**Expressing the Good in Bad Times: Examining Whether and Why Positive Expressivity in Negative Contexts Affects Romantic Partners' Responsive Support Provision**

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Receiving high-quality, responsive support in times of distress is highly important, yet notoriously challenging. Although emotion and relationship scholars have long extolled the value of expressing positivity (e.g., gratitude, optimism), the potential value of positive expressivity within distress-related support-seeking contexts remains largely unexplored. In a recent theoretical review (Walsh & Forest, 2021), I proposed a conceptual process model that explains why support-seekers' positive expressivity can often elicit—but may sometimes suppress—supportive responses from partners (providers) within negative event contexts. The purpose of the current work was to test direct and indirect pathways of the conceptual model linking seeker-expressed positivity to provider support. Using a combination of correlational in-lab behavioral observation studies of romantic couples and online experiments with manipulations of seeker-expressed positivity, I examined the effects of positive expressivity on partner responsiveness. Studies considered positivity as a broad, unitary construct and also explored three different types of positivity—partner-oriented positivity (e.g., gratitude), stressor-oriented positivity (e.g., optimism), and unspecified positivity (e.g., pleasant demeanor). Findings indicated that when disclosing about a recent upsetting event via video-message (Study 1) or about their greatest fear in a face-to-face discussion (Study 4), seekers' positive expressivity (coder-rated) was a robust predictor of provider responsiveness (coder-rated), even when controlling for seeker-expressed negativity and several other plausible third variables. Experimental work (Study 2) provided causal

evidence of a support-eliciting direct effect of seeker-expressed positivity on a coded behavioral measure of provider responsiveness. Regarding the value of particular types of positivity, partner-oriented positivity showed the strongest and most consistent support-eliciting potential in both correlational (Studies 1 and 4) and experimental work (Study 3). Stressor-oriented and unspecified positivity also appeared to be valuable in some contexts. Additionally, these studies yielded evidence supporting several of my conceptual model's indirect pathways, shedding light on why positivity often enhances (but may sometimes suppress) responsive support. This work highlights the active role of support-seekers in obtaining support, provides empirical evidence linking positive expressivity to responsiveness in support-seeking contexts, and provides insight into the mechanisms through which positivity operates. These findings lay the groundwork for further research on positive expressivity's effects in support-seeking contexts.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Over the course of their lives, people are bound to experience negative events. For example, a loved one's health might rapidly decline, problems at work might arise, or daily hassles might upend important plans. Coping with such troubling circumstances can be difficult. Negative experiences affect people for longer than do positive or neutral experiences and take more effort for people to cognitively process and regulate (Baumeister et al., 2001; Bohanek et al., 2005; Brosschot & Thayer, 2003; Kim & Hamann, 2007). But managing the demands of negative events is critical, as unregulated stress can negatively impact health and well-being (e.g., Cohen et al., 2016; Juth et al., 2015; Lepore & Helgeson, 1998).

A powerful and commonly used approach to navigating stressful experiences involves turning to others—especially close relationship partners—for comfort or coping assistance (American Psychological Association [APA], 2018; Hazan & Shaver, 2004; Rimé, 2009; Rimé et al., 2020; Taylor, 1991, 2011). A wealth of theory and research asserts the value of receiving responsive support (i.e., support that meets the recipient's needs, demonstrating caring, understanding, and validation; Cutrona et al., 2007; Maisel & Gable, 2009; Reis et al., 2004) during such times. For example, when people facing daily stressors receive responsive support, their sadness and anxiety decreases, and their relationship quality increases (Maisel & Gable, 2009). In contrast, when people need or seek support, receiving low (vs. higher) levels of responsive support is associated with greater psychological distress (Merluzzi et al., 2016) and worse mood (Collins & Feeney, 2000). Yet, obtaining adequate support is often difficult (e.g., Lepore & Revenson, 2007; Jayamaha et al., 2021; Rafaeli & Gleason, 2009), as recently collected national data

illustrate: The majority (61%) of Americans received less emotional support than they needed in the past year (APA, 2020).

Although people benefit from receiving responsive support in good times as well as bad (e.g., Gable & Algoe, 2010; Gable et al., 2004; Gable & Reis, 2010; Lambert et al., 2012; Maisel & Gable, 2009; Peters et al., 2018), research on support processes has a long tradition of emphasizing the importance of having one's needs met during times of stress, challenge, or adversity (e.g., Collins et al., 2010; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2009; Simpson & Rholes, 2012, 2017; Taylor, 1991). According to the stress-buffering model of social support (Cohen & Wills, 1985), support functions by reducing the negative effects of stressful experiences. In particular, perceiving that support is available if needed protects people from the deleterious health consequences that contexts involving adversity or stress can otherwise bring about (Cohen, 2004; Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Considerable research supports a stress-buffering role for support (e.g., Pietromonaco et al., 2021; see Cohen & Pressman, 2004; Thoits, 2011). Recent theoretical developments also provide expanded perspectives on the value of support, indicating that—in addition to limiting the negative impact of stress—support may also help recipients thrive (experiencing positive outcomes such as increased strength, knowledge, or sense of purpose) through their experiences with adversity (Feeney & Collins, 2015a, b, 2018). Thus, receiving high quality support in times of distress can diminish stress's negative impacts and promote positive outcomes or gains.

Although literature on support often emphasizes the value of perceiving that support is available rather than enacted/received support (e.g., Kaul & Lakey, 2003), there is substantial evidence that received/enacted support is beneficial (see Feeney & Collins, 2018)—particularly when it is sought. Indeed, enacted support (as rated by coders) and experimental manipulations of

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responsive support predict favorable outcomes for recipients (e.g., increased relational well-being and positive affect, and decreased stress; for a review, see Feeney & Collins, 2015b). Moreover, when people seek, want, or clearly need help coping with a personal problem or stressful situation, they expect to receive support (Bar-Tal et al., 1977; Bolger & Amarel, 2007; Zee & Bolger, 2019). Perhaps not surprisingly then, support-seekers (i.e., "seekers") feel hurt when their partners seemingly ignore or deny their bids for support (McLaren & High, 2019) and may view their partner's lack of supportive response as rejecting (Lemay & Neal, 2014) and unresponsive (Bar-Kalifa & Rafaeli, 2013; Zee & Bolger, 2019). Unfulfilled requests for support may also jeopardize the quality of the relationship between the seeker and their partner (Jakubiak et al., 2019). Therefore, receiving support may be more beneficial when people want, need, or seek support, compared to when they receive support before they recognize their need for it or seek it out (Bolger & Amarel, 2007; Uchino et al., 2011). And when people want, need, or seek support, receiving little support or unresponsive support may be particularly costly to people's well-being.

Unfortunately, although people commonly disclose about their negative experiences to solicit support or comfort, they often have trouble obtaining support that meets their needs in these situations. As such, there is a need for research that considers how people who are seeking support for such negative personal experiences (e.g., professional or academic stressors, concerns about the future, illness or injury) might go about eliciting responsive support (Feeney & Collins, 2015a; Forest et al., 2021).[1] The present work aims to contribute to filling this gap. In so doing, I examined responsive support elicitation within romantic relationships because people commonly disclose

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[1] People sometimes may not want or seek support, such as when they feel ashamed or guilty (Finkenauer & Rimé, 1998; Nadler, 2015). Here, I focus on contexts involving people who are seeking support.

about their emotional experiences to their romantic partner and frequently rely on them for support in times of distress (APA, 2018; Feeney, 2003; Rimé, 2009; Rimé et al., 2020).[2]

## 1.1 Support-Seekers: Active Agents in Eliciting Support

Considerable research efforts have centered on understanding factors that influence support. A predominant focus of work in this area has been on personal and relational factors that influence support. Such work has examined features of the support-recipient/seeker (e.g., self-esteem; Marigold et al., 2014), the provider (e.g., attachment insecurity; Collins & Feeney, 2000; self-esteem; Cavallo & Hirniak, 2019), or the relationship (e.g., relationship quality; Collins & Feeney, 2000; Hadden et al., 2015) as predictors of support receipt or provision. Yet, as several scholars have pointed out, research examining how seekers' behavior in support-seeking situations might influence the support they receive remains surprisingly limited (Chow & Buhrmester, 2011; Don et al., 2013; Feeney & Collins, 2015a; Feeney et al., 2017; Forest et al., 2021; Walsh & Forest, 2021). When summarizing the state of the literature, Feeney and Collins (2015a) aptly noted that "the bulk of the literature considers the support-recipient as relatively passive, as if the recipient has no responsibility in shaping his or her support outcomes" (p. 130).

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[2] The current work focuses on people who are seeking support, and who are doing so by explicitly disclosing about a stressor or problem. Although people can obtain support without directly addressing the stressor (i.e., implicit support-seeking), I focus on explicit support-seeking contexts because this represents the typical form of support-seeking in Western cultural contexts (Kim et al., 2008).

Although the social support literature largely overlooks how seekers might contribute to the support they receive, my collaborators and I (Forest et al., 2021) recently reviewed theory and emerging empirical evidence that affirms the active role that seekers play in eliciting support. In reviewing this work, we presented a facilitate and motivate model of support that explains why support-seeking behaviors have important consequences for providers' supportive responses. This model holds that the seeker's power to elicit high-quality support stems from the capacity of their support-seeking behaviors to give providers what they need to behave supportively. Specifically, delivering responsive support requires that providers (a) perceive the seeker's need for support and discern how seekers want to be supported and (b) feel motivated to carry out the support they believe seekers want/need. Although many factors may shape providers' motivation to offer support when they perceive it is needed, theory and research highlight two particularly important motivational determinants of support: pro-relational sentiments (e.g., feelings of warmth and concern for the seeker; Winczewski et al., 2016) and efficacy beliefs (i.e., perceiving that one's support efforts will be successful). As such, support-seeking behaviors that increase providers' ability to understand seeker needs/goals (i.e., that facilitate support) and/or increase providers' willingness to engage in support efforts (i.e., that motivate support, by increasing providers' pro-relational sentiments or efficacy beliefs) should increase the seeker's chances of receiving high-quality support. Here, I adopt this novel approach to understanding support interactions, which emphasizes the provider's psychological experience within support interactions—namely, what providers need to deliver responsive support—when considering the impact of seeker behavior on providers' support-relevant thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

## 1.2 Positive Expressivity

In this dissertation, I focus on positive expressivity—a cluster of behaviors that involve the expression of positive thoughts and/or emotions—as one type of seeker behavior that might shape responsive support. I define positive expressivity as the verbal and nonverbal expression of positive thoughts (e.g., optimistic beliefs, benevolent attributions, kind self-reflections) and positive emotions (e.g., love, happiness, and appreciation; Walsh & Forest, 2021). Seekers might express positivity when disclosing about negative events by, for example, recalling cherished memories of a recently deceased loved one, describing opportunities that might emerge from their stressful experience, or affectionately touching their partner when talking about their troubles.

