


# How you respond to “not tonight” matters, too: Partner responses to sexual rejection and sexual and relationship well-being in couples coping with low desire

This study explores how different partner responses to sexual rejection impact relationship and sexual well-being in couples coping with low sexual desire (SIAD). This study seeks to examine these effects over time using daily and long-term data.

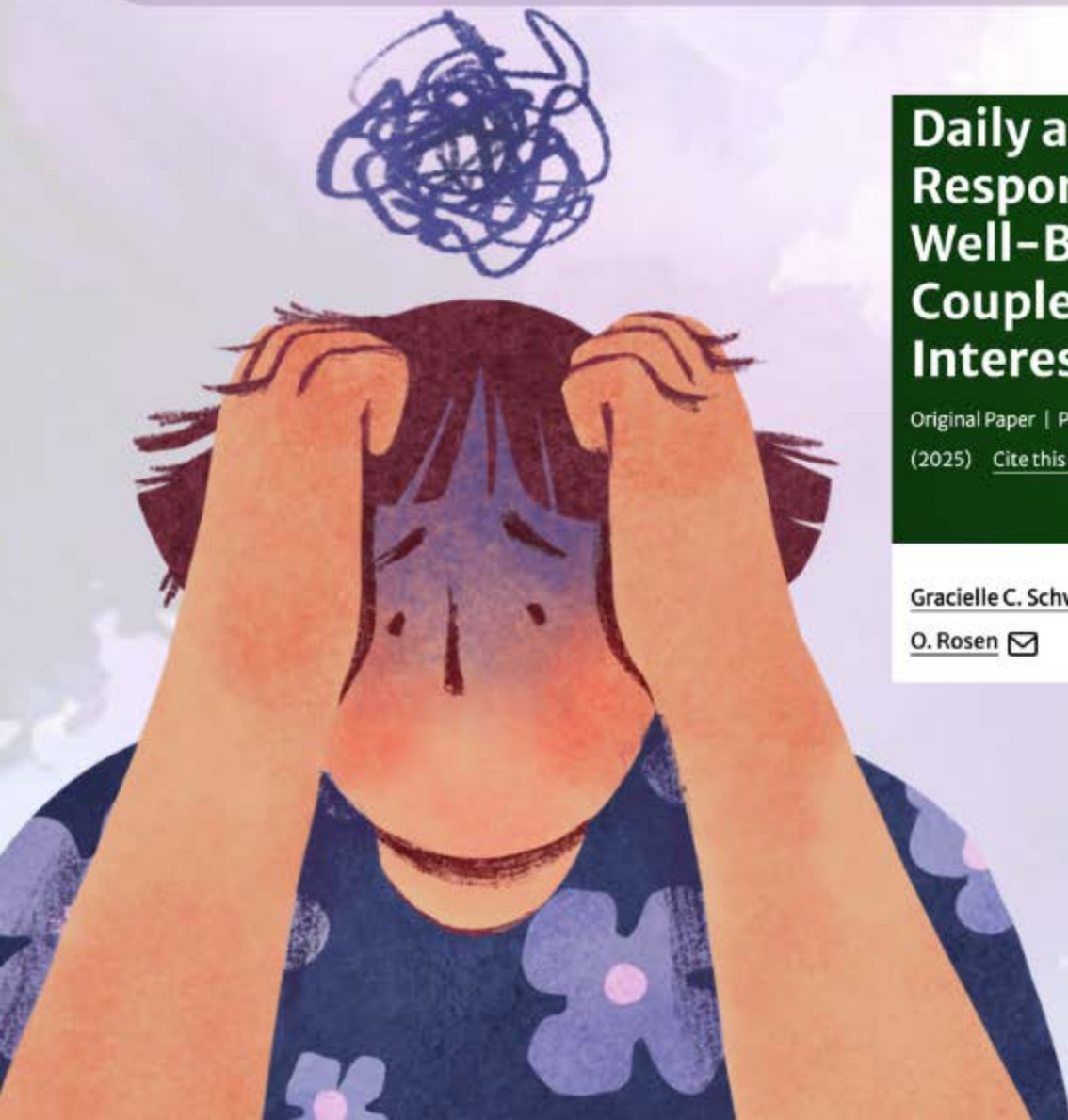

## Daily and Prospective Associations Between Responses to Sexual Rejection and Sexual Well-Being and Relationship Satisfaction in Couples Coping with Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder

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*Scroll to see  
what we found!*



Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder (SIAD), or clinically low sexual desire, is one of the most common sexual concerns reported by women with studies suggesting that 7% to 23% of women experience symptoms. SIAD can significantly impact sexual and relationship satisfaction.



A common issue among couples coping with SIAD is sexual rejection - where a partner's advances are declined.

Responses to sexual rejection, such as...

- 1) Understanding** (responsiveness, reaffirming positive regard towards a partner)
- 2) Resentful** (expressing anger, guilt-inducing), insecure (responding with feelings of sadness or hurt)
- 3) Enticing** (attempting to re-initiate sex or change a partner's mind)...

may impact the sexual well-being in both partners



# we wanted to know:

1

How different partner responses to sexual rejection impact both short-term and long-term sexual and relationship well-being in couples coping with SIAD

2

Whether understanding responses improve satisfaction over time and whether resentful, insecure, or enticing responses contribute to distress or desire shifts.



# 232

couples were recruited, where one couple - a woman or assigned female at birth (AFAB) individual - met criteria for SIAD



232 couples completed the baseline survey

200 couples completed 56-days of daily diaries

170 couples completed the 6-month follow-up survey

All couples completed the measures of sexual rejection, sexual satisfaction, partner-focused sexual desire, sexual distress, and relationship satisfaction independently.

# we found that...

**Responses to sexual rejection** were **stronger** in same-day outcomes than long-term effects.

All types of responses for sexual rejection were **linked to increased same-day sexual distress** for both partners.

**Sexual rejection** itself can be a **significant emotional challenge**.

For partners of individuals with SIAD, all response types were **associated with greater sexual desire** for their partner they may be **more likely to initiate sexual activity and experience sexual rejection**, on days when they experience greater desire.



**Understanding responses** were **linked to greater relationship satisfaction** - especially over time. May **lead to short-term sexual distress**, likely due to avoidance of sexual communication or activity.

**Resentful and insecure responses** were **linked to poorer sexual and relationship outcomes** for both partners. **Partners showing insecure responses sometimes reported greater sexual satisfaction over time** - due to increased relationship-promoting behaviours from the individual with SIAD.

**Enticing responses showed mixed results.** Occasionally **associated with improved sexual satisfaction** they were also **linked to sexual distress**, due to whether enticing responses were perceived as non-coercive and respectful of boundaries, or as insistent and misaligned with the individual with SIAD's needs

# so, what does all of this mean?

These findings highlight an opportunity for therapists to help couples navigate sexual challenges by addressing how partners respond to rejection. Through psychoeducation, clinicians can encourage supportive reactions like understanding while reducing harmful behaviors such as resentment. Therapy can also help partners manage insecurities, shift negative thought patterns, and explore respectful ways to reconnect. By focusing on relationship dynamics rather than individual blame, tailored interventions can foster healthier, more compassionate communication.

## This is a summary of our published article:

Schwenck, G. C., Bergeron, S., Huberman, J. S., Impett, E. A., Oliveira, H., & Rosen, N. O. (2024). Daily and prospective associations between responses to sexual rejection and sexual well-being and relationship satisfaction in couples coping with Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-024-03066-2>



Blog post and infographic by Grace Schwenck and Audrey Chu