

Growing desire or growing apart? Consequences of personal self-expansion for romantic passion



How does personal self-expansion (e.g., positively growing and expanding your self-concept) affect the passion you feel for your romantic partner?

WE CONDUCTED 3 STUDIES

One in which 122 couples completed a short survey each day for 21 days.

One in which 107 couples completed a short survey including reports of their sources of self-expansion (i.e., with partner or alone) each day for 21 days.

And one in which 398 individuals who had relocated to a new city or country for their partner filled out a single online survey.



In all surveys, participants reported their well-being, their personal and relational self-expansion (e.g., how much did you seek to enhance your potential self-efficacy and how much did being with your partner result in you having new experiences?), and relational intimacy (e.g., how connected were you to your partner?).

ALTOGETHER, WE FOUND THAT...

on days when people engaged in personal self-expansion, they experienced higher levels of passion for their partner and well-being.



HOWEVER...

chronically engaging in more self-expansion over the 21-day period was associated with **less** romantic passion...

...and that following a move for their partner, when people engaged in personal self-expansion, they felt greater feelings competence.



IN SUMMARY

In romantic relationships, you can increase your passion by engaging in activities without your partner that help you grow and expand your senses of who you are as a person. However, doing this too much can detract from relationship intimacy, so it's important to strike the right balance between engaging in activities with or without your romantic partner.