

# Let it go: The Effect of Stress on Anonymous Self-Disclosure

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## **Abstract**

Despite increasing concerns regarding information privacy and regulations that enhance consumers' control over their personal data, consumers voluntarily share personal and sensitive information about themselves. The current research argues that one important driver of consumers' self-disclosure is psychological stress, and that the effect of stress on self-disclosure can be eliminated by activating self-presentation goals. We propose that the activation of individuals' self-presentation efforts reduces the effect of stress on self-disclosure by encouraging individuals to protect their self-image. Hence, we hypothesize that when consumers are under high (vs. low) stress, their self-disclosure will increase, but only when their self-presentations are not salient. Results from three studies using different manipulations of stress and different research settings (i.e., field, laboratory, and online) lend support to these hypotheses.

**Keywords:** *stress; self-disclosure; consumer privacy*

**Track:** Consumer Behaviour