When experiencing negative events, one might expect that people often express negativity. Negative expressivity plays an adaptive signaling function, informing others that a seeker is distressed or has unmet needs (Balsters et al., 2013; Feeney & Collins, 2001; Fischer & Manstead, 2008; S. Graham et al., 2008; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001; Marsh & Ambady, 2007; Nesse & Ellsworth, 2009; Trobst et al., 1994). This can prompt others to recognize those needs and potentially provide support (see Forest et al., 2021). Although much evidence links distress expression positively with support receipt, some evidence suggests that increased seeker/recipient distress is associated with receiving less support (e.g., Bolger et al., 1996; Moyer & Salovey, 1999). This may sometimes arise because despite its valuable need-signaling function, negative expressivity also poses challenges to providers: It can be unpleasant, burdensome/taxing, and lead them to doubt their ability to help, and thus may undermine their motivation to provide support. As such, in a recent theoretical review paper (Walsh & Forest, 2021), I proposed that expressing positivity in these negative expressivity-laden support-seeking contexts can be valuable in helping providers overcome the motivational challenges of supporting distressed individuals—a

proposition consistent with the facilitate and motivate model's (Forest et al., 2021) motivation pathway linking seeker behavior to high-quality support receipt.

Before considering specifically why positive expressivity might enhance support, it is worth considering whether people actually express positivity in times of distress. In the aforementioned theoretical review paper (Walsh & Forest, 2021), my coauthor and I described evidence suggesting that people can and often do experience and express various forms of positivity in the wake of negative events. For example, people can reappraise stressful events, finding benefits and identifying experiences of growth (Helgeson et al., 2006). In stressful times, people might reflect on past or simultaneous positive experiences or find humor amid their struggles (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Research also indicates that people often express positive and negative feelings in response to the same stimulus (e.g., Aragón et al., 2015; Griffin & Sayette, 2008). For example, when divorced adults describe their thoughts and feelings surrounding their divorce, they commonly include statements that demonstrate self-compassion (Sbarra et al., 2012). In some contexts, people even *expect* seekers who are facing or disclosing about negative events to express positivity—typically ones involving positive appraisals (e.g., optimism or benefit-finding) of source of stress or adversity. Cancer patients, for example, are expected to "think positively, to be hopeful and optimistic and not give in to despair" (McGrath et al., 2006, p. 665).

To illustrate the forms that positive expressivity might take when seekers are disclosing about a particular negative personal experience, consider Kate, who is talking to her partner (Alex) about her mother's recent cancer diagnosis. When disclosing about her mother's compromised health to Alex, Kate might express negativity—for example, anxiety about her mother's quality of life and regret or feelings of guilt that she had not urged her mother to promptly address her

developing symptoms. Within the same interaction, Kate might also lovingly reach out to hold Alex's hand, express optimism about her mother's prognosis, or note her resolve to cherish her own good health and the good health of their loved ones.

Although people may express positivity in negative contexts, remarkably little work has focused on the consequences of expressing positivity within negatively-toned conversations or distress-related support-seeking contexts. As van Kleef (2016) noted, "the interpersonal effects of mixed emotional displays are uncharted territory" (p. 231). Drawing on the literatures on positive emotion and expressivity, support, and close relationships, we (Walsh & Forest, 2021) recently hypothesized in the aforementioned review paper that positive expressivity might often elicit (but could sometimes suppress) support-providers' supportive behavior within negative event contexts. To begin navigating this territory, we proposed a process model that explains why support-seekers' positive expressivity might shape support (see Figure 1) and we reviewed the existing literature for evidence that bore on our model's pathways.

As shown in Figure 1, the model includes three *support-eliciting pathways* through which positive expressivity can increase support. Consistent with the two key motivational components highlighted in the facilitate and motivate model (Forest et al., 2021), seeker positivity may increase support by bolstering provider efficacy beliefs (their beliefs that they will be able to effectively support the seeker; Paths A-B) and by strengthening provider pro-relational sentiments (their feelings of warmth and compassion toward the seeker; Paths C-D). In addition, we also expected that positive expressivity could enhance support by boosting provider positive mood (Paths E-F). When deciding whether to respond compassionately to individuals who are facing negative events, people must be motivated to prioritize goals related to providing support, despite the costs of doing so (Cameron & Rapier, 2017) and at the expense of other goal pursuits. By boosting pro-relational

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sentiments and/or positive mood in providers, seeker positivity may offset the costs (e.g., increases in negative mood or unpleasant feelings, felt cognitive effort) of behaving supportively, and thereby motivate providers to prioritize support-provision goals. The model also includes one *support-suppressing pathway* through which seeker positivity can *decrease* support: by reducing providers' perceptions of the seeker's support needs (Paths G-H). Whereas negative expressivity can facilitate support (signaling to providers that help is needed; Forest et al., 2021), expressing positivity when disclosing about negative experiences may reduce providers' perceptions that the seeker needs support—an important determinant of whether one offers support (Forest et al., 2014).

Thus, in accordance with the facilitate and motivate perspective on support (Forest et al., 2021), I suspect that seeker positivity will often motivate enhanced responsive support provision (via increases in provider efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, and positive mood), but may sometimes undermine responsive support (by limiting providers' perceptions of the seeker's need for support). These predictions regarding the mediated pathways are also consistent with van Kleef's (2009, 2010) emotion as social information model, which indicates that emotion expression affects potential providers' inferences regarding the expressor's (seeker's) internal states (efficacy beliefs and need appraisals) and affective reactions (pro-relational sentiments and positive mood).

I suspect that the potential for positive expressivity within negative disclosers to elicit responsive support is not limited to specific types of positivity (e.g., gratitude, optimism, pleasant intonations). In our review (Walsh & Forest, 2021), we reasoned that various kinds of positivity might bring about supportive responses from providers, although the strength of positivity's direct effect on support may depend on the specific type of positivity that seekers express. We further

speculated that type-specific effects of positivity may operate through different set of mechanisms. Before elaborating on these possibilities, I first summarize existing evidence linking seeker-expressed positivity (as a unitary construct) to support and describe gaps that remain in the literature.

**1.3 Existing Evidence Linking Positive Expressivity to Support and Remaining Gaps**

In our review of the literature regarding the effects of positive expressivity in support-seeking contexts (Walsh & Forest, 2021), we first adopted a broad, unitary definition of positivity, looking across various types of positivity. Bases for this decision stem from theoretical and empirical research on affective experiences and expression: Existing scholarship points to a single, global construct of positivity (Diener & Emmons, 1984; Mauss & Robinson, 2009; Tellegen et al., 1999; Watson, 2000; Watson et al., 1988) and has demonstrated that a single positivity factor subsumes various kinds of positive expressions (e.g., regarding excitement about an event; happiness; gratitude; Halberstadt et al., 1995; see also, Gross & John, 1995, 1997, 1998). Further, scholars have not yet reached agreement regarding a conceptually meaningful and empirically supported way in which to group positive emotion types (L. Graham et al., 2019; Keltner, 2019). Adopting a unitary construct approach is in accordance with Watson's (2000) recommendation to investigate affective phenomena at the level of their valence (i.e., the phenomena's standing on positivity or negativity) before examining whether particular types of affective experiences provide additional insights into such phenomena. (For additional rationale for this approach, see Walsh & Forest, 2021).

Our review of literature revealed strong support for the direct path from positivity to support (Path I, Figure 1). Although most of the studies in which we could examine the link between positive expressivity and support in negative contexts were designed to test other hypotheses, the strong majority of the studies we located supported the hypothesis that positive expressivity predicted increased support quantity. In the small subset of studies that provided insight into support *quality*, positive expressivity also predicted increased support quality. The studies we reviewed relevant to the direct path included correlational and experimental designs, involved support interactions between a variety of relationship partners (e.g., strangers, friends, romantic partners, coworkers), and examined a variety of positive expressivity types.

Based on the evidence included in our review, we identified several gaps in the literature that warrant additional research. For example, although the benefits of received/enacted support primarily emerge when the support is responsive to the recipient's needs (Maisel & Gabel, 2009), few studies examined support quality or responsiveness (most examined quantity of support only). In addition, most of the evidence for positivity's direct effect on support came from studies involving non-close relationship partners (e.g., strangers, acquaintances). This is problematic because as mentioned earlier, close relationship partners are the people distressed individuals most often approach for support. Further, much of the experimental evidence linking positive expressivity to support relied on hypothetical and/or static displays of positivity. Moreover, non-close relationship contexts were especially prevalent in experimental studies linking positivity to support quality.

