



| LOG ID    | BOOK REFERENCE                                            | RCT FILTER | CONFIDENCE TIER |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| SEC 8.2.4 | CHAPTER 8: COGNITIVE DOWNCLOCK<br>(10 Bits vs. 1 Billion) | ON         | CONSENSUS       |

AUDITED CLAIM

# LIMITS OF THE BOARDROOM (GRACEFUL YIELDING)

SYSTEMS MODEL — AS STATED IN THE BOOK

Clinically, forcibly suppressing the physical expression of intense emotion actively increases **sympathetic arousal** and autonomic stress; allowing the physiological response to run its course through **acceptance** avoids this autonomic cost and prevents further escalation.

VALIDATION QUERY

Does suppressing the physical expression of emotion increase sympathetic arousal and physiological stress compared to acceptance and non-suppression?

EMPIRICAL FINDING

Experimental emotion-regulation studies establish that forcing the suppression of intense emotional behaviors carries a measurable autonomic cost, escalating heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol responses. Conversely, dropping behavioral inhibition through mindful acceptance and non-suppression reliably avoids this extra sympathetic payload.

PRIMARY ANCHORS

- Gross, 1998, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
- Hofmann et al., 2009, Behaviour Research and Therapy

ABOUT THIS RECORD

Each claim in the book is decompiled from its IT metaphor into a naked, falsifiable scientific claim, then anchored to a **primary peer-reviewed source**. Claim and anchor are queried against the Consensus academic database (200M+ papers) under a fixed protocol — top-tier **Q1/Q2 journals only**, preprints excluded, human studies only. If a hypothesis fails the audit, the build is rejected: the AI generates the syntax; the peer-reviewed grid validates the physics.

CONFIDENCE TIERS

- ☒ **CONSENSUS** ◀ **this log** — broadly established, highly replicated mechanics.
- ☐ **EMERGING** — plausible, actively researched; no universal consensus yet.
- ☐ **EXPERIMENTAL** — contested, extrapolated, or purely theoretical.

**RCT FILTER** — Controlled Studies is ON for interventions (a forced action must beat a control) and OFF for mechanisms (so foundational neuroscience isn't blocked).

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## Yes, suppressing emotional expression usually raises physiological stress, while acceptance is generally lower-arousal.

Suppressing the physical expression of emotion usually increases sympathetic arousal and physiological stress relative to acceptance and often relative to non-suppression, but the effect is not universal. The strongest evidence comes from randomized lab studies showing higher heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol, cardiovascular threat, or sympathetic activation during suppression, while acceptance often reduces distress or supports better recovery (■ Gross, 1998; ■ Hofmann et al., 2009; ■ Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; ■ Peters & Jamieson, 2016). The main exceptions are culturally specific or task-specific studies, plus a few clinical samples, where suppression shows null effects or even lower arousal (■ Yuan et al., 2014; ■ Pankratova et al., 2019; Liverant et al., 2021).

**Does suppressing the physical expression of emotion increase sympathetic arousal and physiological stress compared to acceptance and non-suppression?**

N = 25

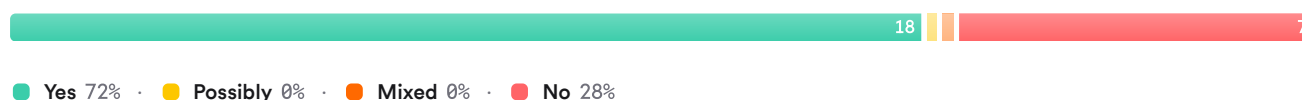


FIGURE 1 Research consensus on suppression and physiological stress

Most controlled evidence points in the same direction: suppression reduces visible expression but tends to increase physiological cost. The disagreement is real, but it clusters around boundary conditions such as culture, specific emotions, clinical status, and whether the comparison condition is acceptance, reappraisal, or passive viewing (■ Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Nagulendran et al., 2020; ■ Yuan et al., 2014).

