

# Relating to someone else's situation 'equally' can be validating, shows research

May 24 2023

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Have you ever wanted to tell someone you were in the same situation as them, but you refrained because you didn't want to seem competitive or steal their spotlight?

Don't hold back. People want you to share, according to a newly published study conducted at the University of Michigan. The findings appear in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

Researchers used several studies to examine how people use and perceive "reciprocal [self-disclosure](#)," which is responding to a self-disclosure with a self-disclosure. They studied more than 2,600 conversations on Reddit and Facebook, via text message and other settings.

The findings indicated that people felt validated, understood and cared for when respondents reciprocally shared their similar experiences.

People may be reluctant to reciprocally self-disclose because they're afraid of stealing the spotlight from the other person.

"We often choose to conceal our own news—to refrain from reciprocal self-disclosure—especially in positive situations," said Zachary Reese, who conducted the research while seeking his U-M doctoral degree.

But Reese, an assistant psychology professor at the University of San Francisco, and co-author Kristin Orrach, a master's degree in social work graduate, noted a caveat.

People hate hearing reciprocal self-disclosures that reveal more impressive accomplishments. People hate being one-upped in positive contexts, which "may make others feel like their accomplishments or blessings are less impressive or exciting," Reese said.

The bottom line: If you have comparable accomplishments, similar downfalls or worse tragedies, share them, Orrach said.

**More information:** Zachary A. Reese et al, Reciprocal Self-

Disclosure: Although Respondents are Reluctant to Steal the Spotlight, Self-Disclosers Feel Validated, Understood, and Cared for when Respondents Share Comparable Experiences, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/02654075231174530](https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075231174530)

Provided by University of Michigan

Citation: Relating to someone else's situation 'equally' can be validating, shows research (2023, May 24) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-05-situation-equally-validating.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.