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## Self-affirmation lets people correct errors

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Self-affirmation enables people to become more receptive to the errors they make, new research has suggested. Published in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, the [study](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/self-affirmation-enhances-performance-makes-us-receptive-to-our-mistakes.html) (<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/news/releases/self-affirmation-enhances-performance-makes-us-receptive-to-our-mistakes.html>) found that by focusing on qualities that make a person who they are, individuals are more open to unfavourable feedback.

The authors noted self-affirmation has the power to minimise stress, anxiety and defensiveness associated with threats to an individual's sense of self, while also leaving people receptive to the idea that improvements can be made.

Lisa Legault of Clarkson University said before the investigation: "Although we know that self-affirmation reduces threat and improves performance, we know very little about why this happens."

Ms Legault later explained self-affirmed individuals are better able to correct their mistakes because they are more receptive to errors, adding the findings suggest error-related distress and greater awareness of it can turn out to be positive in the end.

Professor Gerard Hodgkinson, Professor of Strategic Management and Behavioural Science at Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, and a [Fellow \(node/682\)](#) of the British Psychological Society comments:

"This article provides further welcome evidence pertaining to the neural substrates of self-regulatory processes underpinning adaptive performance. The fact that participants who affirmed their senses of self, simply by endorsing a series of values prior to performing a basic go/no go laboratory task, outperformed their control group counterparts, with clear evidence of differentiated response in the anterior cingulate cortex detected through error-related negativity (ERN) amplitude, adds to a growing body of evidence that self-enhancement increases receptivity to negative feedback and illuminates the neuropsychological mechanisms at play.

"It nicely complements applied work in organisational psychology and related fields indicating that such regulatory processes are central to overcoming well-documented dysfunctional decision processes such as strategic persistence and escalation of commitment to failing courses of action. It thus paves the way for further exciting developments that bridge fundamental and applied psychology."