### 1. Introduction

Expressive suppression is a response-focused emotion regulation strategy that aims to hide outward emotional behavior after emotion has already been triggered (■ Gross, 1998). Across this corpus, the central question is whether that behavioral control carries a physiological cost, especially in sympathetic and stress-system measures such as heart rate, blood pressure, skin conductance, vascular resistance, and cortisol (■ Gross, 1998; ■ Rimes et al., 2016; De Witte et al., 2020).

Foundational experiments support that cost. In Gross's classic disgust-film study, suppression increased sympathetic activation versus natural viewing (■ Gross, 1998). In clinical and social-stress paradigms, suppression produced larger heart-rate increases than acceptance or reappraisal, whereas acceptance often improved recovery or lowered anxiety (■ Hofmann et al., 2009; Levitt et al., 2004). Interpersonal studies extend this pattern by showing that suppression can elevate blood pressure, cortisol, vascular resistance, and stress contagion in both the suppressor and interaction partners (■ Butler et al., 2003; ■ Peters & Jamieson, 2016; ■ Waters et al., 2020).

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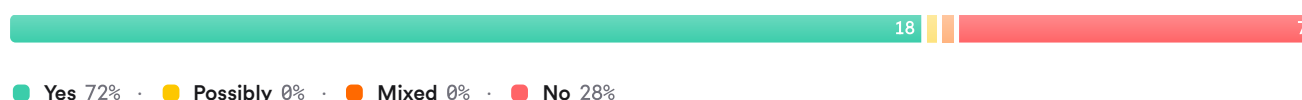


FIGURE 2 Consensus estimate for suppression-related stress effects

### 2. Methods

The search ran over more than 170 million research papers indexed in Consensus, including Semantic Scholar, PubMed, and related sources. A broad controlled-human-studies search identified 17,388 papers for the main query, and multiple follow-up searches on suppression, acceptance, autonomic arousal, culture, clinical populations, and interpersonal stress expanded the pool substantially. Machine-learning relevance screening narrowed 250 candidate papers to 115 eligible papers, and the top 50 most relevant papers were included in this synthesis.

## Search Strategy

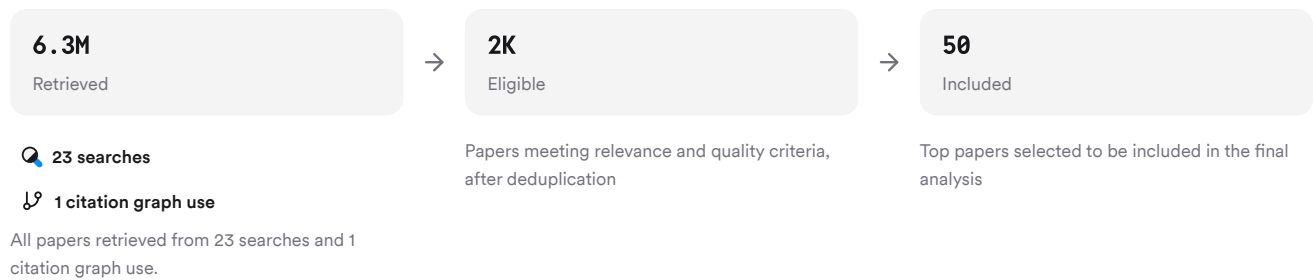


FIGURE 3 Study identification, screening, and inclusion flow

The strategy combined foundational, mechanistic, critical, cross-cultural, interpersonal, and clinical searches to capture both replication and boundary conditions.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Key Papers

A small set of papers anchors the field because they directly manipulated suppression and measured physiological stress outcomes. Gross established the core sympathetic-activation finding, Campbell-Sills and colleagues tested suppression against acceptance in clinical samples, and Hofmann and colleagues extended the comparison to social stress (■ Gross, 1998; ■ Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; ■ Hofmann et al., 2009).

| Paper                       | Summary                                                                             |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (■ Hofmann et al., 2009)    | Suppression increased <b>sympathetic activation</b> (■ Gross, 1998)                 |
| (■ Gross, 1998)             | Acceptance showed <b>better heart-rate recovery</b> (■ Campbell-Sills et al., 2006) |
| (■ Pankratova et al., 2019) | Suppression raised <b>heart rate</b> in stress (■ Hofmann et al., 2009)             |

FIGURE 4 Foundational papers on suppression and stress

### 3.2 Direct Comparisons

The clearest head-to-head comparisons favor acceptance over suppression for physiological stress in social and emotional tasks. In an impromptu speech task, suppression caused a greater heart-rate increase from baseline than both reappraisal and acceptance (■ Hofmann et al., 2009). In anxiety and mood disorders, suppression increased heart rate during an emotional film, whereas acceptance decreased it, and acceptance also improved post-film affective recovery (■ Campbell-Sills et al., 2006).

