

Does an unhappy partner make you less happy?

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. What words can you use to talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships? Write them in the chart.

Healthy relationships	Unhealthy relationships

2 Key words

a. Match the correct words to the definitions below. Then, find and highlight them in the article to read them in context.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. changing the position of your body or a body part ____ | a. data |
| 2. the look on your face, showing how you feel ____ | b. movement |
| 3. facts or information ____ | c. relationship |
| 4. a loving, romantic friendship between two people ____ | d. experience |
| 5. getting knowledge or skills from doing new things ____ | e. expression |
| 6. a connection between two or more people or things ____ | f. mood |
| 7. one of several things that cause something else ____ | g. link |
| 8. facts that make you believe something is true ____ | h. recover |
| 9. the way you are feeling at a particular time ____ | i. factor |
| 10. feel better after a bad experience ____ | j. evidence |



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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. The police officers looked at the _____ for the case.
2. I was in a good _____, but then I received some bad news.
3. It can take a long time to _____ from a breakup.
4. My grandparents have been in a _____ for 50 years.
5. There are _____ between happiness and health.
6. Have you tried that new restaurant? How was your _____?
7. The _____ shows that, after five years, the chance of an unmarried couple breaking up is 20%.
8. The dancer's _____ were so smooth and beautiful.

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- 1 Research shows that people often become similar to people they spend much time with. Even strangers often copy each other's movements and expressions. Studies have shown that couples have similar well-being when they start dating and over time.
- 2 So if two people date and become more similar, who becomes more like who? In a recent paper, Olga Stavrova, a psychology professor at the University of Lübeck, asked this question. She wanted to understand if the happier person becomes unhappier or the unhappier person becomes happier.
- 3 Stavrova looked at data from more than 20,000 German and Dutch couples who were followed for 37 and 14 years, respectively, focusing on couples with different levels of health and happiness at the beginning of their relationships. If one person said they were happier than the other at the beginning, their happiness went down over time. The unhappier person might experience a small increase in happiness but often doesn't improve. And the amount the happier person's happiness went down was always greater than any increase for the unhappier person.
- 4 Couples share what happens in their day and how they feel. If one person is always negative, it can bring the other down. In another study, researchers found that negative emotions are more commonly shared than positive ones. But this doesn't necessarily mean you should avoid people who seem slightly unhappy.
- 5 The links between long-term relationships and well-being go beyond this one factor. Studies find that close relationships make people healthier. If we were regularly affected by less happy partners, there wouldn't be so much evidence that relationships are good for us.
- 6 Darby Saxbe, a clinical psychologist and psychology professor at the University of Southern California, said that how couples affect each other's mood can vary. If one partner comes home from work each day upset, the other person may experience negative emotions. However, one partner can help to calm the other down.
- 7 You don't have to date someone who is always happy, but they will probably affect you over time. You're making sense of the world together, with its ups and downs, Stavrova said. According to Saxbe, it's not about always feeling happy and never feeling frustrated. "What's more important is: how do you recover?"

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What happens to people who spend a lot of time together?
2. What do people often copy about each other, even strangers?
3. What did Dr Stavrova want to find out?
4. How many couples were in the study?
5. How long were the German and Dutch couples followed?
6. What did the data show for these couples?
7. Which emotions are shared more between couples?
8. What does the data say about close relationships?
9. What are the two things that can happen when a partner comes home upset?
10. What's more important than always feeling happy and never feeling frustrated?

4 Key language

a. Complete the chart with comparative adjectives.

Adjective	Comparative
happy	
unhappy	
healthy	
unhealthy	

b. Complete the sentences using the adjectives above.

1. The child was _____ after he ate some ice cream.
2. The couple was _____ when they started exercising together.
3. Fast food is usually _____ than home-cooked food.
4. She was excited at first, but she is _____ in her new job than in her old one.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- “It’s important to be happy all the time.”
- “Relationships are always good for our health.”
- “You and your partner can help each other be happier.”

6 In your own words

a. Do some research about emotional well-being in relationships.

- What are good ways to have a healthy relationship?
- How can you be happier in your relationship?
- What are healthy ways to talk to your partner?

b. Report your findings to the class and share your opinions. Here are some phrases to help you when you discuss facts.

The research said/found that ...

One idea is ...

One / Some way(s) to do this is / are ...

Something you can try is ...

Another suggestion is ...

Here are some phrases to use when stating your opinion.

I think (that) ...

In my own life, ...

I’m (not) sure that ...

In my understanding/opinion, ...

I (dis)agree with ...