

THE POWER OF PARTNER RESPONSIVENESS FOR COUPLES COPING WITH SIAD

This study examined how different aspects of **intimacy** influence sexual well-being in couples coping with Sexual Interest and Arousal Disorder (**SIAD**).

Intimacy and sexual well-being in couples coping with sexual interest/arousal disorder: the importance of perceived partner responsiveness

Delphine Perrier Léonard ^{1 2}, Natalie O Rosen ³, Noémie Bigras ^{2 4}, Maude Massé-Pfister ^{1 2},
Sophie Bergeron ^{1 2}

**Scroll to see what
we found!**



WHAT IS SEXUAL INTEREST AND AROUSAL DISORDER (SIAD)?

Female Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder, which we refer to as **SIAD***, is one of the most common sexual difficulties experienced by **cisgender and transgender women**, and one of the most common reasons as to why 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]. Couples with SIAD 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) in favour of SIAD 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...

Existing research demonstrates that **relational factors** (e.g., intimacy, attraction to one's partner, closeness) and **interpersonal dynamics** (e.g., partner responses to sexual rejection) may be **important for couples coping with SIAD**.



Intimacy may also play a significant role in **improving sexual well-being** among couples coping with SIAD, yet little research has examined it from a couple-focused perspective.

Intimacy consists of three components: **self-disclosure** (sharing personal thoughts and feelings), **perceived partner disclosure** (perceiving that a partner shares their thoughts and feelings), and **perceived partner responsiveness** (feeling understood and validated by a partner).



WE WANTED TO KNOW:

1

What are the associations between the **three components of intimacy** and sexual well-being in individuals with SIAD and their partners?

2

Do these associations differ according to couple type (e.g., **cisgender heterosexual** couples vs **sex and gender diverse** (SGD) couples)?

WHAT DID COUPLES DO?

**N = 263
COUPLES**

Women and gender diverse individuals with SIAD and their romantic partners

Participants completed measures of:

- Intimacy
- Sexual satisfaction
- Sexual distress
- Sexual function



WE FOUND THAT...



When partners of individuals with SIAD perceived **greater partner responsiveness** from the individual with SIAD:

- ↑ sexual satisfaction in **both members of the couple**
- ↑ sexual function in partners
- ↓ sexual distress in partners

When partners of individuals with SIAD perceived **greater partner disclosure** from the individual with SIAD:

- ↓ sexual distress in partners





ADDITIONAL FINDINGS...

When individuals with SIAD perceived **greater partner responsiveness** from their partner:

↑ sexual function in the individual with SIAD in **sexual/gender-diverse relationships**

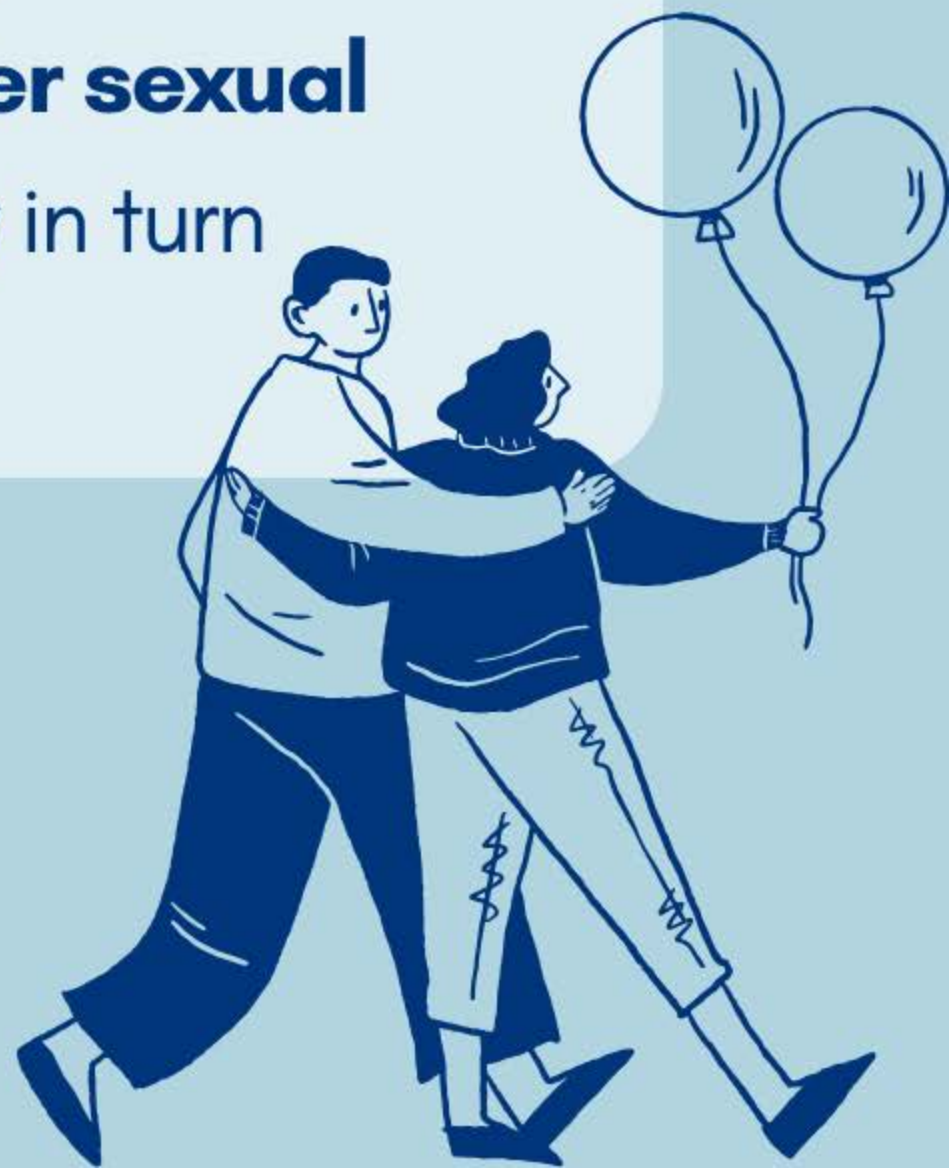
When partners of individuals with SIAD perceived **greater partner responsiveness** from the individual with SIAD:

↑ sexual function in the individual with SIAD in **cisgender heterosexual relationships**



SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

- Feeling **understood, accepted, and supported** by a partner is associated with **more positive sexual experiences**.
- A caring, understanding partner response **may reduce feelings of sexual anxiety, inadequacy, and distress**.
- Feeling understood by a partner may encourage individuals to prioritize **emotional closeness over sexual performance**, which may in turn enhance sexual function.



AND...

Individuals with SIAD in **SGD relationships** may experience **identity-related stressors** that can impair sexual function. Partner responsiveness may play a role in **buffering stress** and **improving sexual outcomes** for SGD couples specifically.

Findings support a **couple-based approach** to SIAD treatment. Strengthening **connection and closeness** through enhanced partner responsiveness may **improve sexual difficulties** in couples.



THIS IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

Perrier Léonard, D., Rosen, N.O., Bigras, N., Massé-Pfister, M., Bergeron, S. (2025). Intimacy and sexual well-being in couples coping with Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsxmed/qdaf119>



Infographic by Alice Bourne