Acceptance does not always beat suppression on every physiological endpoint. In panic disorder during CO2 challenge, acceptance reduced subjective anxiety and avoidance more than suppression, but physiological measures did not differ (Levitt et al., 2004). In experimental pain, acceptance and suppression both reduced pain reports and cardiac defense relative to control, although acceptance reduced anticipatory anxiety more than suppression (■ Braams et al., 2012).

### 3.3 Physiological Outcomes

| Dimension                   | Suppression                                    | Acceptance or Non-Suppression              | Citations                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Heart rate                  | Greater increase                               | Lower increase or decrease                 | ( <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Hofmann et al., 2009; <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Campbell-Sills et al., 2006)                                                         |
| Blood pressure              | Increased in regulators and partners           | Lower than suppression                     | ( <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Butler et al., 2003)                                                                                                                              |
| Cortisol                    | Higher during emotional conversation or stress | Lower than suppression in some comparisons | ( <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Peters & Jamieson, 2016; Lindsay et al., 2017)                                                                                                    |
| Sympathetic cardiac control | Increased cardiac sympathetic activation       | Lower under natural viewing                | ( <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Demaree et al., 2005)                                                                                                                             |
| Skin conductance            | Often higher, but inconsistent                 | Sometimes lower, sometimes no difference   | ( <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Rimes et al., 2016; <span style="color: #00A651;">■</span> Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; <span style="color: #E31A1C;">■</span> Dunn et al., 2009) |

The most consistent markers are heart rate, blood pressure, cortisol, and cardiovascular threat indices. Skin conductance is more variable across tasks and samples, which explains part of the mixed literature (■ Jentsch & Wolf, 2020; ■ Ben-Naim et al., 2013; Liverant et al., 2021).

### 3.4 Boundary Conditions

Several studies qualify the broad “suppression increases stress” claim. Some experiments found no physiological difference between suppression and control, especially in young healthy samples viewing negative images or distressing films (■ Bahl & Ouimet, 2021; ■ Dunn et al., 2009). In depressed veterans, suppression even reduced skin conductance and respiration acutely, though it carried a later affective cost (Liverant et al., 2021).

Culture also matters. In Chinese participants facing frustration, suppression reduced depressive experience and skin conductance relative to acceptance and control (■ Yuan et al., 2014). In Russian and Azerbaijani samples, suppression did not significantly affect sympathetic activity (■ Pankratova et al., 2019). Even within cross-cultural work, East Asian participants sometimes showed different vagal responses to suppression than European Australians (Nagulendran et al., 2020).

### Results Timeline

Research has moved from foundational lab demonstrations to interpersonal, clinical, and cultural boundary testing.

