

# Couples in the same place emotionally stay together, study says

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(Medical Xpress) -- Despite life's ups and downs, couples whose feelings are in sync consistently over time are more likely to stay together, says a University of California, Davis, study.

“We found that the longer periods of stability for the couple were great predictors of staying together,” said Emilio Ferrer, a psychology professor and principal author of a research paper on the topic.

Researchers looked at surveys of 131 [couples](#) of various ages, married and unmarried, and analyzed their responses to daily questionnaires for at least 60 days and as long as 90 days. The test subjects recorded their emotions for nine positive feelings such as “trusted,” “physically intimate” and “free,” and nine negative mood feelings, such as

“discouraged,” “lonely,” “angry” and “deceived.”

The researchers followed up after one to two years to inquire about each test pair’s status as a couple. The researchers were able to get the information from 94 couples; 72 of them, or 76 percent, reported still being together.

“Our emotions fluctuate every day and throughout the day ... and there is substantial variation in the way individuals react to different things that happen,” Ferrer said.

Yet, even if both halves of a couple react differently, they can still be in the same place emotionally — and have a better chance of staying together, Ferrer said.

Differences in the emotions between members of a couple, even for three or four days at a time, was a predictor of couples breaking up. Ferrer said this was true even for couples whose times of unhappiness were followed by periods of happiness.

“If they move around on the chart and are not consistent, they were more likely to break up,” he said.

The paper, “Analyzing the Dynamics of Affective Dyadic Interactions Using Patterns of Intra- and Inter-individual Variability,” is due to be published in the February issue of *Multivariate Behavioral Research*.

The paper can be accessed [here](#). The National Science Foundation supported the research. Co-authors: Joel S. Steele, a former student in Ferrer’s lab and current assistant professor at Portland State University; and Fushing Hsieh, a UC Davis statistics professor.

All couples surveyed were from the Sacramento region, and ranged in

age from 19 to 74. The length of their relationships ranged from eight months to 35 years.

Of the 113 couples, 19 never responded when asked if they were still together one to two years later. Ferrer said it was unclear whether those who did not answer had moved, were tired of the study or had broken up.

Two people in their 70s comprised one of the most emotionally consistent relationships, Ferrer said.

“So, either they figured it out by then, or they had always been this way,” he said.

Provided by UC Davis

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