Our review also revealed a paucity of research examining mechanisms through which seeker positivity might shape provider support. Although the indirect links in our model received good support overall, the strength of existing evidence varies across paths. We found that the

weakest evidence for the indirect paths involving efficacy beliefs; there also is no evidence—to our knowledge—of a mediated direct effect via efficacy (Path A-B, Figure 1). However, there was strong evidence for the proposed support-eliciting indirect effect of positivity on support via boosted pro-relational sentiments (Paths C-D). The path from positivity to positive mood states (Path E) was well-supported, but evidence regarding the path from positive mood to support (Path F) is still scarce. Relatedly, we uncovered no evidence for the full mediated pathway via positive mood (Paths E-F). Lastly, the evidence for path from positivity to need appraisals (Path G) is limited, such that it consists primarily of correlational findings and work suggesting that positive expressions may neutralize negative expressivity. However, strong evidence exists for the hypothesis that perceived need is positively related to support (Path H).

## 1.4 The Current Work

In the current work, I aimed to address the gaps and limitations that we (Walsh & Forest, 2021) identified in the existing literature linking positive expressivity to support in negative contexts. Whereas existing evidence primarily involves non-close relationship contexts, overlooks support quality as an outcome, and comes from studies relying heavily on hypothetical scenarios paradigms or static representations of positive expressivity, the current work examined support processes between close relationship (romantic) partners and emphasizes support quality (i.e., enacted, coder-rated responsive support). I complemented correlational studies featuring dynamic (non-static) operationalizations of positive expressivity in ecologically valid, non-hypothetical behavioral observation paradigms, with experimental studies that permit careful control over the manipulation of positive expressivity. Although the direct path linking positive expressivity to

high-quality support is of major interest, I also hoped to accumulate evidence regarding the conceptual model's (Figure 1) indirect (mediated) pathways, given that only a few studies that we reviewed assessed full mediated pathways, and none tested multiple mediators in one study.

For the reasons previously described, I first considered positive expressivity as a unitary construct. However, I also examined different types of positivity and how they may function, as "disentangling type-specific effects of positivity…[is] a high priority not only in scholarship on support elicitation but also in the broader literature on positive emotion (Keltner, 2019; Sauter, 2010)" (Walsh & Forest, 2021, p. 24).

In our theoretical review paper (Walsh & Forest, 2021), we considered different types of positivity and how and why they might affect support. We based our groupings on social-functional perspectives on emotional expression, which suggest that people come to learn about an individual's internal states related to certain targets through the individual's emotional expressions (e.g., Keltner & Kring, 1998; van Kleef, 2016, 2017). We reasoned that, within negative disclosures or distress-related support-seeking contexts, specific positive expressions (e.g., affectionate touch, displays of happiness, optimistic beliefs) that share the same referent (i.e., are directed at or are about the same person/thing) are likely to be functionally equivalent, producing similar effects on providers' support-relevant thoughts, feelings, and behavior. That is, positive expressions that are directed at/about the support-provider (i.e., partner-oriented positivity; e.g., affection, gratitude), the stressor (i.e., stressor-oriented positivity; e.g., optimism, benefit-finding), or the self (i.e., self-oriented positivity; e.g., self-compassion, confidence in one's resilience) seem likely to covey to providers the same support-relevant information as other types within that subgroup (e.g., about the seeker's helpability, the nature of the seeker-provider relationship, the seeker's need for support), and therefore produce similar effects on providers'

supportive efforts. In addition to these three types of positivity, I also suspected that positivity that contributes to the overall pleasantness of the support situation without corresponding to any particular person/thing (e.g., pleasant tones of voice, upbeat demeanors) may constitute a fourth type of positivity: unspecified positivity.

Although I considered stressor-oriented positivity and self-oriented positivity as separate types of positivity in my theoretical review, I speculated that they would have the same pattern of direct effects on provider support and that they would operate through the same subset of mechanisms. There is also high conceptual similarity between these two types of positivity. For example, "I feel good about how I've been coping" and "I'm optimistic that I'll be able to turn things around" could represent not only stressor-oriented positivity but also self-oriented positivity. In the current work, I considered these stressor- and self-related types of sentiments together as one construct, which I refer to as stressor-oriented positivity.

### 1.5 Specific Aims and Hypotheses

The current research includes two behavioral observation studies involving observational coding of spontaneous expressions of positivity among romantic couples talking about one partner's recent upsetting experience (Study 1) or greatest fear (Study 4) and two experiments in which I manipulated positive expressivity as a unitary construct (Study 2) or broken into specific subtypes (Study 3) and assessed participants' responsiveness in an imagined negative disclosure paradigm. In conducting this work, I pursued several aims (see Table 1).

### 1.5.1 Spontaneous Expressions of Positivity within Negative Disclosures

**Aim 1.** Examine how people might express positivity in negative disclosures to their romantic partner. Because positive expressivity as a support-seeking behavior has received little research attention to date, I examined this phenomenon in an exploratory fashion. Specifically, I examined the questions: To what extent do people spontaneously express positivity when they seek support for negative events from their romantic partners (Q1)? And, what kinds of positivity do seekers most commonly express in such contexts (Q2)? Informed by the referent-based positivity groupings about which I theorized in my review paper (Walsh & Forest, 2021), I focused on partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity when examining these questions in Studies 1 and 4, and I sought empirical justification for differentiating types of positivity on the basis of the expression's referent in Study 1.

### 1.5.2 Positivity as a Unitary Construct

**Aim 2.** Examine the direct link between seeker-expressed positivity (as a unitary construct) and provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1). In Studies 1 and 4, I tested the predictions that continuous, unidimensional measures of positivity would predict heightened levels of partner (provider) responsiveness, even when controlling for seekers' negative expressivity (H1A) and potential third variables (H1B). In Study 2, I sought causal evidence for the direct path from seeker-expressed positivity to provider responsiveness, predicting experimentally-manipulated positive expressivity (i.e., a combination of several kinds of positive expressions) to increase responsiveness relative to a no-positivity control condition (H1C) and a neutral-filler control condition (H1D).

**Aim 3.** Examine support-eliciting and support-suppressing mechanisms that are expected to underlie effects of positivity (as a unitary construct) on provider responsiveness (Paths A-B, C-D, E-F, and G-H, Figure 1). In Studies 2 and 4, I examined indirect effects of positivity as a unitary construct, expecting indirect support-eliciting effects of seeker-expressed positivity via increased provider efficacy beliefs (H2A), pro-relational sentiments (H2B), and positive mood (H2C), and an indirect support-suppressing effect via decreased provider need appraisals (H2D).

### 1.5.3 Different Types of Positivity

As previously noted, the hypothesized direct and indirect paths shown in the conceptual model (Figure 1) may vary depending on the type of positivity that seekers are expressing within their negative disclosures. Thus, in addition Aims 2 and 3 (to examine the direct and indirect effects of seeker-expressed positivity as a unitary construct on partner responsiveness), this dissertation also serves a parallel set of exploratory aims to investigate the direct and indirect effects of different types of seeker-expressed positivity on partner responsiveness.

**Exploratory Aim 1.** Explore the direct paths from different types of positivity to provider responsiveness (Path I in Figure 1, for partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity). Our recently published conceptual model and review of the literature (Walsh & Forest, 2021) suggest that several types of positivity could increase responsiveness. In that review, we speculated that partner-oriented positivity seems more likely than other types of positivity to have support-eliciting effects (vs. support-suppressing effects or null effects due to competing pathways through support-eliciting and support-suppressing mechanisms that cancel each other out). However, existing evidence regarding different positivity types is limited, and—to my knowledge—no work directly compares the impact of different types of positivity on

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support. Accordingly, I explored positivity's type-specific direct links to partner responsiveness without advancing predictions about the relative impacts of different types of positivity.

In Studies 1 and 4, I assessed whether and to what degree partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity predicted partner responsiveness. In Study 3, I examined the direct effects of experimentally-manipulated partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity (i.e., separate type-specific positivity conditions) on provider responsiveness compared to a non-positivity condition and to a neutral-filler condition.

**Exploratory Aim 2.** Investigate support-eliciting and support-suppressing mechanisms that might indirectly link different types of positivity to partner responsiveness. In our theoretical review paper (Walsh & Forest, 2021), we speculated that partner-oriented positivity is particularly likely to strengthen pro-relational sentiments and boost positive mood states, with little (if any) risk of undermining need appraisals; that stressor-oriented positivity may bolster efficacy beliefs but also decrease need appraisals; and that unspecified positivity may increase pro-relational sentiments and positive mood states but also decrease need appraisals. I examined positivity's type-specific indirect pathways to responsiveness in an exploratory fashion. Study 3 enabled me to investigate all four mediated pathways shown in the conceptual model (Figure 1). In Study 4, I examined efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, and need appraisals as potential mechanisms through which indirect effects of different types of positivity on responsiveness might emerge.

## 2.0 Study 1

In Study 1, I examined people's spontaneous expressions of positivity when disclosing about a personal, negative event to their romantic partner (provider). Doing so enabled me to investigate research questions from Aim 1 about the extent to which people spontaneously express positivity when they seek support for negative events from their romantic partners (Q1) and the kinds of positivity they most commonly express in such contexts (Q2). Relevant to Aim 2—to examine the direct path between positive expressivity as a unitary construct and provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1)—I hypothesized that unitary measures of seeker-expressed positivity would predict increases in provider's subsequent responsiveness, even when controlling for seekers' negative expressions (H1A) and potential third variables (H1B). I also explored the direct links between different types of positive expressivity and provider responsiveness (Exploratory Aim 1). Specifically, I examined the relative predictive power of partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity in an exploratory fashion.

I tested these research questions and hypotheses using data that I collected as part of a larger lab study, which was originally designed to test predictions regarding the effects of romantic rival threat. As part of the larger lab study, I created two conditions that I expected would shape the provider's beliefs about whether their partner was romantically interested in another person who was ostensibly also participating in the study (but in reality did not exist). Analyses on key measures of rival threat-related beliefs and feelings, indicating that the manipulation did not work as I had intended (see Appendix C for a description of the manipulation procedure and for results from relevant manipulation check analyses). However, this study also included a video-exchange procedure—wherein one couple member ("seeker") made a disclosure video-message about a

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recently upsetting event, to which the other couple member ("provider") subsequently replied—which enabled an initial test of hypotheses regarding positive expressivity and its relation to responsiveness in a negative disclosure context. An advantage of this design is that the seeker's negative disclosure was temporally separated from the provider's response, which eliminates a reverse causality explanation (responsiveness causes changes in seeker positivity), should the hypothesized link between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness emerge.

