The interplay between relationships, stress, and sleep

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A new *Personal Relationships* study documents how the quality of a person's romantic relationship and the life stress he or she experiences at two key points in early adulthood (at age 23 and 32) are related to sleep

quality and quantity in middle adulthood (at age 37).

Investigators found that people who have positive relationship experiences in early adulthood experience fewer, less disruptive stressful life events at age 32, which in turn predicts better sleep quality at age 37. Sleep is a shared behavior in many romantic relationships, and it is a strong contender for how relationships "get under the skin" to affect long-term health. The study's findings add to a growing body of literature showing that one of the important ways in which relationships impact individuals is by reducing the occurrence and severity of life stress.

"Although a large body of evidence shows that relationships are important for health, we are just beginning to understand how the characteristics of people's close relationships affect health behaviors, such as sleep," said lead author Chloe Huelsnitz, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota. "The findings of our study suggest that one way that relationships affect health behavior is through their effects on individuals' stress."

More information: Chloe O. Huelsnitz et al, The interplay between relationship effectiveness, life stress, and sleep: A prospective study, *Personal Relationships* (2019). DOI: 10.1111/pere.12266

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