

Planning date nights that promote closeness: The roles of relationship goals and self-expansion

Harasymchuk et al. (2021)

Are some people better at planning dates that promote more closeness? Is planning for excitement effective?

Two Studies Were Conducted

where participants in romantic relationships were asked about their relationship goals (i.e., approach-oriented goals that focus on intimacy and growth and avoidance-oriented goals that focus on limiting adverse outcomes) and were asked to plan a date for their partner and describe it.

In one study, we asked ~250 participants in romantic relationships to plan a date with their partner and have them as well as coders rate how exciting it is (e.g., adventurous, playful). Participants also estimated how much self-expansion (e.g., opportunities to grow as a person) and closeness (to their partner) they think the date would result in.

In the second study, we asked 150 participants to do a similar task, but this time, we asked them to go on the date in the next 6 days. Following the date, they completed an online survey assessing their self-expansion and closeness from the date.



The Results Showed That...

participants with high (vs low) approach relationship goals planned more exciting dates (as rated by participants and outside coders), and these dates were linked to greater self-growth and closeness with their partner.

As Well...

these people forecasted that their dates would increase relationship self-expansion (broadening of the mind) and closeness suggesting that the benefits are not an accident, they are part of the plan.

In Short

People high (vs low) in approach relationship goals are better at planning dates that promote closeness, in part, because of their greater aptitude for planning dates that are more exciting and promote self-expansion.



Harasymchuk, C., Walker, D., Muise, A., & Impett, E. A. (2021). Planning date nights that promote closeness: The roles of relationship goals and self-expansion. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 38, 1692-1709.