## 2.1 Method

### 2.1.1 Participants

I recruited 137 couples from the Department of Psychology subject pool ($n = 126$) or flyers posted on campus ($n = 11$) to participate in a lab study on impression formation and communication styles. Although I intended to recruit participants and their exclusive romantic partner, four pairs of participants included at least one member who reported that they were not currently in an exclusive romantic relationship. Data from these four pairs of participants were therefore excluded from analyses. The sample ($M_{age} = 19.82$ years, $SD = 3.60$) comprised 129 different-gender couples, three man-man couples, and one woman-woman couple ($M_{relationship\ length} = 1.46$ years, $SD = 2.86$). Each couple member received either course credit or \$10-\$15 in appreciation of their participation in the 90-minute lab study.

## 2.1.2 Procedure

Before their session, one participant from each couple was randomly assigned to the "seeker" role. As part of the larger study, the research assistant told couples at the start of their session that another person was also participating in the study, and that they would learn about and answer questions about this other person.

Seekers and providers first completed questionnaires about themselves and their relationship, independently but in the same room. Participants then completed study tasks that were intended to set the stage for the larger study's attempted rival threat manipulation, which occurred later in the study (described in Appendix C). Seekers then made a video-message in a nearby lab room: Seekers were asked to talk about an upsetting event that occurred within the last year and that did not involve the provider. Seekers talked about, for example, interpersonal conflicts, the death or illness of a family member or friend, and problems related to work or school. Seekers then completed post-disclosure questionnaires (see Appendix D), while providers watched the seeker's disclosure video and made a reply video-message for the seeker. For their reply video-message, providers were asked to respond in whatever way felt natural to them. Seekers' disclosure videos and providers' reply videos were later coded by independent raters (details below). After providers made their reply videos, all participants completed tasks not relevant to the hypotheses tested here (see Appendix D).

Next, seekers rejoined providers in the observation lab, where couples completed a writing task while seated back-to-back. This task was intended to manipulate providers' perceptions that seekers found the other person in the study romantically desirable, but manipulation checks suggested that the manipulation was ineffective in inducing the desired psychological state in providers (for details, see Appendix C).

### 2.1.3 Measures

As part of the larger study, participants completed some measures not relevant to the current investigation. Full materials are in Appendix D. Here, I describe only measures used in the present analyses. Measures appear in the order they were administered.

#### 2.1.3.1 Questionnaires

Among the background questionnaires were measures of plausible third variables that might explain variation in both seeker-expressed positivity and provider responsiveness. Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale (10 items; e.g., "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" assessed trait self-esteem (seeker $\alpha = .90$; provider $\alpha = .87$; 1 = *very strongly disagree*; 9 = *very strongly agree*). The Revised Experiences in Close Relationships scale (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000), which comprises an 18-item attachment anxiety subscale (e.g., "I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me") and an 18-item attachment avoidance subscale (e.g., "I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down"), assessed attachment anxiety (seeker and provider $\alpha s = .90$) and avoidance (seeker and provider $\alpha s = .91$; 1 = *not at all;* 7 = *extremely*). The Perceived Relationship Quality Components inventory (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000) assessed relationship quality (seekers: $\alpha = .91$; providers: $\alpha = .90$; 1 = *not at all*; 7 = *extremely*). I planned to control for these variables in some analyses, as described shortly.

#### 2.1.3.2 Behavioral Coding

Coding of couples' support message exchange videos occurred in two phases. During Phase 1 of coding, coders, who were unaware of hypotheses, rated (a) seekers' disclosure videos for seeker-expressed positivity (as a unitary construct) and seeker-expressed negativity and (b)

providers' reply videos for responsiveness. For each couple, the same coders rated the seeker's disclosure video and the provider's reply video consecutively, which enabled coders to evaluate responsiveness levels within the context of the particular disclosure that the provider was addressing (see Feeney & Collins, 2015a). Phase 2 of coding expanded on the constructs coded in Phase 1, focusing specifically on disclosure videos. One group of coders rated disclosure videos for various types of positive expressivity; another group of coders rated the intensity of the stressor that seekers described in their disclosure video. For full coding schemes, see Appendix D.

### 2.1.3.2.1 Phase 1

Three coders reported their overall impressions of seeker-expressed positivity (as a unitary construct) using one item: "How much positivity did the partner [seeker] express in his/her message?" (interrater α = .83). Coders' ratings were averaged to create scores for this *single-item positivity* measure. Coders also rated seekers' disclosure videos for negative expressivity: "How much negativity did the partner [seeker] express in his/her message?" (interrater α = .75). Given past work showing that disclosed negativity can elicit support (e.g., S. Graham et al., 2008), I wanted to rule out the possibility that seekers' negative expression—rather than their positive expression—might account for any observed relation between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness. I therefore planned to include coder-rated seeker negativity as a covariate in relevant analyses, as described in subsequent sections. Coders rated seeker positivity and negativity on 9-point response scales (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great deal*).

After coding a seeker's disclosure videos, the same group of three coders then rated the provider's corresponding reply video for responsiveness. Coders' ratings were averaged across seven items (e.g., "How concerned does this person seem about his/her partner?"; 1 = *not at all*; 9

= *extremely*) and combined to create a responsiveness composite (α = .91, interrater, α = .84; for full measure, see Appendix D).

### 2.1.3.2.2 Phase 2

During Phase 2, six coders (none of whom were involved in Phase 1 coding) rated seekers' disclosure videos either for positive expressivity (three coders, using an extended coding scheme that included a variety of discrete kinds of positivity) or stressor intensity (three coders).

As a complement to the single-item global positivity measure used in Phase 1, I developed an extended positive expressivity coding scheme to capture a broad range of distinct positive expressions (e.g., optimism, gratitude). I devised nine items to capture different kinds of positivity, based on types represented in existing literature as well as what I observed in watching a subset of disclosure videos (see highlighted items in Appendix D). Three coders then used the resulting coding scheme to rate disclosure videos for each of the nine distinct positive expressions (interrater αs = .71 – .96; 1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great deal*). I planned to use these ratings to create a unitary *positivity composite* (an average of these discrete positive expressions that coders rated) assuming that the items hung together to form a reasonably reliable composite. I also planned to create type-specific sub-composites, grouping items on the basis of referent, as long as they hung well together.

A final group of three coders rated seekers' disclosures for a plausible stressor-related third variable: the intensity of the stressor that the seeker talked about in their disclosure video. Because I wanted stressor intensity scores to reflect coders' judgments of the negative event itself rather than how the seeker talked about the negative event, I used a two-step procedure to code this variable. A research assistant first generated a written summary of the negative event that seekers described in their disclosure videos. Three coders then used those written summaries to rate stressor intensity: "How severe is this event?" (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *extremely*) and "How would you

describe the consequences of this event for someone's life?" (1 = *extremely trivial*; 9 = *extremely disruptive*), $r(123) = .85$, $p < .001$. Coders' ratings were combined across these items to create a stressor intensity composite (interrater $\alpha = .78$). I planned to control for stressor intensity in models predicting responsiveness in analyses testing plausible third variables.

## 2.2 Results

Eight sets of disclosure-response videos were lost due to a technological failure. Thus, the final sample comprised 125 couples, which a sensitivity analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2009) indicated would be sufficient to detect a small to medium population effect size for the link between seeker positive expressivity and provider responsiveness with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$).

### 2.2.1 Seekers' Expressions of Negativity and Positivity within Negative Disclosures

The disclosure message-exchange task was intended to prompt disclosures from seekers about a personally upsetting experience. Perhaps not surprisingly then, seekers expressed considerable negativity in their videos: The average level of expressed negativity ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.16$) was significantly higher than the mid-point of the 9-point scale, $M_{difference} = 1.08$, 95% CI = [0.87, 1.28], $t(124) = 10.36$, $p < .001$. Further, the negative events that disclosers focused on in their videos were relatively severe/impactful: The mean stressor intensity rating ($M = 5.50$ on a 9-point scale, $SD = 1.77$) was higher than the mid-point of the scale, $M_{difference} = 0.50$, 95% CI = [0.19, 0.82], $t(124) = 3.18$., $p = .002$.

Relevant to Aim 1, I examined indices of seeker-expressed positivity and frequencies of their scores to assess the degree to which seekers might use positive expressivity within their negative disclosures to their romantic partner (Q1). In terms of the positivity composite, internal consistency indices suggested that one item—"To what extent did this person express warmth or affection s/he feels for other people (i.e., people apart from the partner)?"—was not assessing the same construct that the other scale items were assessing: This item had a low corrected item-total correlation of .17 (all other corrected item-total correlations = .38-.71). Removing this item from the scale improved the unitary positivity composite's reliability from $\alpha$ = .79 to $\alpha$ = .82, with corrected inter-item correlations for the remaining eight items ranging from .39 to .67. It also seemed conceptually different from other items on the scale; it was the only one that involved positivity directed towards a person who was not one of the couple members.[3] I therefore dropped this item and combined the remaining eight items to create the positivity composite measure.

Although the disclosure videos were intended to—and did—have a negative focus, disclosure videos commonly also contained expressions of positivity (assessed as a unitary construct), according to the frequency of single-item positivity and positivity composite scores that exceeded a value of 2 on a 9-point scale (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great deal*). By this standard, most seekers—78.4% according to single-item positivity scores and 67.7% based on positivity composite scores—expressed at least some positivity in their negative disclosure. Average levels of positive expressivity were nonetheless relatively low (single-item positivity *M* = 3.59, *SD* = 1.84; positivity composite *M* = 2.51, *SD* = 0.91). Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for seeker-

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[3] Some work (e.g., Chun & Lee, 2013) suggests that the "warmth toward others" item may capture perceived support from other network members.

expressed negativity, unitary measures of seeker-expressed positivity (single-item positivity and the positivity composite), and individual items from the positivity composite. For correlations between these variables, see Table 3. For additional correlations between seeker expressions, coder-rated stressor intensity, and features of seekers and providers (self-esteem, attachment anxiety and avoidance, relationship quality), see Appendix E.

