

Low self-esteem partners create their own regret in relationship sacrifices

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Credit: Lynn Greyling/Public Domain

Low self-esteem partners can feel vulnerable in their relationship, including feeling insecure about their partner's support and love. In a series of studies, social psychologists in the Netherlands show that people with low self-esteem end up regretting sacrifices they make in relationships because they do not feel appreciated or supported by their partner. The results appear in the journal, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

"Low [self-esteem](#) partners desire strong interpersonal connections like everybody else but they are very sensitive to rejection and interpersonal threats," says lead author Francesca Righetti (VU University Amsterdam). "They underestimate how positively they are viewed by their partner and how much their partner loves and cares for them. They also tend to think that others are not there for them, not available to provide support when in need."

These doubts can influence mood, stress, and [life satisfaction](#).

The researchers tested the idea that when [low self-esteem](#) individuals decide to [sacrifice](#) personal preferences for their relationship, they come to regret those actions, with further consequences for their wellbeing.

130 couples in the Netherlands participated in the study, first filling out emotional assessments every 2 hours for eight days and a daily diary at the end of the day, and were then contacted a year later. The couples spoke Dutch, had no children and had been together at least 4 months. Most weren't married.

The results showed that low self-esteem is related to greater regret of past sacrifices, which in turn, affects [negative mood](#), stress and life satisfaction. "Further analyses revealed that low self-esteem individuals feel less supported by the partner after they sacrifice which helps explain why they come to regret their sacrifices," says Righetti.

Based on their research, the issue isn't how much or how often they sacrifice, "People with low self-esteem sacrifice in their relationship as much as people high in self-esteem," says Righetti. "However, they are more likely to regret those sacrifices and this leads them to experience more negative mood, greater stress and lower life satisfaction, even over time."

Righetti's advice, "If you have a low self-esteem partner, try to show much appreciation and gratitude after s/he sacrificed. S/he needs reassurance that you have noticed and appreciated the efforts. If you are low in self-esteem yourself, try not to assume that your [partner](#) did not notice what you have done for the relationship. Perhaps, talk together (in a constructive manner!) about what you have done for him/her and what it has entailed for you."

More information: Francesca Righetti et al, I Gave Too Much, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/1948550617707019](#)

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