

Why you may lose that loving feeling after tying the knot

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Dating couples whose dreams include marriage would do well to step back and reflect upon the type of support they'll need from their partners when they cross the threshold, a new Northwestern University study suggests.

Will the partner who supports your hopes and aspirations while you are dating also help you fulfill important responsibilities and obligations that come with [marriage](#)? The answer to that question could make a difference in how satisfied you are after tying the knot.

Believing a partner is there to help you grow into the person you aspire to be predicted higher relationship satisfaction for both dating and married couples, the study showed. But the belief that your partner helps you live up to your responsibilities and uphold your commitments only predicted higher relationship satisfaction after marriage.

For dating couples, the relationship itself tends to revolve around whether things are moving forward. [Happiness](#) with a partner depends on whether the relationship will grow into something more, whether a partner will support the dreams the other eventually hopes to achieve.

For married couples, the feeling that their partners are helping them to advance their relationships and realize their ideal achievements is still important. But the relationships of married couples, now more interconnected both practically and psychologically, tend to revolve around upholding the commitment made to their partners. Unlike dating

couples, married couples also put a high premium on their partners' support of whatever they determine to be necessary obligations.

"In other words, the feelings of being loved and supported that people use to judge who makes a good girlfriend or boyfriend may not be completely trustworthy in deciding who makes a good husband or wife," said Daniel Molden, assistant professor of psychology at Northwestern and lead author of the study. "Those feelings may only partially capture the emotions that will determine your satisfaction with the person you marry."

The findings, Molden said, could be important in explaining why so many marriages fall apart.

The study, which will be published in the July issue of *Psychological Science*, included 92 heterosexual dating couples and 77 married couples. They completed a battery of questionnaires that included an assessment of how much they thought their partner understood and supported both the hopes and responsibilities they had set for themselves. To measure how different types of perceived support were related to happiness with the relationship, couples also completed well-validated measures of satisfaction, intimacy and trust.

Previous research overwhelmingly demonstrates an important connection between feelings about partner support and satisfaction with a [relationship](#) but does not reveal any differences for dating versus married couples.

By identifying different ways in which people feel supported by their partners, the new Northwestern study goes beyond past work to show that support for maintaining perceived responsibilities seems to be important for satisfaction only after marriage.

The study also showed that different types of perceived support predicted differences in people's overall [satisfaction](#) with their lives.

"People planning to get married should think about not only how their partners support what they hope to achieve but also about how their partners support what they feel obligated to accomplish," Molden said. "We could end up with both happier marriages and more satisfied people in general."

Source: Northwestern University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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