

Communication patterns during sexual conflict

Sexual conflicts are common in relationships and how couples communicate during conflict is important for their overall well-being.



Do Demand-Withdrawal Communication Patterns During Sexual Conflict Predict Couples' Relationship Satisfaction, Sexual Satisfaction, and Sexual Distress? An Observational and Prospective Study

Natalie O Rosen ^{1 2}, Justin P Dubé ¹, Myriam Bosisio ³, Sophie Bergeron ³

Affiliations + expand

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*Scroll to see
what we found!*



Sexual conflicts
(disagreements about sex)
are common and
challenging for couples to
navigate.

Poor communication about
sex can interfere with
intimacy and is linked to
lower relationship and
psychological well-being.



Demand-Withdrawal (DW) is a pattern of communication where one person exerts pressure to talk about a problem and the other person avoids the conversation.

DW is linked to poorer psychological and relationship well-being, but has not been studied in the context of sexual conflicts.



we wanted to know:

1

Is the DW pattern during a sexual conflict linked to worse outcomes for couples?

2

Do any observed effects persist 6 months later?



n=151 couples

in long-term relationships
were recruited!



We asked them to
complete measures of their
sexual and relationship
well-being at 2 time-
points, 6 months apart

Couples came into the lab and discussed an important sexual conflict in their relationship.



These conflict discussions were then coded by trained observers for the degree of demand-withdrawal.



we found that...

Individuals in a couple who were observed to display higher DW reported **lower relationship and sexual satisfaction and higher sexual distress** as well as lower relationship satisfaction 6 months later.

There were differences between men and women!

so, what does all of this mean?

Study findings may be useful to sex and couple therapists! Interventions delivered by a trained therapist could promote more constructive patterns of communication that might benefit couples' sexual relationships.



This is a summary of our published article:

Natalie O. Rosen, Justin P. Dubé, Myriam Bosisio & Sophie Bergeron (08 Aug 2024): Do Demand-Withdrawal Communication Patterns During Sexual Conflict Predict Couples' Relationship Satisfaction, Sexual Satisfaction, and Sexual Distress? An Observational and Prospective Study, *The Journal of Sex Research*, DOI: 10.1080/00224499.2024.2386997



Infographic by Natalie Rosen and Audrey Chu