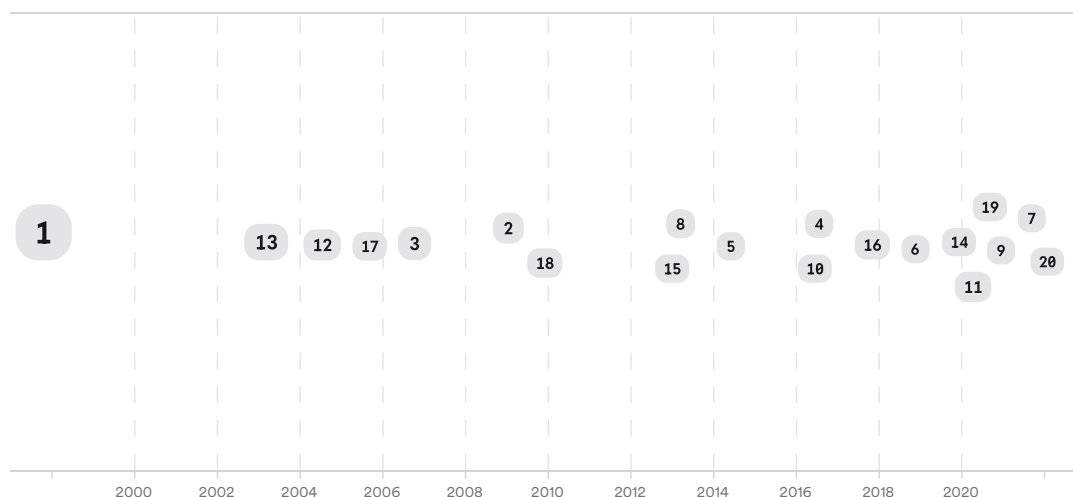


FIGURE 5 Timeline of suppression physiology findings; larger markers indicate more citations

Early studies established that suppression can heighten sympathetic activation during emotion elicitation (■ Gross, 1998; ■ Demaree et al., 2005). Later work showed that the effect extends into dyads, where suppression can spread stress physiologically to partners and children (■ Butler et al., 2003; ■ Waters et al., 2020). More recent studies emphasize heterogeneity by culture, diagnosis, and task type rather than overturning the core pattern (Liverant et al., 2021; Nagulendran et al., 2020; ■ Tyra et al., 2025).

### Top Contributors

Within this corpus, **James Gross**, **Stefan Hofmann**, and **Valerie Jentsch** appear repeatedly, and **Emotion**, **Behaviour Research and Therapy**, and **Biological Psychology** are the most frequent journals represented.

| Type    | Name                                  | Papers                                                                                                     |
|---------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Author  | J. Gross                              | [e4455ad51c215d29aff88e4208495cce][35f9fd0e2ec25c438345fe7f3a1adb63]<br>[30d5f7e82a5d51888ba0e432ac56f301] |
| Author  | S. Hofmann                            | [b818ccd5eb2c5d7ea363d73aebb8d76b][17943261afd75c409538cc1bc60d4234]<br>[e5c2ec157b6e56418c6a5527091ca9f9] |
| Author  | Valerie L. Jentsch                    | [d4da0c9be982541c9c448655cf00d747][0dedb424f5f358289d2745512f7eb075]                                       |
| Journal | <i>Emotion</i>                        | [35f9fd0e2ec25c438345fe7f3a1adb63][95eca717d24550a2a52dfb379953a777]<br>[9280d650830056c9bd2bf936a17bdc3e] |
| Journal | <i>Behaviour Research and Therapy</i> | [b818ccd5eb2c5d7ea363d73aebb8d76b][17943261afd75c409538cc1bc60d4234]<br>[830ff7f3533757349eef646fa2f44f8f] |
| Journal | <i>Biological Psychology</i>          | [d4da0c9be982541c9c448655cf00d747][fa43d3e4ec335560bd01a82c72c3053b]<br>[bf9674cc395d5284a02a9502476d4a7c] |

FIGURE 6 Authors and journals appearing most often

## 4. Discussion

The overall evidence is moderate to strong that suppression often increases physiological stress, especially in Western laboratory studies using disgust films, speeches, conflict conversations, and social-evaluative stressors (■ Gross, 1998; ■ Hofmann et al., 2009; ■ Ben-Naim et al., 2013; ■ Peters & Jamieson, 2016). This conclusion is strengthened by replication across multiple physiological systems: cardiac sympathetic control, heart rate, blood pressure, vascular resistance, and cortisol all point in the same direction more often than not (■ Demaree et al., 2005; ■ Butler et al., 2003; ■ Peters & Jamieson, 2016).

The evidence is weaker for a universal skin-conductance effect. Some studies found no differences in skin conductance or electrodermal activity between suppression and comparison conditions, and others found culture- or diagnosis-specific reversals (■ Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; ■ Dunn et al., 2009; Liverant et al., 2021; ■ Yuan et al., 2014). Acceptance appears more reliable for lowering subjective anxiety and sometimes physiological load, but not every study finds physiological superiority over suppression or control (Levitt et al., 2004; ■ Braams et al., 2012; Hamza et al., 2024).

