

Sexual Script Flexibility and Sexual Wellbeing

In long term relationships, couples often face sexual challenges that disrupt their typical sexual routine. This study aimed to understand whether having flexible sexual routines, or sexual scripts, can help couples to maintain sexual wellbeing throughout challenges



JOURNAL ARTICLE

Sexual script flexibility and sexual well-being in long-term couples: a dyadic longitudinal study

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The Journal of Sexual Medicine, Volume 20, Issue 7, July 2023, Pages 945–954,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jsxmed/qdad067>

Published: 06 June 2023 **Article history** ▼

*Scroll to see
what we found!*



Sexual scripts are social and cultural ideas of expected sexual behaviour. Sexual scripts provide direction for how sex might go. For example, which sexual behaviours are appropriate from each individual, and what order they are performed in.

When faced with a sexual challenge that disrupts the typical routine, having a flexible sexual script could allow couples to shift to different sexual behaviours that work better at that time. Couples with rigid sexual scripts might struggle to adapt their routine when facing challenges.



we wanted to know:

1

Is sexual script flexibility is associated with greater sexual wellbeing for long-term couples?

2

How does sexual script flexibility affect these three facets of sexual wellbeing:

- dyadic sexual desire (the desire each member of a couple feels for one another)
- sexual satisfaction
- sexual distress



n=74
couples

We recruited 74 mixed and same gender long-term couples.



Each couple completed an online survey about sexual script flexibility and the three facets of sexual desire. The couples repeated the survey four months later.



we found that...

We found that when an individual reported **higher sexual script flexibility** in the face of recent sexual challenges, both they and their partner were more likely to report **greater sexual satisfaction**.

Individuals who reported high sexual script flexibility were also more likely to report **greater desire** for their partner and **lower sexual distress**.

Unexpectedly, we also found that individuals' **greater sexual script flexibility** was linked to their **partner's lower sexual script flexibility**, as well as their own **dyadic sexual desire** four months later.



so, what does all of this mean?

The results **confirmed our hypothesis** that greater sexual script flexibility is associated with greater sexual satisfaction for individuals and their partners! This is significant because it **provides support** for interventions in couples or sex therapy that help to **modify rigid sexual scripts.**



However, given the **unexpected finding** that an individual's higher sexual script flexibility is associated with their partner's lower sexual script flexibility and their own lower dyadic sexual desire four months later, the nuances of how couples' sexual scripts affect one another should be **investigated in further research**. This finding suggests that greater sexual script flexibility could **decrease individuals' desire over time**. Future research should aim to better understand these associations.



This is a summary of our published article:

Bouchard, K. N., Cormier, M.u, Huberman, J. S.p, & Rosen, N. O. (2023). Sexual script flexibility and sexual wellbeing in long-term couples: A dyadic longitudinal study. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 20, 945-954.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jsxmed/qdad067>



Blog post and infographic by Carol Southall