

Sacrifices: Costly Prosocial Behaviors in Romantic Relationships

Righetti et al. (2022)

Sacrifices are made when partners experience conflicts between their goals and preferences. Sacrifices can range from disagreeing on your dinner food or choosing where to move next. Some theories suggest that sacrifices are good for building trust, whereas others suggest that they can negatively affect your well-being by preventing you from reaching your goal.

Is sacrificing for your romantic partner a good or bad thing?

An analysis of 82 samples and over 32,000 participants finds that willingness to sacrifice for your partner is associated with greater personal and relationship well-being. However, partners only really notice ...

50% of your sacrifices, and

without the appreciation you might deserve, your personal well-being is likely to take a dip.

A recent study combining correlational, longitudinal, and experimental data shows that noticing the sacrifice led to positive reactions such as

better mood and feeling appreciated,

but also negative feelings, such as **indebttness and guilt.**



And while the partner who made the sacrifice felt good, such as experiencing sense of pride, much of their feeling is negative, consider how a lot of the time their sacrifices go unnoticed.

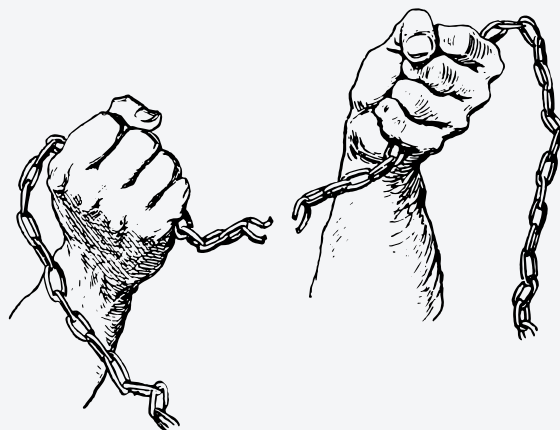


Both partners, given their conflicting feelings, report greater

ambivalence

towards one another, which predicted a greater likelihood of breaking up and

separation.



Given the current state of sacrifice research, it is recommended that partners avoid ambivalence by, for example, doing what both partners want or choosing to do the least costly decision for whichever partner may need to sacrifice.