

Can mindfulness improve your relationship?

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What if being mindful could help romantic partners feel less stressed and happier?

A new study at Université de Montréal suggests it's possible: couples with greater mindfulness have reported experiencing [less stress](#), which is

thought to be associated with greater [satisfaction](#) with one's partner.

"Such satisfaction is a subjective feeling that describes being happy and satisfied in a [romantic relationship](#), and is associated with less conflict and fewer separations," said the study's lead author Laurence Morin, an UdeM doctoral student in psychology.

Published this month in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, the study focused on couples entering parenthood, as this is a period marked by an increase in stressors and a frequent decrease in [relationship satisfaction](#).

A total of 78 new-parent couples provided data on their perceived stress, mindfulness and satisfaction by completing a questionnaire on their mobile phones every night for 14 consecutive days. The daily scores that the parents reported were then averaged.

"In sum, we found that the more present and mindful parents said they were, the less stress they reported and the more satisfied they felt in their relationship," said Morin. "At the same time, a person's mindfulness was positively associated with satisfaction in their relationship."

Morin was co-directed in her work by UdeM psychology professor Julie Laurin and Université du Québec à Montréal education professor Simon Grégoire.

A beneficial practice on multiple levels

Mindfulness refers to the ability to deliberately pay attention to what is happening inside you (emotions, sensations, thoughts) and outside you (environment, stimuli) without judgment. Scientific studies have shown that this practice can help people maximize their physical and mental well-being and better adapt to stressful life events.

"Recently, it has been suggested that people who are more mindful perceive their environment as less stressful during difficult periods in life," said Morin. "We therefore believe there is a correlation between mindfulness and relationship satisfaction, and that perceived stress is the key variable underlying this relationship."

With this in mind, Morin makes a clinical recommendation to new parents, as well as anyone else, to practice mindfulness every day in order to reduce stress and "better regulate their emotions."

The Ph.D. student insists that mindfulness can be practiced formally (meditation, breathing exercises), as well as informally, simply by striving to be intentionally aware of each moment in normal everyday activities, such as brushing your teeth or eating.

"The benefits of mindfulness for individuals are well-documented, but now we can see them extending to couples as well," she said. "We could even consider integrating mindfulness into prenatal classes as a way to prevent separations and as a tool for dealing with the changes that parenthood brings."

"Dyadic association between new parents' [mindfulness](#) and relationship satisfaction: mediating role of perceived [stress](#)," by Laurence Morin et al, was published Feb. 9, 2023, in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

More information: Laurence Morin et al, Dyadic Association Between New Parents' Mindfulness and Relationship Satisfaction: Mediating Role of Perceived Stress, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/02654075231156404](https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075231156404)

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