Managing Emotions in Personal Selling: Examining the Role of Emotion Regulation Strategy in Salespeople

By Elyria Kemp, Aberdeen Leila Borders, and Joe M. Ricks

Personal selling is a dynamic profession and a salesperson’s ability to manage his/her emotions is crucial. This research examines the role that a salesperson’s ability to regulate his/her emotions has on burnout, motivation, selling behaviors and perceived performance. It highlights an emotion regulation strategy which is especially adaptive for managing negative emotions, cognitive reappraisal. A conceptual framework is developed to illuminate the role of cognitive appraisal on salesperson emotional well-being, adaptive selling behavior, motivation and perceived performance. Findings indicate that cognitive reappraisal is positively related to adaptive selling behavior which is positively related to perceived performance. Further, cognitive reappraisal is negatively related to ruminative propensity and emotional exhaustion. Results are discussed in relationship to their implications for managers and researchers.

INTRODUCTION

Emotions play an important role in both an individual’s personal and professional life. Emotions prompt behavioral responses in consumption activities (Andrade, 2005), affect decision-making in purchasing products (Kemp and Kopp, 2011) and even facilitate interpersonal interactions with friends, family and professional associates (Gross and John, 2003). Because personal selling is a highly dynamic profession, salespeople’s ability to manage their emotions on the job is crucial.

Previous research that has examined emotions in personal selling has focused on moods and emotions present in the sales encounter (Verbeke and Bagozzi, 2000; Donen and Cannon, 1997); coping strategies to manage stress (Nonis and Sager, 2003; Lewin and Sager, 2008); and salespeople’s ability to perceive the emotions of customers (Kidwell et al., 2007; Rozell et al., 2006). However, little is known about how salespeople manage the emotions they experience on a daily basis in the work environment (both positive and negative emotions). Research from the behavioral literatures suggests that individuals can exert considerable control over their emotions by using strategies to influence which emotions they experience (Gross, 1998; Gross and John, 2003). Such strategic functioning can be useful in the sales environment as salespeople deal with a myriad of situations and circumstances that can elicit strong emotions (rejection, stress, surprise, elation) that may need to be managed. Salespeople’s ability to effectively manage their emotions can lead to adaptive functioning and possibly enhance daily performance on the job.

This research explores the role that a salesperson’s ability to regulate his/her emotions has on burnout, motivation, selling behaviors and perceived performance. The focus of this research is on a common emotion regulation strategy known as cognitive reappraisal. Cognitive reappraisal is an emotion regulation strategy that involves construing a potentially emotion-eliciting situation in a way that changes its emotional impact (Lazarus and Alfert, 1964; Lazarus, 1991). It is especially adaptive for managing negative emotions. Research has demonstrated that individuals employing cognitive reappraisal can effectively down-regulate negative emotion and show enhanced functioning in interpersonal situations (Gross and John, 2003).

This research develops a conceptual framework to illuminate the role of cognitive reappraisal on salesperson subjective well-being, adaptive selling behavior, motivation and perceived performance (see Figure 1). A theoretical review, rooted in the emotion and strategic functioning literature is provided. Next, salesperson subjective well-being is presented in the context of its relationships to motivation, adaptive selling behavior and perceived performance. An empirical investigation, which tested the proposed model, is then described. Findings are discussed in relationship to their implications for managers and researchers.
REGULATING EMOTIONS IN PERSONAL SELLING

Salespeople are highly vulnerable to role stressors (Singh, 1998). Because salespeople are boundary spanners in the organization and may interface with a myriad of individuals on a daily basis, opportunities to encounter possibly negative emotion-eliciting situations abound. When unfavorable occurrences manifest, the salesperson must have the ability to regulate his/her emotions in order to combat negative thought patterns and possible emotional exhaustion.

Cognitive Reappraisal

Emotion regulation refers to a process by which individuals attempt to influence “the emotions they have, when they have them and how these emotions are experienced and expressed” (Gross et al., 2006, p. 3). An individual may engage in emotion regulation to dampen, intensify, or simply maintain an existing emotion. Emotion regulation differs from coping, in that coping’s principal focus is on decreasing negative affect caused by life events (e.g. coping with bereavement) for larger periods of time (Gross et al., 2006). Emotion regulation is focused on primarily managing an individual’s subjective state, rather than objective circumstances (Larsen, 2000).

