; Pauw et al., 2019). Our research suggests a deceptively simple answer to this puzzle: The strategies we use to regulate others tend to be the same strategies we typically use to regulate ourselves. This association implies that the factors that determine the selection of strategies to regulate one's own emotions may also shape the selection of strategies to regulate the emotions of others. For example, when regulating their own emotions, older individuals are more likely to use distraction and less likely to use reappraisal (Scheibe et al., 2015). Our findings suggest that such individuals may also be more likely to use distraction and less likely to use reappraisal when regulating the emotions of other targets, even if the targets of regulation are younger. Armed with this knowledge, researchers can make inferences about other-oriented emotion regulation using the vast knowledge base gathered from decades of research on self-oriented emotion regulation. We found evidence that people choose more similar strategies to regulate another's emotions and to regulate their own emotions particularly when they perceived their relationships as better. Our results show that strategy choice is guided in part by the nature of the relationship in question. Prior work showed that the better the quality of the relationship between two people, the more similar they perceive themselves to be (Lutz-Zois et al., 2006; Montoya et al., 2008). We propose this perceived similarity underpins decisions on how to regulate: To the degree that people assume the other is similar to themselves, the more likely they are to regulate that other with similar strategies as they use for the self.

### Using Specific Strategies Similarly in Self- and Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation

In this investigation, we show that regulators tend to use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others. However, is this equally true for all emotion regulation strategies? In three studies, we examined different strategies, including strategies which are considered to be generally beneficial in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation (situation selection, distraction, cognitive reappraisal, acceptance, emotional support, sharing) and strategies which are considered to be relatively less beneficial (expressive suppression and rumination). By comparing the effect sizes found for each strategy, we could examine whether people are particularly likely (or unlikely) to use similar self- and other-oriented strategies in the context of specific strategies.

Our findings suggest that the association between self- and other-oriented strategies is consistently weaker in strategies which are considered less beneficial (expressive suppression and rumination; see Table 3). Most notably, in Study 3, self-oriented expressive suppression was unrelated to other-oriented expressive suppression. Why might this be? We expected regulators to consider which strategy would be most helpful to them if they were in the target's position, and use that strategy to regulate the target's emotions. If regulators assume a strategy is less helpful in regulating their own emotions, they may be less likely to use that strategy to regulate the targets' emotions, even if they tend to use that strategy to regulate their own emotions. For example, a regulator may use expressive suppression to regulate their own emotions even though they know it is relatively ineffective. When trying to regulate another person's

emotions, they may choose strategies other than expressive suppression, even though they tend to use this strategy to regulate their own emotions. Given that people generally know that expressive suppression and rumination are less effective in decreasing their own unpleasant emotions (Livingstone et al., 2020), this could explain why the association between self- and other-oriented strategies is weaker for these strategies.

For most strategies, the association between self- and other-oriented emotion regulation was stronger in Model 1, which did not include control variables, than in Model 4. In Model 4, we predicted the use of each other-oriented strategy from the matching self-oriented strategy, controlling for the overall extent to which one engaged in self- and other-oriented emotion regulation, their gender, and the unpleasant emotions they experienced. It is possible that some of the associations between self- and other-oriented strategies were informed by the extent to which people generally engaged in emotion regulation and experienced unpleasant emotions. The fact that effect sizes are smaller in Model 4 than in Model 1 highlights the importance of testing these associations, while controlling for these variables. Importantly, although associations were stronger in Model 1 than in Model 4, all associations which were significant in Model 1 remained significant in Model 4. Thus, control variables did not account for these associations.

### Implications for Benefits of Other-Oriented Emotion Regulation

Our findings show that people tend to use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others but is this tendency beneficial or detrimental? Using similar strategies to regulate one's own and another's emotions may carry positive or negative emotional implications and cause the regulation to be more or less successful. In Study 3, we provided preliminary evidence related to this question and found that using similar strategies to regulate one's own emotions and the emotions of others was unrelated to emotion regulation benefits.

There are reasons to expect similarity between self-oriented and other-oriented emotion regulation to be either detrimental or beneficial for other-oriented emotion regulation. On the one hand, using similar strategies to regulate one's own and a target's emotions could be detrimental if it makes the target feel the regulator does not understand them or is not sensitive to their specific needs. On the other hand, using similar strategies to regulate one's own and another's emotions could be beneficial if the regulator is better and more effective at implementing strategies they tend to use when regulating their own emotions. Using similar self- and other-oriented strategies is also likely to have relational outcomes. The more successful other-oriented emotion regulation is, the closer targets and regulators are likely to feel to one another and the better their relationship (Boker Segal et al., 2024). Thus, if using similar self- and other-oriented emotion regulation strategies influences emotion regulation success, it may also influence the relationship between the target and the regulator.