### 2.2.2 Positivity as a Unitary Construct

Aim 2 was to test the direct link between seeker positivity as a unitary construct and provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1). I expected that when seekers spontaneously expressed more (vs. less) positivity, providers would subsequently behave more responsively (H1A and H1B). As described in the Methods, I had two unitary positivity variables: single-item positivity (from coding Phase 1) and the eight-item positivity composite (from coding Phase 2). I examined each unitary positivity variable as a mean-centered predictor of provider responsiveness in separate linear regression analyses. Although these models involve data from couples, linear regression analyses are appropriate because the outcome of interest (provider responsiveness) was assessed in only one member of each couple (i.e., responsiveness is not nested within couples).

Given research showing that the expression of negativity is a key determinant of support (e.g., S. Graham et al., 2008), I controlled for seeker negativity (mean-centered) in all analyses. I also controlled for condition in all analyses, even though results from key manipulation checks indicated that my attempt to vary rival threat across conditions was unsuccessful. Condition was coded (-0.5 = low threat, 0.5 = high threat) such that regression coefficients for each predictor (e.g., positivity) represent the mean of individual slopes across the high and low threat conditions

(i.e., across conditions). No main effect of condition emerged in any analysis presented here, so I describe main effects only for the seeker-expressed positivity and negativity predictors.

### 2.2.2.1 Single-Item Positivity

As a first step in examining the hypothesized direct link between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1; Aim 2), I tested the predictive value of the single-item positivity variable when controlling for negativity and condition. A model that predicted provider responsiveness from single-item seeker positivity, seeker negativity, and condition accounted for 15% of the variance in responsiveness, $R^2 = .15$, $F(3, 121) = 7.16$, $p < .001$. Consistent with H1A (see Table 1), a main effect of the single-item positivity predictor emerged: As seekers expressed more (vs. less) positivity, providers subsequently behaved more responsively, $\beta = .37$; $b = 0.27$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI $= [0.14, 0.39]$, $t(121) = 4.32$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .13$. Replicating findings from past work on the support-eliciting effects of negative expression (e.g., S. Graham et al., 2008), a main effect of the seeker negativity predictor also emerged, indicating that when seekers expressed more (vs. less) negativity, providers subsequently behaved more responsively, $\beta = .21$, $b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI $= [0.04, 0.43]$, $t(121) = 2.40$, $p = .018$, $sr^2 = .05$. No two-way interactions (involving single-item positivity, negativity, or condition) emerged on Block 2, $p > .05$.

I then ran supplemental analyses with the intention of ruling out several plausible third variable explanations. Relevant to Aim 2, I tested whether the positive main effect of the single-item positivity predictor on responsiveness would hold when controlling for each of the following mean-centered covariates (entered in separate models): coder-rated stressor intensity; seeker self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and relationship quality; and provider self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and relationship quality. I continued to control

for negativity and condition in each of these models. Consistent with H1B (see Table 1), single-item positivity continued to positively predict responsiveness in each supplemental model (see Table 4), uniquely accounting for 9-14% of the variance in responsiveness. The positive main effect of seeker negativity also held in these models, with seeker negativity uniquely predicting 3-5% of responsiveness variance.

### 2.2.2.2 Positivity Composite

In parallel models to those just described, I replaced the single-item positivity predictor variable with the 8-item positivity composite from Phase 2 coding. A model predicting responsiveness from the positivity composite, negativity, and condition accounted for 14% of the variance in provider responsiveness, $R^2 = .14$, $F(3, 121) = 6.74$, $p < .001$. As expected (H1A; see Table 1), a main effect of the positivity composite predictor emerged, $\beta = .35$, $b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI = [0.27, 0.76], $t(121) = 4.18$, $p < .001$, $sr^2 = .12$. Similarly, seeker-expressed negativity predicted increases in provider responsiveness, $\beta = .18$, $b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.39], $t(121) = 2.06$, $p = .042$, $sr^2 = .03$. No two-way interactions (involving the positivity composite, negativity, or condition) emerged on Block 2, $ps > .09$.

To rule out potential third variable explanations for the positivity composite predictor's main effect on responsiveness, I tested supplemental models that predicted provider responsiveness from the positivity composite, negativity, condition, and each of the following mean-centered variables (entered in separate models): coder-rated stressor intensity; seeker self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment, avoidance, or relationship quality; or the same set of features of the provider. As expected (H1B; see Table 1), the positivity composite continued to positively predict responsiveness in each supplemental model (see Table 4), uniquely accounting

for 8-13% of the variance in responsiveness. The predictive capacity of seeker negativity was inconsistent across models: Whereas seeker negativity positively predicted responsiveness in models that (one at a time) controlled for stressor intensity, seeker self-esteem, seeker anxiety, provider anxiety, or provider relationship quality, no main effect of the negativity predictor emerged in models that controlled for seeker avoidance ($p = .094$) or relationship quality ($p = .058$), or for provider self-esteem ($p = .051$) or avoidance ($p = .056$).

Taken together, these findings provide initial evidence that when people express more (vs. less) positivity when disclosing about their negative experiences, their partners may subsequently provide more responsive support. That a single-item measure of positive expressivity and a composite of various kinds of seeker-expressed positivity each predicted responsiveness—and did so even when controlling for negative expressivity and for key features of the stressor, seeker, or provider—provides an encouraging basis to conduct additional analyses examining particular types of seeker-expressed positivity.

### 2.2.2.3 Exploratory Moderation Analyses Related to H1B

Extending beyond my primary aims, when testing models that controlled for stressor intensity or for features of the seeker or provider (trait self-esteem, attachment insecurity, or relationship quality), I also examined whether any of these variables moderated the relation between unitary measures of positivity and responsiveness. No such interactions emerged in analyses that used to single-item positivity predictor or the positivity composite.

### 2.2.3 Different Types of Positivity

To examine how different types of positive expressivity are related to provider responsiveness (Exploratory Aim 1), I first conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) on the eight coder-rated discrete positive expressions (e.g., gratitude, optimism) to identify positivity groups that represent different types of seeker-expressed positivity. I then used those type-specific positivity groups to predict provider responsiveness in subsequent regression analyses. Although we recently proposed theoretically-derived families of positivity elsewhere (Walsh & Forest, 2021), which vary based on the target or referent of the positivity (i.e., the provider/partner, self, stressor, and unspecified), empirical evidence regarding the structure of positive expressivity— especially within negative event or support-seeking contexts—is limited. I therefore used a bottom-up approach to determine type-specific groupings of positivity (e.g., partner-oriented positivity; stressor-oriented positivity) within the broader positivity composite in Study 1.

The PCA (based on a correlation matrix of the eight coder-rated positive expressions) extracted components with eigenvalues greater than 1. Three components cumulatively accounted for 82.44% of the variance. As shown in Table 5, each item loaded highly (.68 - .95) onto only one component, with minimal cross-loadings (.04 - .48). The first component accounted for 45.88% of the variance and comprised three items that suggest the seeker's positive feelings about the provider: gratitude/appreciation for their partner (the provider), liking/affection for their partner, and being considerate of how their disclosure might affect their partner. The second component accounted for 22.84% of the variance and included two items assessing positivity related to the stressor and/or seekers themselves: finding a bright side or silver lining to the event (e.g., grew or learned from the event) and expressing optimism about being able to resolve, come to terms with, or recover from the event in the future. The final component accounted for 13.72% of the variance

and comprised three items assessing positivity that did not seem to be about or directed at a particular target/referent: the seeker's use of humor, their pleasant demeanor, and their expression of happiness. I retained the type-specific sub-composites (partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity) to use in subsequent analyses predicting responsiveness.

Taken together, this pattern of results is largely consistent with three families of positivity that we have recently proposed (Walsh & Forest, 2021):Factor 1 represents partner-oriented positivity (i.e., positivity about/pertaining to the provider), Factor 2 represents stressor-oriented positivity (i.e., positivity about/pertaining to the stressor or the self in relation to the stressor), and Factor 3 represents unspecified positivity (i.e., positivity not pertaining to or referring to a particular person/thing). Each component's corresponding items formed composites with adequate reliability: partner-oriented positivity (three items; $\alpha = .93$), stressor-oriented positivity (two items; $r[123] = .78, p < .001$), and unspecified positivity (three items; $\alpha = .73$). Accordingly, I averaged each component's items to obtain type-specific sub-composite scores for partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity, which I planned to use in subsequent analyses. Table 6 shows descriptive statistics and correlations for type-specific sub-composites. For additional correlations between each type-specific positivity sub-composite, seeker-expressed negativity, and features of seekers and providers (self-esteem, attachment anxiety and avoidance, relationship quality), see Supplemental Table 1 in Appendix E.

### 2.2.3.1 Type-Specific Sub-Composites

To investigate the links between different types of positivity and responsive support (Exploratory Aim 1), I initially examined partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity as predictors of responsiveness in separate models (controlling for

negativity and condition in all models). As shown in Table 7, positive main effects of partner-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = .19, $p$ = .030), stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = .33, $p$ < .001) and unspecified positivity ($\beta$ = .34, $p$ < .001) emerged in their corresponding models, accounting for 4%, 10%, and 11% of the variance in responsiveness, respectively. No main effect of the negativity predictor emerged in the partner-oriented positivity model ($\beta$ = .13, $p$ = .161), but positive main effects of the negativity predictor did emerge in the stressor-oriented positivity model ($\beta$ = .20, $p$ = .024) and the unspecified positivity model ($\beta$ = .19, $p$ = .027). Negativity predicted 4% of the variance in responsiveness in both the stressor-oriented positivity and unspecified positivity models.