Research from the psychology literature suggests that individuals can cognitively exercise control over their emotions by using strategies to influence which emotions they experience and when they have them (Lazarus and Alfert, 1964; Lazarus, 1991). One common emotion regulation strategy is cognitive reappraisal (Gross and John, 2003), which can manifest as a personality trait, or individual difference. Cognitive reappraisal (also referred to as reappraisal) involves using cognitive maneuvers to alter the meaning of an emotion-eliciting situation (Gross and John, 2003). Because salespeople interface with a number of individuals in their daily working environment, the opportunity to experience negative situations increases. For example, salespeople face rejection on a frequent basis. Rejection can result in a number of negative emotions. Rejection poses a threat to people’s identities as competent, desirable individuals and requires strategies to cope with emotions like hostility, dejection, and jealousy (Downey and Feldman, 1996; Bourgeois and Leary, 2001). Cognitive Reappraisal allows the salesperson to reinterpret the rejection and not see it as lack of
competence or personal rejection, but rather see the rejection as a learning opportunity and information for skill development.

Cognitive reappraisal is an antecedent-focused strategy, in that it occurs early and intervenes before the emotion response tendencies have been fully activated. Reappraisal entails keeping the emotion-eliciting event in mind and actively seeking alternate interpretations of the meaning of the event. This is conceptually related to cognitive processes such as reinterpretation, which involves learning and rationalizing behavior (Hoch, 2002; Loewenstein, 2001). However, cognitive reappraisal’s focus is on re-interpreting specific emotional elements in the environment. Cognitive reappraisal can alter the entire emotion trajectory. Research has found that individuals engaging in cognitive reappraisal express more positive emotions, with high cognitive reappraisers possessing the ability to down-regulate the experience of negative emotion more effectively (Gross and John, 2003). Individuals that use reappraisal often show enhanced functioning in interpersonal situations and are more likely to employ cognitive maneuvers to reappraise or reassess potentially negative events. They may also experience more success on the job and enjoy a certain level of subjective well-being.

Cognitive reappraisal is of particular importance to salespeople. Salespeople can experience successes as well as failure on the job. On any day, they may be the victims of rude prospects and rejection. Additionally, demands from existing clients as well as their organization can potentially have a negative impact on psychological well-being. However, when a negative or disappointing event takes place, it may be human nature to engage in some degree of repetitive thought, or rumination, about the situation. The concept of rumination is discussed next.

Rumination

Rumination is defined as having recurrent thoughts that are instigated by the discrepancy between one’s current position and a desired goal (Martin and Tesser, 1996). Some research scholars, including Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow (1991), view rumination as maladaptive and more akin to brooding because it involves repetitive thoughts that are not directed at resolving the problem. Such a “brooding” type of rumination may be associated with increased anger, depression and ineffective coping (Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow, 1991).

Studies show that if ruminating individuals do make attempts to engage in active problem-solving, the solutions they generate to the problems are often of lower quality than solutions they might derive if they were not ruminating (Lyubomirsky and Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995). Further, victims of interpersonal offenses often ruminate on the specifics of a hurtful situation which can lead to negative psychological and relational outcomes.

Since salespeople may interact with a number of individuals on a daily basis and are accountable to both their clients and the organization, opportunities to encounter possibly negative emotion-eliciting situations abound. When negative events occur, individuals may engage in maladaptive behavior such as rumination by re-playing and thinking about how they were wronged or treated unfairly in a situation (Nolen-Hoeksema and Morrow, 1991). However, individuals’ abilities to regulate or manage their emotions effectively can lead to more adaptive functioning (Gross and John, 2003). Employing cognitive reappraisal by utilizing cognitive maneuvers to alter the meaning of a potentially negative emotion-eliciting situation may make one less likely to engage in maladaptive ruminative propensities. As a result, the following is proposed:

