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Research Result Summaries

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### Understanding and Responding to Difficult Experiences throughout Life

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**Title of Study:** Understanding and Responding to Difficult Experiences throughout Life

**Summary of Research Findings:** Uncovering the underlying mechanisms involved in reactive aggression is essential to better understanding and managing this damaging behaviour. Extant research has provided evidence supporting the relation between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; e.g., incarcerated household member, low socioeconomic status, abuse) and reactive aggression in adulthood. Yet, critical questions about how emotional processes might interact with cognitive biases in the relation between early adversity and later reactive aggression remain largely unanswered. The rationale of this present study was to address this identified gap in clinical and forensic literature. Participants ( $N = 236$ ) were recruited from an undergraduate participant pool and an international crowdsourcing platform to complete an online survey. Conditional process analysis was conducted to test a moderated mediation model, which hypothesized that the relation between ACEs and reactive aggression would be mediated by hostile attribution bias (HAB) and that emotional understanding (EU) and emotion regulation (ER) would moderate this indirect effect. The hypothesized model was partially supported in females. For women, higher levels of ACEs predicted higher levels of reactive aggression in adulthood, and this relation was mediated by HAB. Additionally, low and average levels of EU ability interacted with ACEs and strengthened the observed effect on HAB scores. Contrary to predictions, ER ability was not a significant moderator.