

Tick tock: Commitment readiness predicts relationship success, say scientists

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Timing is everything, goes a popular phrase, and this is also true for relationships. As Valentine's Day approaches, social psychologists from Purdue University offer new research showing that a person's

commitment readiness is a good predictor of relationship success. The results are published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

"Feeling ready leads to better relational outcomes and well-being," says Chris Agnew, Professor of Psychological Sciences and Vice President for Research at Purdue University, "When a person feels more ready, this tends to amplify the effect of psychological commitment on relationship maintenance and stability."

The reverse is also true, based on the results from the study; when a person feels less ready for commitment while in a relationship, they are less likely to act in ways to support that relationship.

Assessing readiness for commitment

Agnew and colleagues Benjamin Hadden and Ken Tan report the results from four studies and five independent samples, focusing on reported readiness and commitment to an ongoing relationship, how much people were willing to be involved in the day to day behaviors that help maintain a relationship, and the ultimate stability of those relationships.

Initially, they surveyed over 400 adults in committed relationships, assessing their sense that the current time was right for the relationship (i.e., their commitment readiness), their satisfaction with the relationship, and their investments in it. They found a robust correlation between current sense of readiness and one's commitment level.

To follow up this initial study, Agnew and colleagues ran studies with [university students](#), first in an initial assessment with over 200 students, and then as follow-ups with some participants five and seven months later to see who was still together.

Based on their results, being "commitment ready" was a key predictor of

both success and failure. Greater readiness predicted lower likelihood of leaving a relationship. Those feeling greater readiness to commit were 25% less likely to breakup over time.

People who reported being highly committed to their current partner but didn't feel that the current time was best for them to be in a relationship were also more likely to end a relationship than their peers who expressed greater readiness. And those who were [commitment](#) ready were more likely to do the day to day work needed to maintain the relationship.

When do people feel ready to commit?

Feeling ready to commit to a relationship at a given time depends on the individual, says Agnew. "People's life history, [relationship](#) history, and personal preferences all play a role. One's culture also transmits messages that may signal that one is more or less ready to commit."

More information: Agnew, Christopher R.; Hadden, Benjamin W.; Tan, Kenneth (2019). It's About Time: Readiness, Commitment and Stability in Close Relationships *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, publishing online before print in February 2019.

Benjamin W. Hadden et al. Commitment Readiness and Relationship Formation, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0146167218764668](#)

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