

Better to include your better half in social posts, study finds

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If you're in a relationship and like to share details about your life on social media, do yourself a favor and include your partner. It will probably help your personal life.

That's the takeaway from a series of five studies conducted by

researchers at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Kansas. In their new published paper, they found sharing information online can do more harm to [romantic relationships](#) than good. They did, however, find a way to counteract its [negative effects](#). If you often post about your life, include your better half in the post.

The research is the first of its kind to systematically examine how different circumstances can affect whether a [partner](#) perceives their loved one's online disclosure to be positive or negative.

"Prior research has shown that self-disclosure positively affects offline relationships," said Dr. Juwon Lee, a post-doctoral researcher in Carnegie Mellon's Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences. "We wanted to explore whether that would remain the case in an online context, where users can share detailed information with large audiences—a phenomenon that typically wouldn't be possible in person."

Their paper's five studies built on each other to attempt to resolve inconsistencies in literature on online disclosure and relationships. In doing so, the researchers found underlying conditions driving the negative effects of online disclosure. They compared how posting [personal information](#) online affected intimacy and satisfaction in online and offline contexts, romantic relationships and friendships, and when the partner posted about themselves versus the relationship as a whole.

They found when one person frequently shares personal information with large groups on social media, it negatively impacts their partner's satisfaction and feelings of intimacy in the relationship. The research suggests a romantic partner could feel left out or see themselves as less special.

"On the other hand, when you include a significant other in your post, perhaps as confirming a relationship status online or posting a photo

together, we found that it counters the negative effects of online disclosure, increasing the feelings of intimacy and satisfaction," said Omri Gillath, a professor of psychology at KU who co-authored the study. "This validates the [relationship](#), and a partner likely would see their significant other's post as caring and inclusive."

Gillath, Lee and fellow co-author Andrew Miller, a medical school student at KU, did find one instance when sharing information with large audiences didn't have negative effects. Friendships weren't affected by overly personal posts.

"For many of us, sharing our feelings and daily experiences on [social media](#) is one of the main ways we stay in contact with friends and family," Lee said. "Because of this cultural shift from face-to-face or [phone conversations](#), it's important that we understand how our usage of these technologies affect our personal relationships. Additionally, other research has found that people benefit from sharing information about themselves, which might be why people engage in it so much. But it's important to know the full picture, and understand that sometimes sharing can be bad for you."

The paper, "Effects of Self- and Partner's Online Disclosure on Relationship Intimacy and Satisfaction," is published in the journal *PLOS ONE*.

Provided by Carnegie Mellon University

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