

THE POWER OF USING SELF-COMPASSION FOR SIAD

This study explored whether using **self-compassion** is associated with lower sexual distress and improved relationship satisfaction in couples coping with **Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder (SIAD)**.



JOURNAL ARTICLE

Cross-sectional and prospective associations between self-compassion and sexual distress in couples coping with sexual interest/arousal disorder

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we found!**



WHAT IS SEXUAL INTEREST AND AROUSAL DISORDER (SIAD)?

Female Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder, which we refer to as **SIAD***, is among the most common sexual difficulties experienced by **cisgender and transgender women**, and is one of the most common reasons couples seek sex therapy[1].



[1] Witting et al., 2008

According to the DSM-5-TR, **SIAD** is characterized by persistent **low sexual interest and/or arousal** that causes significant distress and lasts for at least 6 months [2]. Both with women with SIAD and their partners report **high levels of sexual distress** [3].

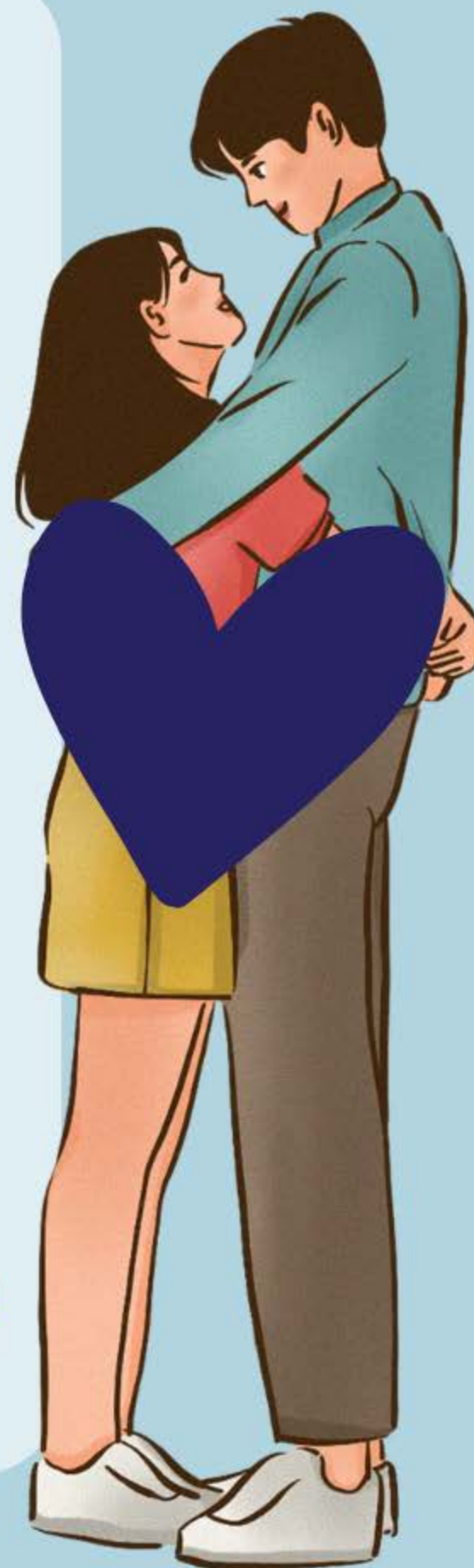
[2] American Psychiatric Association, 2013 [3] Rosen et al., 2019

*At the Couples and Sexual Health Laboratory, we remove the 'Female' from Female Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder (FSIAD) for inclusivity purposes. This terminology recognizes that individuals who do not identify as female, including non-binary and transgender people, may also meet the diagnostic criteria for SIAD.

Research shows that emotional regulation strategies, like **self compassion**, may **benefit couples**.

Self compassion includes:

- **Self-kindness:** Treating oneself with kindness and understanding during difficult times.
- **Common humanity:** recognizing that struggles and imperfections are part of the shared human experience
- **Mindfulness:** being aware of difficult thoughts and emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them.



...Self compassion is linked to **higher sexual and relationship well-being**, as well as **lower levels of psychological distress**. But, the role of self-compassion in couples coping with SIAD remains unexplored.

WE WANTED TO KNOW:

1

Does self-compassion lower sexual distress in couples coping with SIAD?

