

Approach and avoidance motives for touch are predicted by attachment and predict daily relationship well-being

Jakubiak et al. (2021)

Do the reasons for why romantic couples touch (e.g., hug, kiss) differ by their attachment style? What consequences does your motives for touch have on relationship quality?

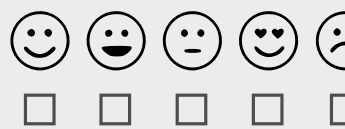
Two Studies Were Conducted:

In one, 1,604 American participants in romantic relationships completed a 30-minute survey assessing their attachment orientation (e.g., fears of abandonment, discomfort with closeness), relationship quality (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, trust), and their motives for touching their partners (e.g., to avoid something bad like upsetting the partner or to gain something good like feeling happy)...



In another, 104 individuals and their partners independently completed an initial survey on their attachment orientation and relationship quality, followed by 28 days of daily surveys where they reported their touch motives and relationship quality.

Results Show That...



Touching a romantic partner to gain good outcomes (e.g., happiness, joy) is linked to greater relationship quality, but touching to avoid bad outcomes (e.g., avoid someone getting upset) is linked to lower relationship quality.

Attachment avoidance (i.e., discomfort with closeness) is associated with touching to avoid bad outcomes, **but not** with the motive of gaining good outcomes.



Attachment anxiety (i.e., fear of abandonment) is associated with touching with the motive to avoid bad outcomes, **and** the motive to gain good outcomes.



In Summary...

The findings of this study demonstrates that your reasoning for why you touch your partner can affect the relational benefits you gain from touching.

As such, those who are avoidantly attached may reap less relational benefits from touching given that they tend to do it to avoid negative outcomes. On the other hand, anxiously attached persons may experience varied relational consequences given that they provide touch to both avoid negative and to gain positive outcomes.