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ABSTRACT

Emotion regulation is often conceptualized as the mechanisms or processes that modify emotional arousal or reactivity. Caregiver behavior is hypothesized to have a major influence on the development of emotion regulation in young children. Research to date has correlated certain hypothesized regulatory strategies of the child and the caregiver with children's overall distress in emotionally arousing contexts, but very few studies have examined whether these strategies reliably precede changes in children's distress, indicating that they are in fact regulatory. The current study observed thirty-two mother-toddler dyads in a task designed to elicit frustration in the child in order to examine the temporal relations between specific maternal behaviors and changes in children's reactivity and regulatory behaviors. Mother strategies, child strategies, and child affect were coded in 5-second intervals and examined using sequential analyses. Temporal patterns of strategies and changes in affect were analyzed in order to identify the sequence of these events during an emotionally arousing task.

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