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Russians brood, but Americans get depressed

By Caroline Humer
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NEW YORK (Reuters Life!) - Russians dwell on negative emotions much as novelists Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy so famously detailed, but they are less likely to become depressed than Americans, according to two new studies.

"It seems that even though Russians brood and contemplate more than Americans, it is not the factor that contributes to them being so unhappy," said Igor Grossmann, the University of Michigan researcher who worked on the studies.

Americans had more symptoms of depression than Russians, who generally are believed to be unhappier than Americans, when reflecting on negative experiences, the studies, which will be published in the journal *Psychological Science*, showed.

When Russians reflect on negative feelings, they are able to distance themselves and have fewer symptoms of depression than Americans, according to the first study, which included U.S. and Russian students.

Symptoms of depression include negative thoughts, feelings of being punished, a decrease in sleep or appetite, feelings of guilt or past failures and pessimism.

In the second study, researchers measured the level of distress of the students after they recalled and analyzed a recent anger-related experience with another person.

In that case as well, Russians were less distressed after having dwelled on such an experience, were less likely to blame the other person for the situation and were able to distance themselves more easily from the event.

"They have the view of a fly on the wall rather than looking at it through their own eyes," Grossman explained.

Grossmann, who co-authored the article, said the studies show that it is possible for culture to affect how people reflect on and adapt to negative experiences.

The studies were conducted jointly with the National Institute of Mental Health.

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