

ECPS4012  
Exploring Emotion  
and Communication

Intimacy

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Introduction

Intimacy is key quality in close relationships

Intimate relationships provide companionship, entertainment, and support

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Includes psychological, emotional, and behavioural bonds

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Complexities of Intimacy

- Can be source of frustration and stress
- Jealousy and failed relationships are common challenges
- Learning about communication in intimate relationships is important

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## Nature of Intimacy

- Can take various forms in different relationships
- Components = closeness, openness, affection, and mutuality
- Closeness reflects degree of overlap in identities
- Openness = sharing personal information and requires trust
- Affection = expressed through actions and positive feelings
- Mutuality = acknowledgment and value of the bond

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## Different Styles of Loving

- Can be experienced in different ways in close relationships
- One model suggests love consists of intimacy, passion, and commitment (Sternberg)
- Another model identifies love styles such as eros (erotic), ludus (exciting game), storge (peaceful), mania (blends eros & ludus), pragma (blends ludus & storage), and agape (blends eros & storage) – Hendrick & Hendrick
- Love styles have important consequences in romantic relationships

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## Communication in Intimate Relationships

- 01 Interpersonal communication helps give and receive help, revitalise routine, and manage tensions
- 02 Intimate relationships are dynamic and constantly changing

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## Maintaining Intimacy

- Relational maintenance refers to actions taken to keep a relationship in a desired state
- Strategic maintenance includes intentional behaviours to sustain the relationship
- Routine maintenance refers to less intentional actions that help keep the relationship going
- Both strategic and routine behaviours are important for maintaining close relationships

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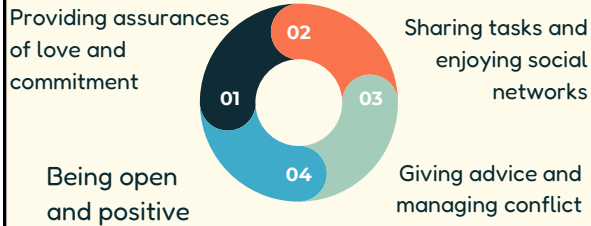
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## Communication Strategies for Maintenance



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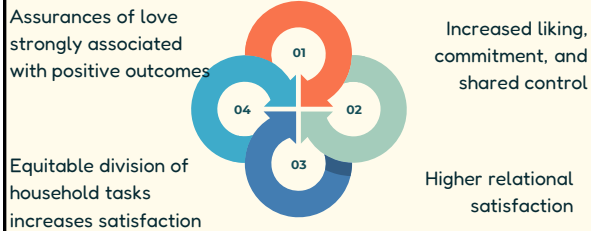
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## Benefits of Relational Maintenance



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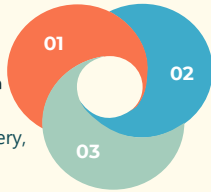
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## Coping with Tension

Relational dialectics theory emphasises tradeoffs and conflicting desires in close relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996)



Three core tensions:  
openness vs. privacy,  
novelty vs.  
predictability,  
independence vs.  
connection

Tensions can be internal or external

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## Openness vs. Privacy



- Struggle between disclosing information and keeping silent
- Sharing personal details can develop bond, but too much information can threaten relationship
- Sharing news of relationship with others can invite support or criticism

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## Novelty vs. Predictability

- 01 Preference for a special relationship, but also concern about being too unusual
- 02 Desire for both excitement and stability in a relationship
- 03 Struggle to find the right balance of routine and mystery



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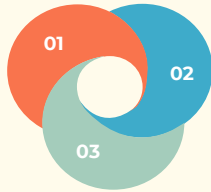
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## Independence vs. Connection

Tension between maintaining autonomy and intimacy



Struggle to balance personal identity and closeness

Lesbian couples tend to favour connection, while gay males prioritise autonomy

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## Coping Strategies for Relational Dialectics

01 Balancing and integrating strategies to embrace both sides

02 Denial and disorientation for temporary relief

03 Spiraling alteration and segmentation for pursuing different sides of tension

04 Recalibration and reaffirmation to accept dialectical tensions

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## Individual Differences in Intimacy



01 Personal characteristics shape how people communicate within intimate relationships

02 Intimacy in relationships can be challenging due to differences in approaches to closeness

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## Attachment Styles

- Attachment style reflects how people see themselves in relation to others
- Secure attachment characterised by comfort with closeness and trust
- Insecure attachment characterised by less confidence in relationships
- Attachment styles formed in childhood influence adult romantic relationships
- Four adult attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful (Bartholomew, 1990).

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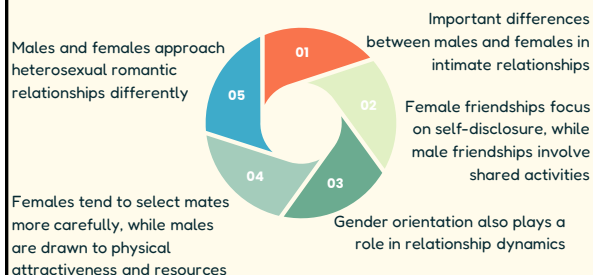
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## Sex Differences and Intimacy



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## Friendship across the lifespan

- Friendships evolve and change throughout lifespan
- Childhood friendships focused on play and fitting in
- Adolescent friendships involve self-disclosure and problem-solving
- Adult friendships become more focused on similarities and connection
- Older adults prioritise deep connections and companionship in friendships



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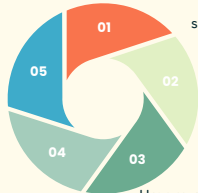
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## Extremes of Intimacy: Romantic Infatuation

Intensely in love individuals show unique brain activity and have heightened levels of oxytocin.



Romantic love is one of strongest and most wonderful emotions in relationship.

People in romantic love may obsess about partner and become emotionally dependent.

Believing in romantic love has several benefits for relationship partners.

However, being in love can lead to less satisfaction and inability to see faults in partner.

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## Romantic Betrayal

- Infidelity violates obligation of monogamy in committed relationships.
- Sexual infidelity involves physical closeness with someone outside relationship.
- Emotional infidelity involves devoting time, attention, and feelings to someone else.
- Different types of infidelity evoke different reactions in betrayed partner.
- Reactions to infidelity are influenced by circumstances and how partners make sense of it.

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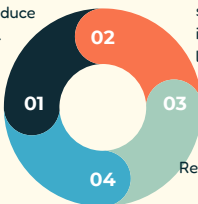
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## Factors Influencing Infidelity

Commitment and sexual desire in a relationship reduce the likelihood of cheating.



Certain personality traits, such as promiscuity and impulsivity, increase likelihood of cheating.

Unfulfilled needs in relationship increase susceptibility to infidelity.

Reactions and consequences of infidelity depend on circumstances and how partners communicate it.

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