**H1:** A negative relationship exists between cognitive reappraisal and rumination.

**Emotional Exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion occurs as a response to job-related demand stressors and is pervasive in people that work in boundary spanning positions such as sales. Tasks and stressors associated with professional selling can be substantial as salespeople must meet the needs of their clients as well as their organizations (Babakus et al., 1999; Lewin and Sager, 2008). Syndromes of emotional exhaustion include dread at the prospect of returning to work, increased absenteeism, diminished self-esteem, depression, insomnia and withdrawal from the organization or profession (Kahill, 1988; Moncrief et al., 1995).
Stress on the sales job can arise because of an incongruity between a salesperson's desired job expectations and actual perceived conditions (Edwards, 1992). Also, as mentioned previously, engaging in repetitive thought patterns about negative emotion-eliciting situations, or rumination, can generate negative outcomes. For example, research has found links between rumination and cognitive and emotional disturbance, including pessimistic thinking, depression, anxiety, and decreased feelings of control over one's life (Lyubomirsky and Nolen-Hoeksema, 1995). For the salesperson, consistent and active rumination may contribute to eventual burnout and emotional exhaustion where the salesperson experiences depression, withdrawal from clients and an overall decrease in the quality of job performance (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Accordingly, the following is proposed:

**H2:** A positive relationship exists between rumination and emotional exhaustion.

Given the potential deleterious nature of rumination, as proposed, rumination may be highly associated with emotional exhaustion. However, enlisting cognitive reappraisal and using cognitive maneuvers to alter the meaning of an emotion-eliciting situation, may help to reduce emotional exhaustion. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of attempting to reappraise negative events can be undermined if the individual insists on falling prey to repetitive, negative thought patterns. This suggests that rumination will mediate the relationship between cognitive reappraisal and emotional exhaustion.

**H3:** Rumination will mediate the relationship between cognitive reappraisal and emotional exhaustion.

Motivation

Motivation involves the effort the salesperson anticipates expending on tasks associated with his or her job. A salesperson's motivation is usually viewed as a function of the salesperson's ability, financial compensation, psychological incentives (recognition, opportunities for personal growth), and organizational and managerial factors (Walker et al., 1979). Salespeople's motivation is regarded as a strong determinant of performance outcomes (Walker et al., 1979). When salespeople are highly motivated, they often exude more confidence about their ability to influence customer decision-making and perform successfully on the job. This subjective assessment of performance, or a salesperson's perceived performance, is positively related to objective measures of salesperson performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Kidwell et al., 2007).

However, the experience of frequent demand-related stressors can contribute to emotional exhaustion, thereby reducing motivation. As discussed previously, emotional exhaustion can lead to increased absenteeism, diminished self-esteem, depression and eventually result in volitional withdrawal, or removal of the salesperson by the firm. Thus, we hypothesize:

**H4:** A positive relationship exists between motivation and perceived salesperson performance.

**H5:** A negative relationship exists between emotional exhaustion and motivation.

**ADAPTIVE SELLING AND EMOTION REGULATION**

Because cognitive reappraisal requires flexibility in cognitive processing and interpretation, enlisting such an emotion regulation strategy might also be positively associated with salesperson performance.

Salespeople are encouraged to react to different selling situations by changing their sales behaviors. Altering sales-related behaviors during customer interactions based on perceived information about the buying and selling situation is adaptive selling, which is a crucial part of a salesperson's success (Weitz et al., 1986; McQuiston and Morris, 2009).

Kidwell et al. (2007) found a relationship between a salesperson's ability to perceive emotions in the buyer-seller interaction and adaptive selling behavior. Findings suggested that the emotionally perceptive salesperson may be more likely to better tailor the sales presentation to match the emotions of the buyer in the sales interaction. However, in addition to perceiving the emotions of the customer, individuals that have an inherent ability to manage their own emotions may be more successful at adapting to different selling situations.
Specifically, individuals adept at employing cognitive reappraisal who actively seek alternate interpretations of emotion-inducing events (particularly those negative in nature) might be more effective at adaptive selling. Individuals who can appraise and manage their own emotions are often more effective at quickly responding to the emotions of others (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Mayer et al., 2000; Mallalieu and Nakamoto, 2008). Additionally, these individuals may display more genuinely pleasant dispositions since those who employ cognitive reappraisal often experience more positive emotions than those who do not enlist the emotion regulation strategy (Gross and John, 2003).

We theorize that management of one’s own emotions by enlisting cognitive reappraisal is positively related to adaptive selling behavior. Furthermore, and consistent with the literature, adaptive selling behavior will be positively related to perceived salesperson performance and competence (Blackshear and Plank, 1994; Goolsby et al., 1992).

H6: A positive relationship exists between cognitive reappraisal and adaptive selling.

H7: A positive relationship exists between adaptive selling and perceived salesperson performance.