I then assessed the unique predictive contribution of each positivity sub-composite, above and beyond the other positivity sub-composites and negativity. For this analysis, I entered all three positivity sub-composites as predictors of responsiveness and controlled negativity and condition. Table 8 displays results from this model. Together, partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, unspecified positivity, and negativity accounted for 17% of the variance in provider responsiveness. Partner-oriented positivity no longer predicted responsiveness ($\beta$ = .06, $p$ = .484) when controlling for stressor-oriented positivity, unspecified positivity, and negativity. However, stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = .22, $p$ = .025), unspecified positivity ($\beta$ = .22, $p$ = .028), and negativity ($\beta$ = .22, $p$ = .014) each emerged as a significant (positive) predictor of responsiveness, uniquely accounting for 4%, 3%, and 4% of the variance in responsiveness, respectively.

### 2.2.3.2 Potential Third Variables

Consistent with the approach I used to rule out potential third variables that might explain the link between unitary measures of positivity and responsiveness, I also tested the main effect of

each positivity sub-composite predictor while controlling (one at a time) coder-rated stressor intensity, or a key feature (self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, or relationship quality) of the seeker or provider. All models continued to control for negativity and condition. Table 9 displays results from supplemental models in which type-specific sub-composites were entered as predictors of responsiveness in separate models. Table 10 displays results from supplemental models in which type-specific sub-composites were entered as simultaneous predictors.

When type-specific sub-composites were entered as predictors of responsiveness in separate models, the positive main effect of the partner-oriented positivity predictor held in six (out of nine) supplemental models, whereas positive main effects of the stressor-oriented positivity predictor and the unspecified positivity predictor held in all nine of their respective supplemental models (see Table 9). When type-specific sub-composites were entered as predictors of responsiveness in the same model, partner-oriented positivity did not predict responsiveness in any supplemental model, stressor-oriented held as a significant positive predictor of responsiveness in eight supplemental models, and unspecified positivity held as a significant positive predictor of responsiveness in seven models (see Table 10).

### 2.2.3.3 Exploratory Moderation Analyses Related to H1A

Extending beyond my primary aims, in addition to testing each positivity sub-composites and seeker-expressed negativity as individual predictors of provider responsiveness, I also tested their two-way interactions (entered on Block 2) in exploratory moderation analyses. No such two-way interaction effects emerged when type-specific sub-composites were tested in separate models with negativity and condition (see Table 7). However, when sub-composites were tested in the same model, an interaction between stressor-oriented positivity and negativity emerged (see Table

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8). To decompose this interaction, I tested each predictor's simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the mean of the other predictor. Stressor-oriented positivity positively predicted provider responsiveness at high (+1 *SD*) seeker-expressed negativity ($\beta = -.61$, $b = 0.55$, $SE = .15$, 95% CI = [0.26, 0.84], $t[109] = 3.72$, $p < .001$) but not at low (-1 *SD*) seeker-expressed negativity ($\beta = -.03$, $b = -0.03$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI = [-0.29, 0.26], $t[109] = -0.24$, $p = .813$). Further, seeker-expressed negativity positively predicted provider responsiveness at high (+1 *SD*) stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta = .55$, $b = 0.63$, $SE = .19$, 95% CI = [0.26, 1.00], $t[109] = 3.39$, $p < .001$) but not at low (-1 *SD*) stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta = -.09$, $b = -0.10$, $SE = .15$, 95% CI = [-0.39, 0.19], $t[109] = -0.68$, $p = .501$). This pattern of results, which is displayed in Figure 2, suggests that expressing stressor-oriented positivity may be beneficial when seekers are expressing negativity at high levels, but stressor-oriented positivity may not help (but also not hurt) when seekers are expressing negativity at low levels.

## 2.3 Discussion

Study 1 served as a novel empirical investigation into the phenomenon of seekers' use of positive expressions when seeking support for negative/distress-related events from their romantic partners. Relevant to Aim 1, when examining positive expressivity as a unitary construct, I found that most people spontaneously expressed some positivity when disclosing about a personal stressor to their romantic partner (Q1). According to coders' ratings of discrete forms of positive expressivity, seeker-expressed positivity most commonly involved displaying pleasant demeanors and expressing optimism, whereas expressing gratitude and using humor were the least commonly used forms of positivity that coders observed in this context (Q2, see Table 1).

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When testing the direct link between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness (Aim 2), I found that single-item positivity and the positivity composite each predicted heightened levels of provider responsiveness (tested separately) when controlling for seeker negativity (H1A) and for plausible third variables (H1B), including stressor intensity, and key features (self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, relationship quality) of the seeker or provider. By showing that when seekers expressed more (vs. less) positivity (a unitary construct) in their negative disclosures, their partner subsequently behaved more responsively, the current study provides correlational evidence for the conceptual model's direct path (Path I, Figure 1).

By accounting for seeker-expressed negativity in analyses, I demonstrated that the expression of positivity—rather than the presence or absence of negativity—was a meaningful predictor of providers' subsequent responsive support. Interestingly, although seekers expressed positivity at relatively low levels when disclosing about a personal stressor, the predictive contribution of seekers' expressions of positivity was higher than that of a known support elicitor: seekers' expressions of negativity (S. Graham et al., 2008), which also emerged as a significant predictor of responsiveness in the current study.

An additional aim of Study 1 was to investigate how different types of positivity might be related to partner responsiveness (Exploratory Aim 1). Although there is reason to believe that different types of positivity may have different consequences for providers' supportiveness, nearly no studies have directly tested this possibility. Further, little agreement among emotion scholars regarding categorically different kinds of positive expressivity exists (see Walsh & Forest, 2021). Using a bottom-up approach, I identified three types of positivity, which captured various specific positive expressions that occurred in disclosure videos: partner-oriented positivity, stressor-

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oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity. These types of positivity are largely consistent with theoretically-derived positivity families that I have proposed elsewhere (Walsh & Forest, 2021).

When examining positivity's type-specific direct links to partner responsiveness (Exploratory Aim 1), I found that partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity were each predictive of provider responsiveness (in separate models, and with seeker negativity controlled), but that the strength and robustness of these type-specific associations varied. The most robust predictor of responsiveness was unspecified positivity, followed by stressor-oriented positivity. Results from some exploratory moderation analyses suggest that the link between stressor-oriented positivity and provider responsiveness may depend on the level of seeker-expressed negativity: Stressor-oriented positivity was positively associated with responsiveness and average and high (but not low) levels of seeker negativity. I will examine whether this effect replicates in Study 4.

Partner-oriented positivity was the least robust predictor of responsiveness in Study 1. Although it predicted provider responsiveness when entered alone (or with seeker negativity) as a predictor, when all three types of positivity were tested as simultaneous predictors (with negativity controlled), only stressor-oriented positivity and unspecified positivity remained significantly associated with responsiveness. The finding that partner-oriented positivity's link to provider responsiveness was the least robust of the three types of positivity is perhaps surprising, given a recent review of past work bearing on the direct path most strongly supported a support-eliciting effect of partner-oriented positivity (Walsh & Forest, 2021). In the present study, overall low levels of partner-oriented positivity ($M = 1.94$, $SD = 1.48$, on a 9-point scale) might have limited the robustness of partner-oriented positivity's link to provider responsiveness. It seems possible that the video-exchange procedure used in Study 1 may have constrained seekers' expression of

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partner-oriented positivity. For example, nonverbal expressions of partner-oriented positivity (e.g., affectionate touch or loving eye contact) might be difficult to communicate outside of in-person, real-time interactions. In subsequent studies, I will examine whether partner-oriented positivity's link to provider responsiveness emerges when partner-oriented positivity is experimentally manipulated (Study 3) or spontaneously expressed during an in-person support interaction (Study 4).

As previously mentioned, the video-exchange procedure that facilitated the seeker's disclosure and provider's reply in Study 1 offered some unique advantages. Given that the video-exchange procedure temporally separated the seeker's disclosure and provider's response, the finding that positivity predicted responsiveness—even when controlling for several plausible third variables—is consistent with my proposition that positive expressivity may elicit responsive support within distress-related support-seeking contexts. However, only an experiment can directly speak to the causal account proposed here. Further, the current study provided no data on mechanisms to test hypotheses regarding indirect pathways through which seeker positivity might be related to provider responsiveness. Thus, in Studies 2 and 3, I sought causal evidence for the conceptual model's (Figure 1) direct path from seeker positivity to partner responsiveness (Path I) and investigated mechanisms expected to underlie positivity's support-eliciting (Paths A-B, C-D, and E-F) and support-suppressing (Paths G-H) effects. I examined positivity as a unitary construct in Study 2—testing its direct effect (Aim 2) and indirect effects (Aim 3) on responsive support— and then explored type-specific direct and indirect effects of partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity (Exploratory Aims 1 and 2) in Study 3.

# 3.0 Study 2

In Study 2, I experimentally manipulated positive expressivity in a support-seeking negative disclosure message and assessed provider responsiveness using an imagined email-exchange scenario procedure. In a non-student sample and using a between-groups design, I asked participants (serving in the support-provider role) to respond to one of three hypothetical negative disclosure messages that they imaged came from their romantic partner. Depending on participants' randomly assigned condition, their partner expressed negativity only (negativity-only/control condition), negativity plus positivity (plus-positivity condition), or—to control for disclosure length differences between the negativity-only/control and plus-positivity conditions—negativity plus neutral filler statements and phrases (plus-filler condition). I then asked participants to type an email response to their randomly assigned disclosure message as if they were responding to their romantic partner. Coders later rated participants' replies for responsiveness. I additionally examined mechanisms underlying the hypothesized support-eliciting effect of positivity on responsiveness (Paths A-B, C-D, and E-F, Figure 1) and considered a potential cost of expressing positivity: decreasing providers' appraisals of the seeker's need for support (Path G-H, Figure 1).