In Study 3, we did not find that using similar self- and other-oriented strategies was related to how beneficial other-oriented emotion regulation was. However, targets' unpleasant emotions and perceived responsiveness of the regulator were not directly measured before and after other-oriented emotion regulation. Future studies could test this question by measuring emotion regulation

success and perceived partner responsiveness directly following instances of other-oriented emotion regulation.

### Implications for Understanding Interpersonal Emotion Regulation and Psychological Health

Our findings may carry applied implications. Some people tend to use strategies that, on average, are less adaptive than others. For example, people who suffer from depression or anxiety tend to engage in more rumination and expressive suppression and in less acceptance and reappraisal to regulate their own emotions (Schäfer et al., 2017). Our findings suggest that if some people tend to use such strategies to regulate their own emotions, they might also be more likely to use such strategies to regulate the emotions of others. Such an individual, therefore, may be less effective in regulating the emotions of others. Indeed, people who suffer from mental disorders often struggle with providing emotional support (e.g., Coyne et al., 2007). Such patterns could contribute to poorer social relationships of people suffering from depression (Leach et al., 2013), as the ability to successfully help others deal with unpleasant emotions is important for relationship quality (Floean & Păsărelu, 2019).

These implications may be particularly important for targets who rely on regulators to help them deal with their emotions, such as children of parents who suffer from mental health disorders. Such parents often find it difficult to regulate their children's emotions (Goodman et al., 2020). For example, mothers who suffer from postpartum depression often struggle to soothe their child (Radesky et al., 2013). In part because of this, their children are more likely to present internalizing and externalizing problems (Goodman et al., 2020) or even suffer from depression themselves (Loechner et al., 2020). Our findings suggest that parents who suffer from depression or anxiety and use more rumination and expressive suppression to regulate their own emotions may also be more likely to use these strategies to regulate their children's emotions. These insights could inform future interventions. For example, interventions could examine the similarity in strategies people use to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others and try to help people differentiate these choices. Because helping people who suffer from mental health disorders improve their self-oriented emotion regulation ability may be challenging (Burckhardt et al., 2016), it may be important to help them select different strategies when regulating the emotions of others.

### Limitations and Future Directions

Though our studies have multiple strengths, they also suffer from some limitations. First, our findings are correlational, and so they do not allow us to infer whether a better relationship with the target leads to greater correspondence between self-oriented and other-oriented regulation strategies, or whether using similar strategies for self- and other-oriented emotion regulation can lead people to perceive their relationship with the target as better—or both. Future research could test these possibilities using experimental designs.

Second, we tested whether people use similar strategies to regulate their own and others' emotions, but we did not directly test a mechanism that explains why people do so. We propose the reason people do so is that they simulate themselves as targets and then use strategies that believe would be helpful in regulating their own emotions. Findings that people are more likely to regulate their own and others' emotions using similar strategies when they have better

relationships (i.e., supporting Hypothesis 2) provide preliminary indirect evidence that is consistent with this potential mechanism. Future studies could test this mechanism directly by manipulating the extent to which regulators simulate themselves as targets when trying to influence their emotions.

Third, our findings show that when people feel their relationship is of higher quality, they use more similar strategies to regulate their own and others' emotions. However, we were only able to test this hypothesis in studies that targeted close relationships, such as romantic relationships. Future studies could test whether relationship quality plays a similar role in other types of relationships (e.g., among friends or strangers).

Finally, we assessed whether people use similar strategies to decrease their own and others' unpleasant emotions, but people can also use emotion regulation to increase pleasant and unpleasant emotions and to decrease pleasant emotions (e.g., Springstein et al., 2023). Future research should also test whether people use similar strategies in these forms of emotion regulation to regulate their own and others' emotions.

### Conclusions

Our findings show that people use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the emotions of others. Furthermore, people who perceived their relationship with the target as better were more likely to use similar strategies to regulate their own emotions and the target's emotions. We found this effect in different cultural contexts and in daily life, during stressful and normal times, assessing a range of strategies that are considered adaptive and maladaptive. Our findings are consistent with the possibility that when regulating the emotions of others, people may put themselves in others' shoes and do unto others what they do to regulate their own emotions.

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