Interpersonal findings are especially important because they show that suppression is not only an intrapersonal cost. It can alter physiological linkage and transmit stress to partners or children, which broadens the practical meaning of “physiological stress” beyond the suppressor alone (■ Waters et al., 2020; ■ Peters & Jamieson, 2016). For personal decisions about stress, anxiety, or mental health treatment, a licensed clinician should interpret how these group-level findings apply to an individual.

| Claim                                                            | Evidence Strength                                                                   | Reasoning                                                        | Papers                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Suppression often increases sympathetic or cardiovascular stress |  | Multiple randomized experiments replicate higher arousal markers | (■ Gross, 1998; ■ Demaree et al., 2005; ■ Ben-Naim et |

| Claim                                                                     | Evidence Strength                                                                             | Reasoning                                                                                  | Papers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| versus natural responding                                                 | Strong                                                                                        | across tasks                                                                               | al., 2013)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Suppression is usually <b>more physiologically costly than acceptance</b> | <br>Moderate | Direct head-to-head studies often favor acceptance, especially for heart rate and recovery | (  Campbell-Sills et al., 2006;  Hofmann et al., 2009; Levitt et al., 2004)                                                                                |
| Suppression can <b>increase stress in partners</b>                        | <br>Strong   | Independent dyadic studies show higher blood pressure, cortisol, and linkage               | (  Butler et al., 2003;  Waters et al., 2020;  Peters & Jamieson, 2016) |
| Skin conductance increases are <b>inconsistent</b>                        | <br>Moderate | Some studies report nulls or reversals despite broader sympathetic findings                | (  Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; Liverant et al., 2021;  Yuan et al., 2014)                                                                                 |
| Suppression always increases stress across all cultures and diagnoses     | <br>Weak     | Cross-cultural and clinical studies show important exceptions                              | (  Pankratova et al., 2019;  Yuan et al., 2014; Liverant et al., 2021)                                                                                     |

FIGURE 7 Key claims and supporting evidence strengths

## 5. Conclusion

The literature supports a qualified yes: suppressing the physical expression of emotion usually increases sympathetic arousal and physiological stress compared with acceptance, and often compared with non-suppression. The strongest and most replicated effects appear in cardiovascular and endocrine measures during acute stress and social interaction, while acceptance more often supports lower anxiety, lower heart-rate response, or better recovery ( Hofmann et al., 2009;  Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; Lindsay et al., 2017).

## Research Gaps

The main gaps are long-term outcomes, non-Western replication, developmental samples, and tighter mapping between subjective stress and specific autonomic channels.

| Topic/Outcome                          | RCT comparisons | Cultural diversity | Long-term follow-up | Interpersonal physiology |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Heart rate and BP                      | 10              | 4                  | 2                   | 6                        |
| Skin conductance                       | 9               | 5                  | 2                   | 3                        |
| Cortisol and HPA response              | 4               | 2                  | 2                   | 3                        |
| Child and adolescent samples           | 2               | 1                  | 1                   | 2                        |
| Clinical and cross-cultural moderators | 6               | 7                  | 3                   | 2                        |

## Open Research Questions

The next wave of studies should test when suppression is harmful, neutral, or adaptive rather than asking whether it is globally good or bad.

| Question                                                                                                              | Why                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| When does expressive suppression increase cardiovascular stress versus merely reduce visible emotion?                 | Task demands, social context, and physiological channel appear to change the answer substantially. |
| How much do culture and habitual use alter the stress costs of suppression compared with acceptance?                  | Cross-cultural findings suggest suppression is less costly where it is more normative.             |
| Do repeated short-term suppression effects accumulate into meaningful long-term cardiovascular or mental health risk? | Acute experiments are common, but longitudinal mechanistic evidence remains limited.               |

Suppressing emotional expression generally does increase physiological stress relative to acceptance and often versus non-suppression, but the effect is context-dependent rather than universal.

*These search results were found and analyzed using Consensus, an AI-powered search engine for research. Try it at <https://consensus.app>. © 2026 Consensus NLP, Inc. Personal, non-commercial use only; redistribution requires copyright holders' consent.*

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