

# Couples: Caring for oneself can lead to happier relationships—on both sides

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Being more forgiving of your own shortcomings in a romantic relationship can lead to happier couples. This is the result of a new study by the Otto Friedrich University Bamberg and the Martin Luther

University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU), and [published](#) in the journal *Personal Relationships*.

A total of 209 heterosexual couples were surveyed. The results show that men in particular benefit if their partner is self-compassionate. The results provide important information for couples' therapies, as self-compassion can be learned.

"Self-compassion is the act of having a caring, kind and attentive attitude towards oneself—especially with regard to your own shortcomings," explains lead author Dr. Robert Körner from the University of Bamberg. "We found that one's ability to react compassionately to one's own inadequacies, suffering and pain in the relationship benefits both members of the couple. In this way, an actor's self-compassion not only improves their own happiness, but also their partner's."

In the study, men in [heterosexual relationships](#) in particular showed a high level of relationship satisfaction if their partner was self-compassionate within the relationship.

It has already been established that self-compassion levels can affect personal well-being. They can also influence how people experience their romantic relationships, how satisfied they are in their relationships and how they interact with partners. This includes, for example, how they resolve conflicts or deal with jealousy. In the current study, the researchers have gone one step further to gain a deeper insight into the potential for self-compassion to influence romantic relationships.

"So far, studies have mainly been conducted that relate to one person in the relationship. We interviewed both people in the [romantic relationship](#)," explains Dr. Nancy Tandler from the Institute of Psychology at MLU.

The researchers used a comprehensive survey for relationship satisfaction in order to be able to take various aspects of the romantic relationship into account. The questions asked of the [test subjects](#) centered on how satisfied they were with their sexuality and what long-term potential they attributed to their relationship. The researchers also looked at the connection at a relationship-specific level by analyzing not only individual self-compassion, but also self-compassion within the relationship.

"This approach takes into account the fact that people behave differently in different areas of life," explains Professor Astrid Schütz from the University of Bamberg. For example, there can be a difference in how self-compassionate a person is after a conflict in a romantic relationship and how self-compassionate the person is after a conflict at work. For the study, the researchers surveyed a total of 209 German-speaking [heterosexual couples](#) between January and December 2022 in the form of online questionnaires.

"In addition to the substantive findings, we conclude that it is important to consider the interrelationship between the relationship partners in order to understand the full potential of self-compassion as a resource for happy relationships," says Nancy Tandler.

Further research should also consider same-sex relationships and couples from other nations in particular, as expectations of romantic relationships can differ depending on culture, relationship model, sex and gender roles.

According to the researchers, the results of the current study can be particularly useful for couples' therapies, as [self-compassion](#) can be facilitated and learned. For example, when experiencing failure or personal inadequacy, you could ask yourself: "How would I behave towards a boyfriend or girlfriend if he or she were in such a situation?"

You could then apply this type of care to yourself.

**More information:** Robert Körner et al, Is caring for oneself relevant to happy relationship functioning? Exploring associations between self-compassion and romantic relationship satisfaction in actors and partners, *Personal Relationships* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/pere.12535](https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12535)

Provided by Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg

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