

Wives worry, husbands get frustrated when problems arise

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Over the long term, men report higher levels of emotional support, less marital strain than women.

Problems in long-term marriages trigger much different responses in wives and husbands, a new study finds.

Researchers asked 722 couples who were married an average of 39 years if they could talk to their spouse about their worries, and if they believed their significant other understands how they feel. The [men](#) and women were also asked whether they felt appreciated, or if their spouse argues with them, makes them feel tense, or gets on their nerves.

According to the report, when [marital problems](#) arose, wives said they tended to get worried, sad and frustrated. In contrast, husbands just said they feel frustrated, whether giving support to their spouse or receiving it.

"Men who provide high levels of support to their wives may feel this frustration if they believe that they would rather be focusing their energies on another activity," study author Deborah Carr, a professor of sociology at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., said in a university news release.

"The men don't really want to talk about it or spend too much time thinking about it," she added. "Men often don't want to express vulnerable emotions, while women are much more comfortable expressing sadness or worry."

Carr said the findings may be partly due to the age of the couples, with one spouse having to be at least 60. Men of this generation may feel inadequate if they need too much support from their wives, she suggested.

"For women, getting a lot of support from their spouse is a positive experience. Older men, however, may feel frustrated receiving lots of support from their wife, especially if it makes them feel helpless or less competent," Carr said.

Interestingly, [husbands](#) were more likely to give their marriage a positive rating and reported much higher levels of emotional [support](#) and lower levels of marital strain than [wives](#).

The study was published recently in the *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*.

More information: The American Psychological Association has more about [healthy relationships](#).

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