## 3.1 Method

### 3.1.1 Participants

Three-hundred eighty-three adults (47% female; *M* age = 35.29 years, *SD* = 10.40) responded to a study advertisement posted on Mechanical Turk. Of these participants, 374 met the inclusion criterion of being in an exclusive romantic relationship (167 married, 15 engaged, 52 cohabiting, 111 dating, 29 unreported; *M*relationship length = 7.46 years, *SD* = 8.49). Data from nine respondents who were not in an exclusive relationship were excluded from analyses.[4] Participants received $1.00 in appreciation for their participation.

### 3.1.2 Procedure

Participants completed all study tasks and questionnaires in a single online session. They first reported their gender and completed pre-manipulation questionnaires (see Appendix F).

Participants then completed an imagined hypothetical scenario task. For this task, participants were asked to imagine that their partner sent them an email, in which their partner recounted a conflict they had with a friend that afternoon. Depending on participants' randomly assigned condition, they received one of three versions of this email. All versions of the email described the conflict in the same way (e.g., "We got into a pretty heated argument, and [they] basically told me that I'm an idiot [. . .] and then [they] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!") and contained nearly all the same negative sentiments (e.g., "[their] reaction caught me

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[4] One participant reported that they had taken the survey twice, so I excluded data from their second time participating.

off-guard. I'm really upset right now." and "I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now."). Critically, however, the three emails varied in the presence of other content, such that they included no additional content (negativity-only condition), included additional positive content (plus-positivity condition), or included additional neutral filler content (plus-filler condition). As can be seen in Appendix F, which contains the email used in each condition, the plus-positivity condition included statements reflecting multiple types of positivity (e.g., some forms of partner-oriented positivity, some forms of stressor-oriented positivity, and some forms of unspecified positivity).

My main interest was in comparing the plus-positivity condition to the negativity-only condition, but the addition of positivity created a confound: the length of the email varied with condition. Attempting to address this, I created the plus-filler condition, in which participants received an email that matched the length of the plus-positivity condition email, but the extended length was due to additional neutral—rather than positive—content. The strongest evidence for positive expressivity's value in support-seeking distress-related contexts would be if the plus-positivity condition elicits more responsiveness than both the negativity-only condition and the plus-filler condition. However, it is possible that the added neutral content used in the plus-filler condition may promote responsiveness compared to the negativity-only condition as well.

After the manipulation, participants completed an attention check, which asked participants to indicate the topic of the partner's email. (All participants passed the attention check.) Participants also reported their perceptions of both the positivity and the negativity that their partner expressed (see Measures section). Participants then wrote a reply email as though they were responding to their partner, which coders later rated for responsiveness (a detailed description of the responsiveness measure appears shortly). Although these reply emails, which were never

sent to the partner, were in response to a hypothetical disclosure, crafting a responsive reply required a real investment of time and emotional energy from participants. In this way, the degree to which reply emails were responsive more closely parallels real-world responsive behavior than would a self-reported intention to provide responsive support.

After writing their reply email, participants completed a series of questionnaires containing potential mechanism measures, which I describe in more detail shortly. Lastly, participants were shown the reply email that they had written, rated it for responsiveness, and then answered questions about their demographic information (i.e., age and ethnicity) and current relationship (i.e., relationship status and length, and their partner's gender).

### 3.1.3 Measures

All materials for Study 2 are in Appendix F. Here, I describe only measures relevant to the hypotheses being tested here; these measures appear in the order they were administered.

### 3.1.3.1 Perception of Disclosure Content

Once participants had read their randomly assigned email, they answered two questions about the valence of its contents, which assessed perceived positivity and perceived negativity: "To what degree did your partner express positive thoughts and feelings?" and "To what degree did your partner express negative thoughts and feelings?" (1 = *not at all*; 9 = extremely/*a great deal*). The perceived positivity measure served as a manipulation check, as I intended for the plus-positivity condition email to contain higher levels of positive expressivity than the other two conditions. The perceived negativity measure was collected to test whether people perceived the three emails—which contained the same negative content—as equal in negativity.

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### 3.1.3.2 Potential Mechanisms

After participants wrote their reply email, they responded to items related to their thoughts and feelings about their partner, their partner's disclosure email, and their own task of having to reply. Participants used 9-point response scales (unless otherwise noted, 1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*). Appendix F contains the full set of items.

I planned to combine items to obtain composites that mapped onto the mediators in Figure 1. Five items ($\alpha = .87$) assessed efficacy beliefs (e.g., "I felt like I would be able to provide effective support to my partner" and "I felt like I could say things to my partner that would make him/her feel comforted"). Six items ($\alpha = .87$) asked about participants' warm or compassionate feelings about their partner or their relationship (e.g., "I felt like my partner valued me and/or our relationship" and "I was glad to have had the opportunity to help my partner with his/her situation"). I refer to this construct as the pro-relational sentiments composite. Regarding the conceptual model's positive mood construct, one item assessed positive mood: "Reading my partner's email made me feel an increase in positive emotion(s) (e.g., more inspiration, happiness, gratitude, hope, contentment than I felt before reading it)." Lastly, three items ($\alpha = .75$) assessed a mechanism through which I expected positive expressivity may have support-suppressing effects: need appraisals (e.g., "How severe does your partner think the conflict with his/her friend is?" and "How upset is your partner about the conflict with his/her friend?"; 1 = *not at all*; 9 = *extremely*).

### 3.1.3.3 Responsiveness

Following data collection, three coders rated participants' reply emails for responsiveness, using seven items ($\alpha = .95$, interrater $\alpha = .80$; e.g., "How much concern did the participant express in their response?" and "How supportive is this response?"; 1 = not at all; 9 = *extremely*). Coders

were unaware of hypotheses and participants' condition when coding responsiveness (for the full coding scheme, see Appendix F).

## 3.2 Results

Prior to analyses, I excluded data from two participants because they did not follow instructions for the response email task. Additionally, 38 participants did not provide a written response, resulting in missing data for coder-rated responsiveness. Thus, the final sample comprised 333 romantically involved participants who wrote a response email (i.e., completed the study task designed to assess the main dependent variable, responsive support) in accordance with the instructions (negativity-only condition $n = 108$, plus-positivity condition $n = 115$, neutral condition $n = 112$). A sensitivity analysis revealed a sample of 333 participants would be sufficient to detect a small overall condition effect (effect size $f = 0.17$). Table 11 shows descriptive statistics and correlations for key study variables.

### 3.2.1 Perception of Disclosure Content

To ensure that participants perceived the highest levels of positivity in the plus-positivity condition, I ran a one-way ANOVA with condition as the independent variable and perceived positivity as the dependent variable. Levene's test showed unequal variances in perceived positivity across conditions, $F(2, 329) = 3.88$, $p = .022$. I therefore used Welch's $F$ test, which revealed significant differences in perceived positivity across the three conditions, $F(2, 218.54) = 49.70$, $p < .001$. Contrast tests with equal variances not assumed showed that participants

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perceived higher levels of positivity in the plus-positivity condition email ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 2.06$), compared to the negativity-only condition email ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.59$) and compared to the plus-filler condition email ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.71$), $ps < .001$. Perceived positivity was also higher in the plus- filler condition than in the negativity-only condition ($p = .009$), which was unexpected given that I tried to add only neutral content—and not any positive content—to the plus-filler condition email when extending its length to match that of the plus-positivity condition email. Although I did not anticipate this effect, it is consistent with research on positivity offset, which shows that people tend to perceive positivity in neutral stimuli (e.g., Yuan et al., 2019).

Although I intended to hold negative content constant across conditions, an overall effect of condition also emerged on perceived negativity, $F(2, 329) = 8.14$, $p < .001$, *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.047$. Specifically, participants perceived lower levels of negative expressivity in the plus-positivity condition email ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 2.04$) than in the negativity-only condition email ($M = 6.63$, $SD = 1.71$; $p < .001$) and in the plus-filler condition email ($M = 6.34$, $SD = 1.78$; $p = .006$). The negativity-only and plus-filler conditions did not differ in perceived negativity, $p = .251$. Thus, the positive (but not neutral) content appeared to diffuse the perceived negative content.

**3.2.2 Direct Effect of Seeker Positivity on Responsiveness**

An overall condition effect emerged on responsiveness, $F(2, 330) = 3.25$, $p = .040$, *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.019$. Providing partial support for my hypotheses relevant to Aim 2, contrast tests showed that the plus-positivity condition email elicited more responsiveness ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.31$) than did the negativity-only condition email ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.29$), $p = .015$. However, the plus-positivity condition did not significantly differ from the plus-filler condition ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.30$),

$p = .552$. Thus, Study 2 provided support for H2A, but not H2B (see Table 1).[5] The negativity-only and plus-filler conditions also did not differ in responsiveness, $p = .066$.

### 3.2.3 Indirect Effects of Seeker Positivity on Responsiveness

Having tested the direct path from positivity to support (Path I, Figure 1), I sought to investigate the mechanisms through which positivity as a unitary construct might influence provider responsiveness (Aim 3). I predicted that support-eliciting indirect effects would emerge via increased efficacy beliefs (Path A-B; H2A), strengthened pro-relational sentiments (Path C-D; H2B), and boosts in positive mood (Path E-F; H2C). I also hypothesized that a support-suppressing indirect effect would emerge via decreased need appraisals (Path G-H; H2D).

As a first step, I examined the effects of condition on each potential mechanism variable in separate ANOVAs and used planned contrasts to evaluate which conditions differed from which other conditions. I retained any variable that showed effects of the plus-positivity condition to submit for mediation analyses in PROCESS (Model 4; Hayes, 2017). Following recommended best practices by Yzerbyt et al. (2018), I report results for individual paths of the indirect pathway (X → M and M → Y) and an index of mediation drawn from PROCESS models using percentile bootstrap (with 5,000 resamples). Confidence intervals for indirect effects that exclude zero are consistent with mediation.

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[5] A regression model predicting responsiveness from dummy-coded condition (reference category = plus-positivity condition), provider relationship quality (PRQC), and Condition × PRQC interactions showed no two-way interaction effects involving participant PRQC and the plus-positivity condition compared to the negativity-only condition ($p = .242$) or the plus-filler condition ($p = .108$).