METHOD
Sample and Data Collection
A web-based survey was sent to business-to-business salespeople in over 16 fields (e.g., consumer packaged goods, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, business services and advertising). Firms from various industries were chosen in order to improve the generalizability of results. Twenty sales managers were contacted in person, via phone or email. They were asked if they would share the survey with their salespeople and encourage participation. Sales managers sent the survey to all salespeople within their respective divisions. Over 300 salespeople were sent the survey. Scales from the existing literature were used to measure the constructs in the survey. All measures are presented in the Appendix.

A total of 151 completed surveys were received. Fifty-four percent of the respondents were female and forty-six percent were male. Fifteen percent of respondents were 18-24 years of age, thirty percent were 24-34, forty-three percent were 35-54 and twelve percent were 55 and over. Sixty-seven percent of the participants were European American/Caucasian, twenty-three percent were African American, two percent were Latino/Hispanic, two percent were Native American, one percent was Asian American and four percent listed themselves as “Other.”

The data were subjected to structural equation analysis in AMOS 17.0 using the maximum likelihood estimation method. As recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step procedure was used to first assess the model for construct and discriminant validity and then to test hypotheses in the structural model.

Measurement Model
As previously discussed, many of the constructs in this study were measured using existing and established scales taken from the behavioral literatures. In addition to employing standard statistical techniques (e.g., performing exploratory factor analysis, examining item-to-total correlations, obtaining Cronbach alphas) to assess the model for construct and discriminant validity, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. Several items were removed to improve fit (see Appendix). The final measurement model exhibited adequate fit $\chi^2 (489.27); \text{p-value} (.01); \text{CFI} (.92); \text{IFI} (.92); \text{TLI} (.90); \text{and} \text{RMSEA} (.06)$. To test for construct validity, factor loadings, along with the average variance extracted were calculated for each latent variable. Standardized factor loadings exceeded the 0.6 threshold as recommended by Hair et al., (2006). Additionally, as seen in Table 1, the average variance extracted for each construct exceeded the recommended rule of thumb of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2006), which is an indication that the variance captured by the construct is greater than the variance due to measurement error.
In order to assess discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker test (1981) was performed. Discriminant validity is demonstrated when the average variance extracted for a construct is greater than the squared correlations between that construct and other constructs in the model. As shown in Table 1, the average variances extracted between each construct is greater than the squared multiple correlations for each construct pairing. Reliabilities, represented as composite rho, were also assessed for each construct to ensure that each exhibited internal consistency. All measures exemplified acceptable reliability by exceeding the recommended 0.7 threshold (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). The results from the structural model follow.

### Structural Model

The structural model and hypotheses were evaluated after attaining a validated measurement model. The model (see Figure 1) exhibited a good model fit: $\chi^2$ (507.83); p-value (.01); CFI (.91); IFI (.91); TLI (.89); and RMSEA (.06).

The results of the hypotheses are presented in Table 2. H1 predicted a negative relationship between cognitive reappraisal and rumination. This hypothesis is supported. Individuals that are likely to employ cognitive reappraisal may be less likely to engage in ruminative thought. Next, H2 predicted that rumination would be positively related to emotional exhaustion. The data support this hypothesis. Enlisting recurring thoughts about negative situations is related to greater levels of emotional exhaustion. H3 proposed a mediating relationship. It suggested that rumination would mediate the relationship between cognitive reappraisal and emotional exhaustion. In assessing mediation, if the direct effects are significant, then the indirect effect is also significant (Cohen and Cohen, 1983; Baron and Kenny, 1986). Both the direct effects between cognitive reappraisal and rumination as well as rumination and emotional exhaustion are significant; thus, the indirect effect is significant. Additionally, the Sobel test confirms the full mediation ($z= 2.04$, p<.05). Thus, H3 is supported.

Next, it was predicted that there would be a positive relationship between motivation and perceived salesperson performance. The data confirm H4. Similarly, H5 is confirmed and the data show that there is a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and motivation. It was also predicted that there would be a positive relationship between cognitive reappraisal and adaptive selling. Such a relationship exists, and therefore, H6 is validated. Finally, a positive relationship between adaptive selling and perceived performance was predicted in H7. The data corroborate this prediction.
Table 2

Test of Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Un-standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Critical Ratio</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: Cognitive Reappraisal → Rumination</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-2.17</td>
<td>p &lt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: Rumination → Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: Cognitive Reappraisal → Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>p &gt; .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4: Motivation → Perceived Performance</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5: Emotional Exhaustion → Motivation</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6: Cognitive Reappraisal → Adaptive Selling</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7: Adaptive Selling → Perceived Performance</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>p &lt; .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

As a boundary spanner in the organization, the salesperson may be subject to a number of stressors. As a result, emotional factors including a salesperson’s capacity to regulate his/her emotions can play an important role in success. In this research, we examined the role that a salesperson’s ability to manage his/her emotions has on adaptive selling behavior, emotional exhaustion, and ultimately motivation and perceived performance.

