

CAPITALIZATION RESPONSES AND POSTPARTUM WELL-BEING

This study examined associations between capitalization responses to positive parenting events and sexual and relationship well-being in new parent couples.

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Capitalization responses to daily parenting events: Associations with couples' postpartum sexual and relational well-being

[Inês M Tavares](#)¹, [Samantha J Dawson](#)², [Natalie O Rosen](#)³



**Scroll to see what
we found!**





The **postpartum period** – the year after giving birth to a child – is frequently accompanied by **declines in sexual and relationship well-being**, although it is also full of opportunities for **connection**.

[1] Doss et al. (2009), [2] Twenge et al. (2003)

AND

...One way of promoting connection in couples is through **capitalization, the disclosure of positive events to a partner**. Partners' responses to these disclosures are associated with **sexual and relationship well-being**; however, these associations have not been studied in **new parent couples**.

[3] Gable & Haidt (2010), [4] Gable et al. (2004)



WHAT ARE CAPITALIZATION RESPONSES?

We examined **four different types** of capitalization responses:

1. **Active-Constructive:** responding enthusiastically, asking questions, encouraging elaboration
2. **Passive-Constructive:** conveying warmth and support in quiet
3. **Active-Destructive:** downplaying the event or emphasizing negative aspects
4. **Passive-Destructive:** Ignoring the disclosure, or changing the subject



WE WANTED TO KNOW



We examined whether partners' responses to **positive parenting capitalization attempts** were associated with their own and their partner's **sexual and relationship well-being**.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Higher perceived **active-constructive partner responses** to positive parenting capitalization attempts would be associated with **greater sexual and relationship well-being** for both partners.

Hypothesis 2: Higher perceived **passive or destructive partner responses** would be associated with **poorer sexual and relationship well-being** for both partners.



WHAT DID COUPLES DO?

**N = 240 NEW PARENT
COUPLES**



Couples completed **21 daily diaries** between 3–4 months postpartum, **which measured:**

- Perceived partner responsiveness to capitalization attempts
- Sexual satisfaction
- Sexual desire
- Sexual distress
- Relationship satisfaction
- Relationship conflict
- Perceived partner responsiveness

WE FOUND THAT...

On days when **birthing parents** perceived **greater active-constructive** responses from their partner, they reported **↑ sexual desire and relationship satisfaction**.

On days when **partners** perceived **greater active-constructive** responses from the birthing parent, they reported **↑ sexual desire and ↓ relationship conflict**, and both reported **↑ relationship satisfaction and perceived partner responsiveness**.



WE ALSO FOUND THAT...

On days when **birthing parents** perceived **greater passive-constructive** responses from their partner, partners reported **↓ perceived partner responsiveness**.

On days when **partners perceived greater passive-constructive** responses from the birthing parent, they reported **↑ sexual distress**, and **↓ relationship satisfaction and perceived partner responsiveness**. Birthing parents reported **↑ sexual distress**.



SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

Our results highlight the importance of **responsiveness in fostering sexual and emotional connection** within romantic relationships. They further suggest that **engaged responses to a partner's positive disclosures**, even when unrelated to sexuality, may communicate sexual interest and contribute to greater sexual desire on a day-to-day basis.

Our findings extend previous literature by highlighting that **passive-destructive** responses have the **opposite effect of active-constructive responses**. We also found that nonbirthing parents might be **particularly vulnerable to negative reactions** when sharing positive parenting experiences, which may reflect **heightened sensitivity surrounding their parenting role**.



AND...



Our findings emphasize the role of **emotionally responsive partners** in fostering relational and sexual well-being among postpartum couples. They also suggest that **incorporating capitalization skills** into couple-based interventions may be beneficial. Helping couples **identify and respond enthusiastically to each other's positive experiences**, especially those related to parenting, may help strengthen relationship and sexual well-being.



THIS IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

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Infographic by Alice Bourne