

Couple Therapy for Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder: Testing What Works

Our study aimed to test a new Cognitive-Behavioural Couples Therapy (CBCT) intervention for couples where one member was experiencing Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder (SIAD).

Original Articles

Feasibility of a Cognitive-Behavioral Couple Therapy Intervention for Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder

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Pages 765-775 | Published online: 09 Apr 2024



*Scroll to see
what we found!*



SIAD is a sexual problem experienced by many individuals. Symptoms include low desire, few to no sexual thoughts, and limited initiation of sexual activity that last at least 6 months and cause distress.

BUT

...Despite the negative psychological, sexual and relational impacts of SIAD on individuals and their partners, there are no empirically tested couple-based therapies available for SIAD.



To address this gap...

We adapted a new CBCT intervention for SIAD. The goal of this intervention was to:

- Change negative thoughts and beliefs related to low desire and arousal.
- Highlight how both partners were affected by SIAD.
- Improve coping abilities and couple interactions related to SIAD.



we wanted to know:

1

Is the intervention delivery feasible (homework completion, therapist adherence to treatment manual)?

2

Is the intervention accepted by participants (therapy attendance, treatment satisfaction)?

3

Are there significant improvements in clinical outcomes, such as higher sexual desire and lower distress after treatment?

n = 19
couples*

One member of
the couple was
experiencing
SIAD.

*94.7% of the couples in the sample were mixed-gender/sex couples, which we recognize may not be representative of all couples' experiences of SIAD. Future studies are addressing this limitation.



Couples attended 16 CBCT sessions. We asked couples to complete one survey before starting treatment, one at the end of treatment, and one at 6-months follow up.

we found that...

Immediately after treatment and at 6-months follow up, women experienced an **increase** in **sexual desire**, and a **decrease** in **sexual distress**. Partners also reported a **decrease** in **sexual distress** from before treatment to after treatment and at 6-months follow up.

AND

Therapists adhered to the treatment manual 96.8% of the time, the study had low dropout rates (10.5%), as well as high rates of homework completion (82%) and high treatment satisfaction (7.3/10 on average).

so, what does all of this mean?

- This intervention may be a promising option for couples coping with SIAD. It addressed **couples' unique experiences** with SIAD, and allowed therapists to **adapt sessions** accordingly, such as incorporating touch exercises into the sessions for couples who identified this as an issue.
- The high level of homework adherence was likely associated with **higher sexual desire and lower distress**.
- The intervention targeted **interpersonal factors** associated with SIAD (e.g., sexual motivation and emotional regulation), which was associated with **reductions in sexual distress**, further highlighting that this intervention may be **suitable for couples coping with SIAD**.



Our study was successful in developing and testing a CBCT intervention for SIAD. Due to our small, mostly mixed-gender/sex sample of couples, we are currently conducting a similar study using CBCT in the context of SIAD using a randomized control trial. This will allow us to examine a larger and more diverse sample of couples and compare findings to a control group.



This is a summary of our published article:

Katrina N. Bouchard, Sophie Bergeron & Natalie O. Rosen (2025) Feasibility of a cognitive-behavioral couple therapy intervention for sexual interest/arousal disorder, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 62:5, 765-775, DOI: 10.1080/00224499.2024.2333477



Blog post and infographic by Alice Bourne