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## Adolescent Expressive Reluctance Exacerbates Risk for Substance Use Following Daily Hassles

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Dick, D. M., Aliev, F., Latendresse, S. J., Hickman, M., Heron, J., Macleod, J., Joinson, C., Maughan, B., Lewis, G., & Kendler, K. S. (2013) Adolescent alcohol use is predicted by childhood temperament factors before age 5, with mediation through personality and peers. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res.*, 37(12), 1-20. Kliewer, W., Lepore, S. J., Farrell, A. D., Allison, K., Meyer, A. L., Sullivan, T. N., & Greene, A. Y. (2011) A school-based expressive writing intervention for at-risk urban adolescents' aggressive behavior and emotional lability. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 40(5), 693-705. Low, N. CP, Dugas, E., O'Loughlin, E., Rodriguez, D., Contreras, G., Chaiton, M., & O'Loughlin, J. (2012) Common stressful life events and difficulties are associated with mental health symptoms and substance use in young adolescents. *BioMed Central Psychiatry*, 12, 116. Mize, J. L. & Kliewer, W. (2017) Domain-specific daily hassles, anxiety, and delinquent behaviors among low-income, urban youth. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 53, 31-39. Wen, M. (2017) Social capital and adolescent substance use: the role of family, school, and neighborhood contexts. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 27(2), 362-378.





# Adolescent Expressive Reluctance Exacerbates Risk for Substance Use Following Daily Hassles

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## Background

- Research suggests that daily hassles are associated with adolescent adjustment (e.g., Klierer & Mize, 2017).
- The inability to express emotions (i.e., internalizing of feelings) can lead to substance use as a coping mechanism for adolescents (e.g., Dick et al., 2013).
- Adolescents who experience frequent hassles and do not know how to properly cope may engage in substance use behaviors as a coping mechanism (e.g., Low et al., 2012).
- It is likely that the inability to express emotions, which is vital to health coping, exacerbates the effects of daily hassles on substance use behaviors.

## Study Question

- Does an adolescent's expressive reluctance exacerbate the association between daily hassles and substance use behaviors?

## Methods

- **Participants:** Cross-sectional data were obtained from a larger study (Project COPE) that examined the effects of exposure to community violence among low-income, urban adolescents from Richmond, VA ( $N = 260$ ,  $M_{age} = 14.14$ ,  $SD = 1.62$  years; 92% African American; 54% female).
- **Measures:**
  - *Expressive Reluctance* (Emotion Expression Scale for Children; EESC; Penza-Clyva, & Zeman, 2002). Cronbach's Alpha = .77.
  - *Past 30-Day Drug Use* (i.e., tobacco, alcohol, marijuana; Problem Behavior Frequency Scales; PBFS; Farrell, Kung, White, & Valois, 2000). Cronbach's Alpha = .88.
  - *Daily Hassles* (Daily Hassles Questionnaire; Seidman et al., 1995). Cronbach's Alpha = .91.
- **Covariates:** adolescent age, biological sex, and previous levels of drug use and daily hassles (one year prior).

## Results

- No main effects were detected among any of the core study variables.
- An interaction was detected between total daily hassles and expressive reluctance (see Figure 1).
- Further examination of domain-specific hassles revealed that expressive reluctance moderated the effects of academic, parental, and general neighborhood hassles on drug use, while no significant effects were detected for hassles related to friends or neighborhood danger.

