

- Title

*Max. 50 words*

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*“Comparing Reality to What Could Have Been: Effects of self-generated Counterfactual thoughts on the Willingness to Reconcile in interpersonal Conflicts.”*

- Abstract

If you are submitting for an individual presentation, abstract max. 250 words.

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Most interpersonal conflicts are not clear-cut, with one party being the victim and the other the perpetrator. Instead, they are often marked by mutual wrongdoings and reciprocal blame (Siman Tov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014). This perpetrator-victim dynamic makes reconciliation particularly challenging, as both parties seek to emphasize their own suffering while minimizing their responsibility in the conflict, leading to a process known as competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012). At the same time, reconciliation requires individuals to reflect on their past actions, recognize their role in the dispute, and acknowledge shared responsibility for its escalation (Poitras, 2007; Chaudry & Loewenstein, 2017).

Counterfactual thinking, which involves mentally comparing how one acted with how one could have acted differently, has been shown to influence attributions of blame—both self- and other-directed—as well as emotions such as regret, anger, and shame (Mandel & Dhami, 2005). These thoughts also help individuals anticipate future behavior and strengthen behavioral intentions (Roese, 1994; Roese & Epstude, 2017).

Building on these premises, we hypothesize that engaging in counterfactual thinking in interpersonal conflict situations can foster a greater willingness to reconcile with the other person involved. Across multiple studies, we examined how counterfactual thoughts shape reconciliation tendencies in interpersonal disputes, using both recall-based and scenario-based methodologies. Our findings provide insight into the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that drive reconciliation in interpersonal conflicts and highlight how counterfactual thinking can be leveraged to facilitate conflict de-escalation between individuals.