The behavioral literatures have demonstrated that individuals can influence how and when they experience various emotions by using emotion regulation strategies. Research has shown that employing a common emotion regulation strategy known as cognitive reappraisal can be helpful in managing negative emotions. Our findings indicate that cognitive reappraisal is negatively related to maladaptive, recurring thinking that manifests as rumination and brooding. Salespeople may be commonly exposed to rude prospects and difficult clients. When negative and disparaging events occur, sometimes human beings spend a great deal of time rehearsing these negative events. Consistently re-visiting such negative situations can eventually be exhausting and detrimental psychologically. Subsequently, findings from this research also indicate that there is a positive relationship between rumination and emotional exhaustion. Further, rumination mediates the relationship between cognitive reappraisal and emotional exhaustion. Emotionally exhausted salespeople often exhibit little motivation on the job, which can lead to poor performance. Results from our study demonstrate the negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and motivation.

Finally, findings from this research suggest that there is a positive relationship between individuals adroit at employing cognitive reappraisal as an emotion regulation strategy and adaptive selling behavior. Prior research has demonstrated that individuals who can appraise and manage their own emotions are often more
effective at responding to the emotions of others (Mayer et al., 2000). Results from our study indicate that skill in using cognitive maneuvers and reappraisal to regulate personal emotions is positively correlated with an ability to adapt and alter presentation style with customers in various situations. Consistent with previous literature, our findings also show that adaptive selling ability is positively related to perceived performance.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

A significant implication of this research is that it provides empirical evidence suggesting that emotion regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal can help salespeople manage emotions more effectively. Regulating emotions efficaciously can contribute to more effective selling behaviors and possibly thwart emotional exhaustion. Findings from this research can provide initial insight into how managers might measure their current and potential sales force’s propensity to engage in emotion regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal. Such information might be used in training and development as well as in the selection process. These implications are discussed next.

Given the myriad of emotions, including negative emotions salespeople may experience frequently on the job (e.g., stress, rejection, anxiety and loneliness), managerial styles that significantly consider salespeople’s emotions can serve to facilitate successful selling behaviors in salespeople. For example, training people to use emotion regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal may avert negative psychological outcomes like stress and emotional exhaustion. Individuals can be taught to minimize the potentially harmful effects of negative emotions by identifying and reframing negative emotion-eliciting events. Additionally, these individuals may be less likely to engage in potentially destructive rumination about negative occurrences. This may have significant practical impact due to the mediation effect identified in the study. If individuals are emotionally healthy, they are often easier to motivate, which can result in better job performance.

Measuring an individual’s ability to engage in cognitive reappraisal might be used to provide more information to the sales manager in the hiring and selection process. Such a short assessment might give sales managers an indication of how effectively the salesperson can handle and down-regulate negative emotions. However, those salespeople that score low on the measure should not necessarily be excluded from selection, but might require additional training with regard to emotion regulation and management techniques.

Additionally, because high performing sales people usually are better able to adapt and consider the various contingencies within selling situations, it is in the sales manager’s best interest to be able to recognize and hire individuals that may be more likely to engage in such selling behavior (Weitz et al., 1986; Weilbaker and Bennion, 1999). Tendencies that an individual may possess related to enlisting cognitive reappraisal to manage emotions might be a barometer as to whether the salesperson might also be skilled in adaptive selling behavior. Thus, salespeople that are better at managing their emotions may be more effective at adaptive selling.

Results from this research also indicated that emotional exhaustion is negatively related to motivation and previous literature has demonstrated that it can be a major cause of turnover (Babakus et al., 1999). Sales managers can also play a role in combating emotional exhaustion. For example, sales managers can make efforts to create positive working environments. Fostering positive working environments might include offering encouragement, recognition and performance feedback. These behavior-based controls might help to keep salespeople satisfied and possibly counteract emotional exhaustion.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this research makes important contributions in understanding the role of emotion regulation strategy in salesperson performance, it is not without its limitations. The data from this study were cross-sectional in nature and no causal relationships could be established. Future research might include studies which take place in an experimental, laboratory setting where causal relationships can be achieved and actual behavior assessed.

