

Does reading your mood get you in the mood??

We wanted to know if couples would have better sexual well-being when they were more in tune with each other's day-to-day emotions.



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Empathic accuracy for a partner's negative affect is associated with couples' daily sexual well-being.

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Huberman, J. S., Tavares, I. M., Goruk, K. J., & Rosen, N. O. (2025). Empathic accuracy for a partner's negative affect is associated with couples' daily sexual well-being. *Journal of Family Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0001317>

Sexual well-being contributes to satisfying relationships, yet commonly declines in long-term couples. According to theory, effective coregulation of emotions promotes couples' sexual well-being. Accurately perceiving a partner's affect (i.e., mood, emotions)—*empathic accuracy*—may be

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what we found!



We all experience a range of emotions on a daily basis! When partners are more accurate at perceiving each other's negative moods, this promotes intimacy in the couple.



... but does this "*empathic accuracy*" translate to better sexual wellbeing?

we wanted to know:

On days when couples more accurately perceive each other's negative moods (i.e., higher *empathic accuracy*), do both partners report higher sexual desire, sexual satisfaction, and/or sexual distress?



N=141

We recruited an inclusive sample of long-term couples who had been living together 6+ months

On average, couples were 34 yrs old and together 9 yrs



Participants completed short surveys every day for 28 days, including questions about:

- Own mood ("target")
- Perception of their partner's mood ("perceiver")
- Own sexual wellbeing



we found that...

On days when partners were **MORE INACCURATE** at perceiving the target's negative mood, targets were **less sexually satisfied** and perceiving partners were **more sexually distressed**.

HOWEVER, perceiving partners also reported higher desire.

When perceivers **over-estimated** the target's negative affect, they themselves reported **higher sexual distress AND higher desire.**

so, what does all of this mean?

Couples' sexual wellbeing may benefit from noticing daily changes in one another's negative moods.





Accurately picking up on a partner's negative mood may allow couples to be more understanding or responsive to each other's emotional needs, promoting intimacy and sexual wellbeing.

However, unexpectedly, **LESS** accurately identifying a partner's negative moods could have some benefits for perceivers' own desire.

We need to better understand these associations and test mechanisms in future research!

This is a summary of our published article:

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Infographic by Jackie Huberman