

Experts discover whether it's better to be right or be happy

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Doctors see many couples who lead unnecessarily stressful lives by wanting to be right rather than happy. But is it better to be right or to be happy?

In the Christmas edition of the *BMJ*, researchers at the University of Auckland in New Zealand try to answer this question by evaluating the effect of being right versus being happy on a couple's quality of life.

The study involved a [married couple](#) living in their own home.

The authors decided that the female participant would prefer to be right and the male participant would prefer to be happy. So the man was asked to agree with his wife's every opinion and request without complaint. Even if he believed the female participant was wrong, the male was to bow and scrape.

The male was informed of the intervention while the female participant was not.

Quality of life of both participants was measured using a scoring scale of one to 10 (10 being the best possible quality of life).

The study had to be stopped after 12 days as the result of a severe adverse outcome – this being that the male participant found the female participant became increasingly critical of everything he did.

The man's quality of life score fell from 7 out of 10 at the start of the study to 3 at 12 days. The women's increased slightly from 8 to 8.5 at six days.

"It seems that being right is a cause of [happiness](#), and agreeing with what one disagrees with is a cause of unhappiness," say the authors. "The results of this trial show that the availability of unbridled power adversely affects the quality of life of those on the receiving end."

They conclude: "Many people in the world live as [couples](#), and we believe that it could be harmful for one partner to always have to agree with the other. However, more research is needed to see whether our results hold if it is the male who is always right."

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