2

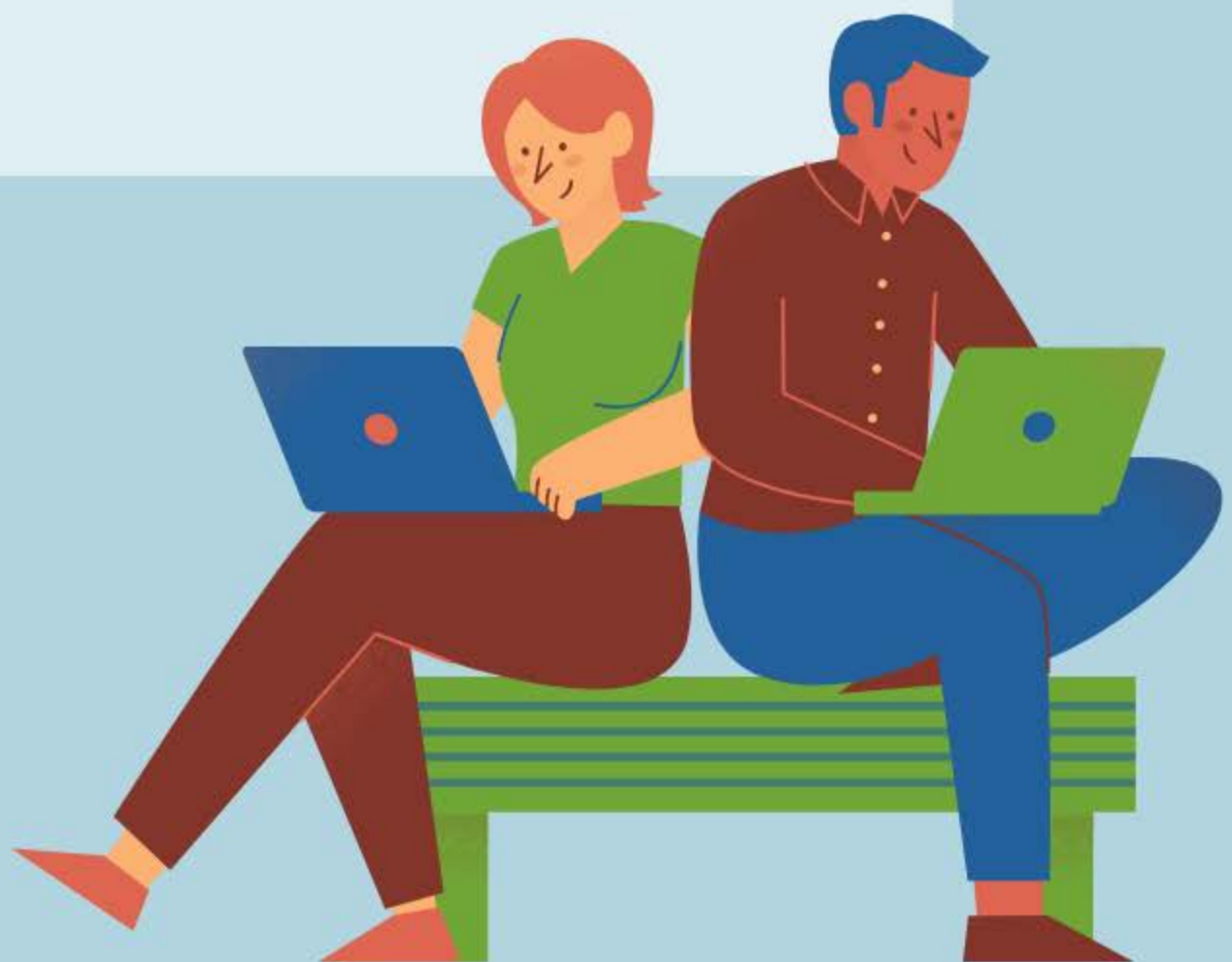
Do these associations differ across sex and gender diverse couples?



**N = 263
COUPLES**

Where one member of the couple met DSM-5-TR criteria for SIAD.

Participants completed questionnaires assessing sexual distress and relationship satisfaction at baseline and 6 months later.



WE FOUND THAT...

Higher levels of self-compassion were associated with **lower levels of sexual distress** among individuals with SIAD and their partners at baseline. Additionally, **higher levels** of a **partner's self-compassion** were associated with **lower sexual distress** in individuals with SIAD.

The association between higher self-compassion and lower sexual distress was **especially strong in sexually diverse couples**, specifically when one or both partners identified as a sexual minority.



SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

Using self-compassion may be an important factor in reducing sexual distress for both individuals with SIAD and their partners. Self-compassion **may help those with SIAD cope with feelings of guilt and inadequacy related to sexual desire disorders.** One explanation for why the association between self-compassion and lower sexual distress was stronger in sexually diverse relationships may be that sexually diverse couples may experience **additional stressors related to stigma and discrimination.** Self-compassion may be particularly beneficial in helping couples coping with SIAD in sexually diverse relationships **navigate difficult emotions and reduce sexual distress.**



SO, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

- Incorporating self-compassion into treatment for sexual distress, such as **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy**, or **Compassion-Focused Therapy**, may be important for couples coping with SIAD.
- More couple-based interventions are needed to address the **interpersonal nature of SIAD and sexual distress**.
- Researchers should continue to investigate how self-compassion influences sexual distress in sex and gender diverse couples.



THIS IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

Massé-Pfister, M., Rosen, N. O., Bigras, N., Girouard, A., Perrier Léonard, D., Bergeron, S. (2025). Cross-sectional and prospective associations between self-compassion and sexual distress in couples coping with Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 1-12. doi:10.1093/jsxmed/qdaf007



Infographic by Alice Bourne