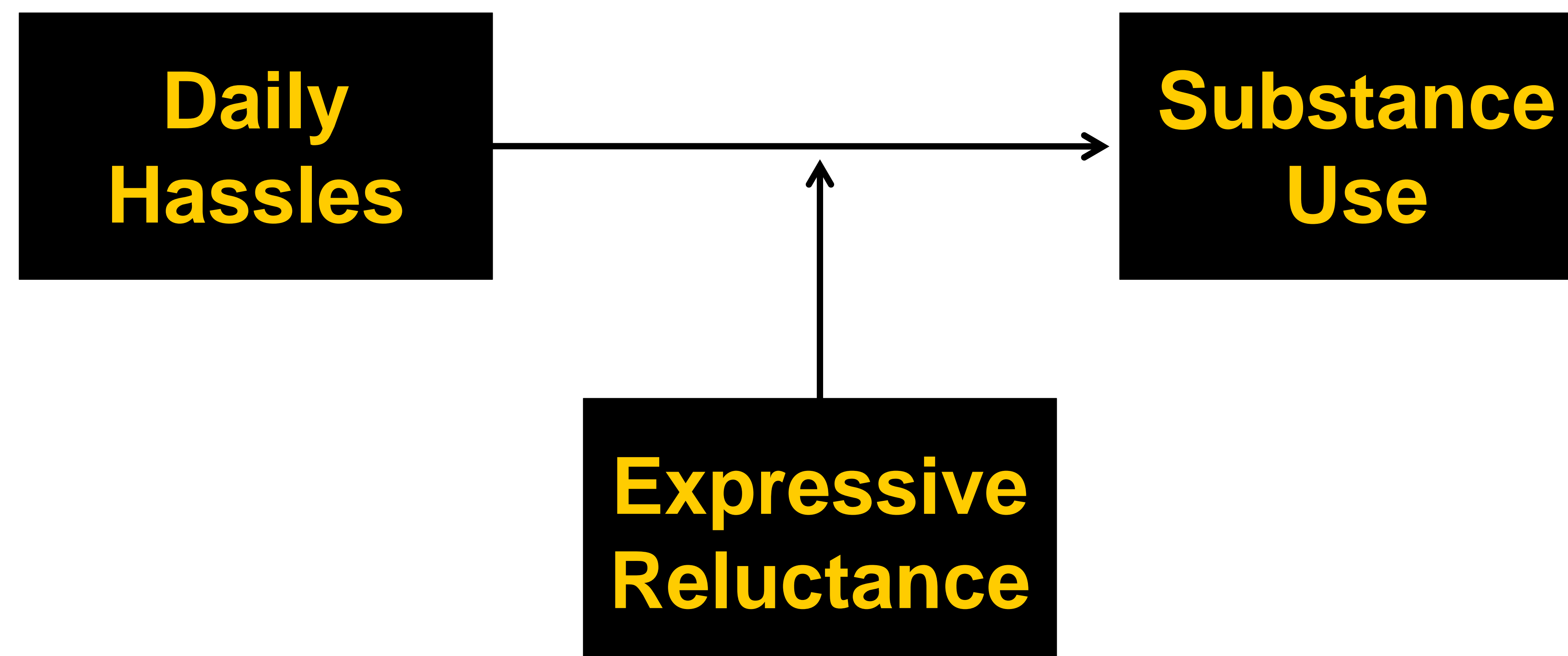
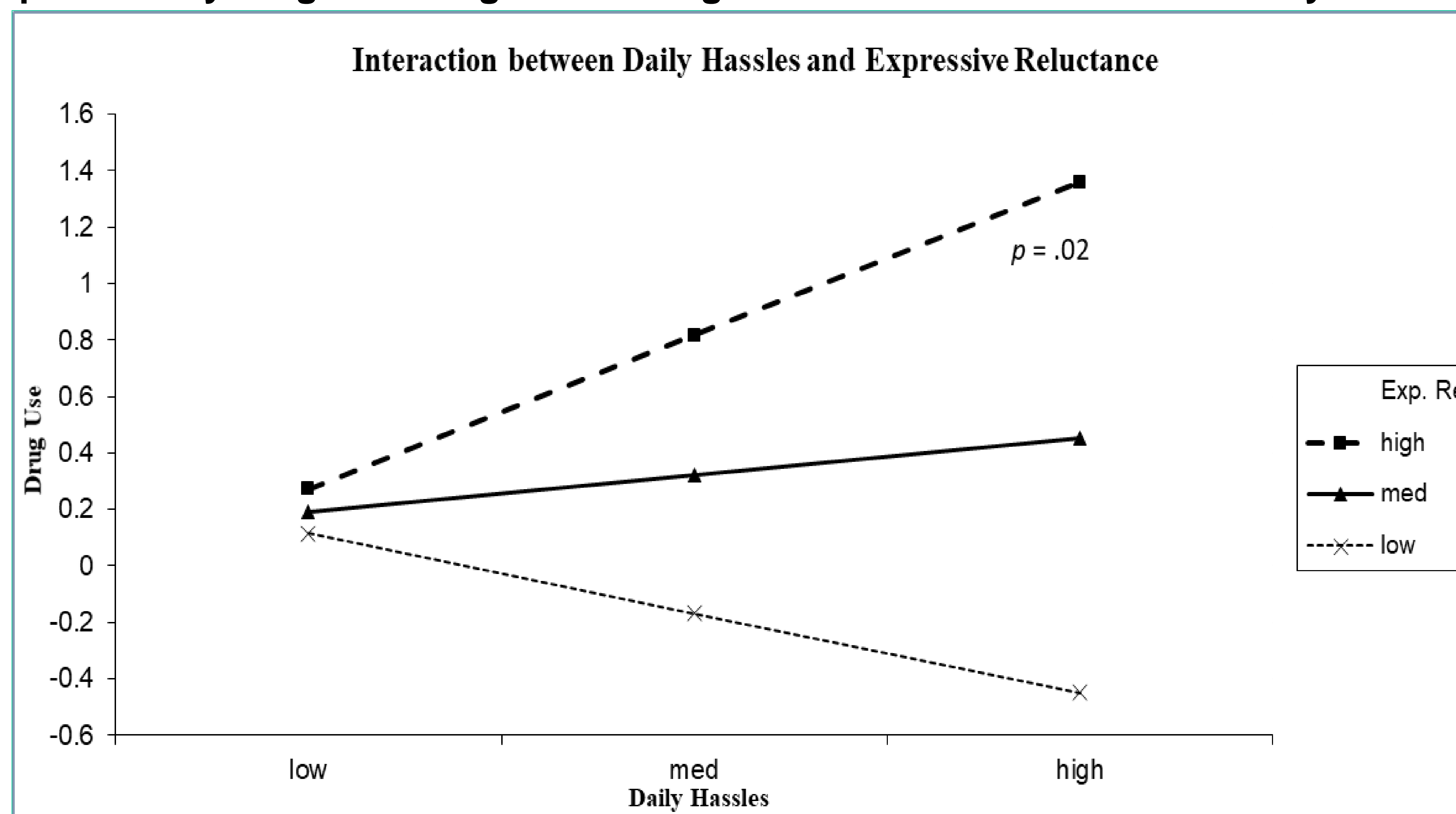


Figure 1. Interaction between daily hassles and expressive reluctance predicting past 30-day drug use. Drug use was log-transformed for the current analysis.



## Discussion

- The present findings clarify which perceived daily hassles adversely affect adolescents, and how emotional expression can play an integral role in determining risk for poor coping behaviors.
- Additional research needs to be conducted on the longitudinal effects of expressive reluctance on perceived daily hassles and substance use.
- An interesting subsequent investigation would explore the underlying mechanisms linking hassles to substance use (i.e., mediation).
- Interventions that focus on active emotion coping strategies like expressive writing may be useful in curbing problematic substance use in adolescence. (e.g., Klierer et al., 2011)



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