

Childhood emotional maltreatment causes troubled romantic relationships

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People who experience Childhood Emotional Maltreatment (CEM) are more likely to have troubled romantic relationships in adult years, according to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) researchers.

In two separate studies, doctoral candidate Dana Lassri and Prof. Golan Shahar of BGU's Department of Psychology examined the stability and satisfaction of [intimate relationships](#) among college students with a history of CEM. The studies, published in the *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology*, suggest that emotional abuse as a child impacted relationship fulfillment due to self-criticism. Participants had an extremely strong tendency to bash themselves, and this interfered with their relationship satisfaction.

The studies also revealed that some participants had symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (P.T.S.D.) due to the emotional abuse they endured. This could be the result of internalizing behaviors caused by the maltreatment or by a child's inability to properly comprehend their circumstances.

Childhood Maltreatment (CM) includes sexual and physical abuse, emotional maltreatment and neglect, and is a significant contributor to the dramatic increase in referrals to university counseling centers. CM also foments self-criticism causing a deleterious effect on [romantic relationships](#).

"Over time, this tendency might be consolidated, becoming a defining

part of a person's personality, and ultimately derailing relationships in general and romantic relationships in particular," explains Ms. Lassri, whose doctoral dissertation, supervised by Prof. Shahar, served as the basis for the study. Lassri and Shahar are with the Sealth and Health Research Lab (SEALTH) located at the Department of Psychology of BGU.

Lassri believes that even though these findings were gathered from college-age individuals, the behaviors could potentially worsen throughout adulthood.

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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