

Sleep quality affects marital mindset

8 August 2016, by Kara Irby



Credit: Florida State University

A new study by two Florida State University researchers found that when husbands and wives get more sleep than on an average night, they are more satisfied with their marriages, at least the following day.

The research was conducted by FSU Psychology Professor Jim McNulty and graduate student Heather Maranges.

"The universality of our findings is important," Maranges said. "That is, we know all people need [sleep](#). Regardless of the stage at which a couple is in their relationship or the cultural context in which they're embedded, each member of the couple can be adversely affected by not getting enough sleep."

The paper, "The Rested Relationship: Sleep Benefits in Marital Evaluations," was published in the July issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology*.

It highlights the significance of sleep as it relates to self-regulation or self-control, which influences how [married couples](#) feel and think about their partner. Self-control requires energy that can be replenished when our bodies are in the resting period known as sleep. In other words, sleep offers

self-regulatory benefits to relationships.

"Up to one-third of married or cohabiting adults report that [sleep problems](#) burden their relationship," the researchers wrote in the paper.

Other sleep studies have indicated that even partial sleep deprivation can have harmful effects on processes that require self-regulation, like evaluating how you feel about your partner. However, results in this study revealed that differences between couples' sleep durations was not associated with differences in marital satisfaction. That is, because one couple gets more sleep than another does not mean that the couple that experienced more sleep viewed their marriage more favorably.

Maranges and McNulty conducted their research with 68 newlywed couples. Over a seven-day period, couples recorded the number of hours they slept and then responded to two sets of questions on a scale of 1 (not satisfied at all) to 7 (extremely satisfied).

The first set measured overall relationship satisfaction, asking husbands and wives to respond to questions such as, "How satisfied were you with your marriage today?" The other set focused on relationship experiences in nine areas including chores, the amount of time spent together and conflict resolution.

Husbands especially were less negatively affected by bad experiences in those nine areas when they got more sleep. That is, sleep buffered the effects of specific negative events and evaluations on their broader, more general satisfaction with their marriages.

Until the study can be repeated for a wider variety of couples, the researchers said several factors limit the conclusions that can be drawn from their findings. For instance, the [couples](#) examined were primarily white, had been married less than six months and on average were 24 years old. They

also said measures of [sleep quality](#) would provide more rigorous tests of the association between sleep and marital satisfaction.

Provided by Florida State University

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