Additionally, this research only examined one emotion regulation strategy, cognitive reappraisal. Other
emotion regulation strategies might be studied for their relationship and effect on salespeople’s performance. Cognitive reappraisal is an antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategy—it occurs early and intervenes before emotion response tendencies have been fully activated. Response-focused emotion regulation strategies, such as expressive suppression, might also be examined within the context of personal selling. Expressive suppression comes later in the emotion-generative process and can result in the modification of emotional response tendencies. Identifying multiple emotion management strategies and the context in which they are most effective may have major implications on sales force performance.

While this research examined cognitive reappraisal and its impact on the constructs measured, future research might examine the varying types of emotions experienced by salespeople during the sales cycle and identify management strategies for each situation. This might give managers a “toolbox” for developing emotion management skills for the salesforce. Finally, future research might examine the role of the sales manager in encouraging and promoting good emotional health among salespeople. For example, sales manager support, in the form of emotional coaching where individuals are instructed on how to channel their emotions in order to reach their objectives quickly, might contribute to successful salesperson performance and engender positive interpersonal functioning.

Not only do people act on their thoughts, but their feelings as well. Understanding the role of emotions in personal selling can provide valuable insight into training and managing productive and successful salespeople. Research opportunities abound for understanding how emotion management for salespeople can impact their overall success.

REFERENCES


Academic Article


(7-point Likert)

Below are some questions about your emotional life—in particular, how you control (that is, regulate and manage) your emotions.

When I want to feel more positive emotion (such as joy or amusement), I change what I’m thinking about.
When I want to feel less negative emotion (such as sadness or anger), I change what I’m thinking about.
When I’m faced with a stressful situation, I make myself think about it in a way that helps me stay calm.
When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I’m thinking about the situation.
I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I’m in.
When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I’m thinking about the situation.

State Rumination – Adapted from Wade et al. (2008)
(7-point Likert Scale)

Consider the following scenario. You have been working with a potential buyer for six months now. This week you think that you can get a commitment from the prospect. This sale is equal to 50% of your monthly sales quota. You meet with your prospective buyer and he/she informs you that he/she is going to buy from another company. Please respond to the statements below based on how you would react to this outcome.

I can’t stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person.
Memories about this person’s wrongful actions have limited my enjoyment of life.
I have a hard time getting thoughts of how I was mistreated out of my head.
I try to figure out the reasons why this person hurt me. *
The wrong I suffered is never far from my mind.
I find myself replaying the events over and over in my mind.
Emotional Exhaustion - Adapted from Singh et al. (1994)  
(7-point Likert)

Working with customers is really a strain for me.*
I feel I am working too hard for my customers because they’re too demanding.
Working with my sales manager directly puts heavy duty stress on me.
I feel emotionally drained by the pressure my sales manager puts on me.
I feel I work too hard trying to satisfy non sales employees of the company.*
I feel burned out from trying to meet top management’s expectations.
I feel frustrated because I can’t work directly with non sales employees (e.g., shipping, order processing)
I feel dismayed by the actions of top management.

Motivation – Adapted Badovick, Hadaway and Kaminski (1992)  
(7-point Likert Scale)

I plan to increase my overall efforts to reach my sales quota.
I plan to work harder to make my sales quota.
I have plans to increase the quality of my sales activities.

Perceived Performance – Adapted from Badovick, Hadaway and Kaminski (1992)

For the following items, please rate where you stand compared to other salespeople in the company.  
(7-point; 1=substantially below average; 7=substantially above average)

Your overall performance as a salesperson.
Your ability to consistently reach your monthly sales quota.
Your potential for reaching the top 10% of all salespeople in the company.

(7-point Likert scale)

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

When I feel that my sales approach is not working, I can easily change to another.
I like to experiment with different sales approaches.
I can easily use a wide variety of selling approaches.
I find it difficult to adapt my presentation style to certain buyers.*
I vary my sales styles from situation to situation.*
I feel confident that I can effectively change my planned presentation when necessary.
Basically, I use different approaches with most customers.*
I am very flexible in the sales approach I use.
I try to understand how one customer differs from another.

*Note: Item had a low factor score and was dropped prior to CFA.