

For better romantic relationships, be true to yourself

March 15 2010, by Jeff Grabmeier

Be true to yourself, and better romantic relationships will follow, research suggests.

A new study examined how [dating](#) relationships were affected by the ability of people to see themselves clearly and objectively, act in ways consistent with their beliefs, and interact honestly and truthfully with others.

In other words, the ability to follow the words of William Shakespeare: "to thine own self be true," said Amy Brunell, lead author of the study and assistant professor of psychology at Ohio State University's Newark campus.

Findings showed that college students who reported being more true to themselves also reported more positive dating relationships.

"If you're true to yourself, it is easier to act in ways that build intimacy in relationships, and that's going to make your [relationship](#) more fulfilling," Brunell said.

The study appears online in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* and will be published in an upcoming print edition.

Participating in the study were 62 [heterosexual couples](#), all of whom were college students. The participants completed a long list of questionnaires in three separate sessions that took place about two weeks

apart.

The first set of questionnaires probed how true participants were to themselves, a characteristic that [psychologists](#) call "dispositional authenticity." This was measured through the answers to questions like "For better or for worse, I am aware of who I truly am."

In the second phase, participants answered questions examining various aspects of their relationship functioning, including their willingness to discuss their emotions with their partner, and whether they kept secrets.

The third phase involved measures of relationship satisfaction and personal well-being.

Overall, the study found that both men and women who reported being more true to themselves also behaved in more intimate and less destructive ways with their partner, and that led to them feeling their relationship was more positive. In addition, they also reported greater personal well-being.

But the study revealed an interesting gender difference in how authenticity in men and women affected their partners, Brunell said.

Men who were more true to themselves had partners who showed more healthy relationship behaviors. However, there was no significant relationship between women being true to themselves and men's relationship behaviors.

That finding may be the result of relationship gender roles in our society, she said.

"Typically in dating and marital relationships, the women tend to be 'in charge' of intimacy in the relationship," Brunell explained.

"So when men have this dispositional authenticity, and want to have an open, honest relationship, it makes women's job easier - they can more easily regulate intimacy," she said.

But since men have less of a role in developing relationship [intimacy](#), they were not affected as much by whether their partners were true to themselves or not.

The study also confirmed findings from other studies that show that when men or women act in constructive, healthy ways in a relationship, it increases their partners' satisfaction with the relationship.

Brunell said being true to yourself doesn't mean that you should accept all of your flaws and not try to make positive changes in your life. But you should be aware of both your limitations and areas where you can improve. One payoff could be better [romantic relationships](#).

"It shouldn't be a surprise, but being true to yourself is linked to having healthier and happier relationships for both men and women," she said.

Provided by The Ohio State University

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