**3.2.3.1 Condition Effects on Potential Mechanisms**

Table 12 shows results from ANOVAs with condition as the independent variable and efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, positive mood, or need appraisals as the dependent variable in separate models. Omnibus tests revealed no effects of condition on efficacy beliefs or pro-relational sentiments, and planned contrasts showed that these variables did not significantly differ across any two conditions. Although the omnibus test for positive mood was not significant, I proceeded with planned contrasts to test Path E of Figure 1. The plus-positivity condition did not differ from the negativity-only condition ($p = .096$) but did increase positive mood compared to the plus-filler condition ($p = .020$). Regarding the hypothesized support-suppressing mechanism, an overall effect of condition emerged on perceived need for support: The plus-positivity condition decreased perceived need compared to the negativity-only condition ($p = .001$) and compared to the plus-neutral condition ($p = .007$).

In sum, the plus-positivity condition decreased need appraisals compared to the negativity-only/control condition, and simultaneously decreased need appraisals and increased positive mood compared to the plus-filler condition. I retained these two variables (need appraisals and provider's positive mood) for mediation analyses.

**3.2.3.2 Mediation Analyses**

As a next step, I ran mediation analyses in PROCESS (v3.5; Model 4; Hayes, 2017). To test the conceptual model's support-suppressing pathway via decreased perceived need for the plus-positivity (vs. negativity-only) condition, I entered condition as the independent variable, with the negativity-only condition as the reference category, need appraisals as the mediator, and responsiveness as the dependent variable. Compared to the negativity-only condition, the plus-positivity condition decreased providers' perceived need ($b = -.58$, $SE = .18$, $p = .001$), which in

turn positively predicted provider responsiveness ($b$ = .31, $SE$ = .05, $p$ < .001). Consistent with H2D, the indirect effect of the plus-positivity (vs. negativity-only) condition via decreased perceived need was significant, indirect effect = -.18, $SE$ = .06, 95% CI = [-.310, -.073].

To examine the plus-positivity (vs. plus-filler) condition's indirect effects on responsiveness via boosted positive mood and via decreased need appraisals I tested another set of mediation models, in which the plus-filler condition served as the reference category. A model that tested positive mood as a mediator showed that the plus-positivity (vs. plus-filler) condition increased positive mood ($b$ = .74, $SE$ = .31, $p$ = .020), but positive mood did not predict responsiveness ($b$ = .02, $SE$ = 63, $p$ = .532). In contrast to H2C (see Table 1), the indirect effect of the plus-positivity (vs. plus-filler) condition via positive mood was not significant, indirect effect = .01, $SE$ = .03, 95% CI = [-.040, .074]. A model that tested a perceived need as a mediator showed that the plus-positivity (vs. plus-filler) condition decreased providers' perceived need ($b$ = -.47, $SE$ = .18, $p$ = .007), which in turn positively predicted provider responsiveness ($b$ = .31, $SE$ = .05, $p$ < .001). Consistent with H2D (see Table 1), the indirect effect of the plus-positivity (vs. plus-filler) condition via need appraisal was significant, indirect effect = -.15, $SE$ = .06, 95% CI = [-.278, -.040]. I obtained the same pattern of results from a model that estimated indirect effects via positive mood and via need appraisals simultaneously.

Taken together, these mediation model findings provide strong support for the conceptual model's support-suppressing pathway via decreased need appraisals (Paths G-H, Figure 1). However, I found no support for a support-eliciting pathway via boosted positive mood (Paths E-F, Figure 1).

## 3.3 Discussion

Building on the correlational evidence of positive expressivity's potential value in distress-related support-seeking contexts obtained in Study 1, Study 2 provided causal evidence of a direct support-eliciting effect of seeker-expressed positivity on provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1). Relevant to Aim 2 and consistent with H1C (but not H1D; see Table 1), I found that experimentally-manipulated positive expressivity in a negative disclosure increased participants' (providers') responsiveness (as rated by coders) compared to a negativity-only condition (but not compared to a plus-filler condition).

Study 2 also provides initial evidence that expressing positivity in negative disclosures may affect providers in ways that both encourage and discourage responsive support. That is, a support-eliciting direct effect (Path I, Figure 1) of positivity emerged—at least when compared a non-positivity condition—but a *support-suppressing* indirect effect (via decreased need appraisal) also emerged.

Relevant to Aim 3, although I found evidence of the hypothesized support-suppressing indirect effect of positivity (via need appraisals; H2D), I found no evidence of support-eliciting mechanisms for the observed positive (support-eliciting) direct effect. Efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, and positive mood did not emerge as significant mechanisms, in contrast to my hypotheses (H2A, H2B, and H2C, respectively). This may have been in part because the positivity manipulation included multiple types of positivity. Measuring some of the mechanism variables with items that are relatively indirect reflections of the construct (e.g., "I was glad to have had the opportunity to help my partner with his/her situation" for pro-relational sentiments) or just one item (e.g., positive mood) might have also decreased my chances of finding support for some indirect pathways. The net support-eliciting effect is nonetheless encouraging, at least in

studies so far. I sought to build on these findings in Study 3 by teasing apart the effects of different types of positivity (inspired by the types I identified in Study 1) on responsive support provision. I also aimed to address potential measurement issues related to the pro-relational sentiments and positive mood variables (support-eliciting mechanisms) in Study 3.

# 4.0 Study 3

In Study 3, I used an experimental approach similar to Study 2 to investigate whether each type of positivity affects responsiveness (Exploratory Aim 1) and explored whether different types of positivity operate through the same or different mechanistic pathways (Exploratory Aim 2). Recall that in Study 1, unspecified positivity and—at least in the context of average and high negative expressivity—stressor-oriented positivity, were the most robust predictors of responsiveness. Yet, it seemed possible that partner-oriented positivity could also affect provider responsiveness, and strong evidence for this might emerge in a context in which partner-oriented positivity was unconfounded with the other types of positivity. Similar to Study 2, Study 3 featured a between-groups manipulation of the content in a negative disclosure that participants imagined receiving from their romantic partner. As in Study 2, support-seeking conditions comprised negativity-only, plus-neutral, and plus-positivity conditions. However, I broke the plus-positivity condition from Study 2 into three positivity conditions, each of which contained a different type of positive expressivity: partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, or unspecified positivity. After the manipulation, I assessed potential mechanisms and responsiveness using procedures from Study 2. I (Walsh & Forest, 2021) have previously speculated that partner-oriented positivity is particularly likely to strengthen pro-relational sentiments and boost positive mood states, with little (if any) risk of undermining need appraisals; that stressor-oriented positivity may bolster efficacy beliefs but also decrease need appraisals; and that unspecified positivity may increase pro-relational sentiments and positive mood states but also decrease need appraisals. I tested these possibilities in Study 3.

## 4.1 Method

### 4.1.1 Participants

I recruited 500 adults from the crowdsourcing platform, Prolific. Although I intended to recruit a sample comprised entirely of participants with an exclusive romantic partner, six respondents reported being single, separated, non-exclusive with their partner, or uncertain about their relationship status. The remaining 494 participants ($M$age = 34.82 years, $SD$ = 11.50; 56.3% women; 78.7% White, 7.9% Asian, 5.7%, Hispanic, 3.6% multiracial, 3.4% Black or African American, 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.2% Middle Eastern) reported that they were exclusively dating ($n$ = 95), cohabiting ($n$ = 88), engaged ($n$ = 34), married ($n$ = 277). On average, participants had been with their partner for 9.27 years ($SD$ = 9.70). Most participants (94.9%) were in mixed-gender relationships. Participants received $1.00 in appreciation for their participation.

### 4.1.2 Procedure

Participants completed all study tasks and questionnaires online, during a single session. Participants first reported their gender. After completing background measures not related to the hypotheses being tested here (see Appendix G for full materials), I manipulated the seeker's expression of positivity, using modified versions of emails used in Study 2 (see Appendix G). Each of the positivity condition emails included the negative content from the negativity-only condition email plus several statements exemplifying one particular type of positivity identified in Study 1: partner-oriented positivity (e.g., "Thanks for taking the time to read this! I'm lucky that I have you to share these things with."), stressor-oriented positivity (e.g., "We've been able to move past

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arguments that we've had before, so I'm hopeful that we can resolve this too."), or unspecified positivity (e.g., "Things are going great with work and I've been planning some fun activities for the weekend!").

Next, participants completed an attention check that required them to indicate the topic of the partner's email. (All participants passed the attention check.) Participants then wrote a response to their randomly assigned email that they imagined was from their romantic partner. (As in Study 2, this response was not actually sent to the partner). After writing a reply, participants completed a series of measures assessing potential mechanisms (described shortly); reported on their state relationship quality; and answered questions about their demographic information (i.e., age, ethnicity), relationship status (e.g., exclusively dating one person, married), relationship length, and their partner's gender identity. Following data collection, three trained coders independently rated participants' reply emails for responsiveness.

### 4.1.3 Measures

All materials are in Appendix G. Here, I describe only measures relevant to hypotheses being tested in the current investigation; they appear in chronological order.

### 4.1.3.1 Potential Mechanisms

After participants completed their reply email, they completed a series of measures that I expected would serve as mediators of the predicted condition effects on responsiveness (for complete set of items, see Appendix G). Participants made their ratings on 9-point response scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*). Three items ($\alpha$ = .80) assessed participants' efficacy beliefs (e.g., Reading my partner's email made me feel: "confident in my ability to effectively help

my partner"; "capable of supporting my partner"). Seven items (α = .84) assessed pro-relational sentiments (e.g., "Reading my partner's email made me feel: fond of my partner" and "In my partner's email to me, I thought that my partner tried to: Make my experience reading his/her email pleasant"). Four items (α = .84) assessed positive mood (Reading my partner's email made me feel: "content"; "happy"). Five items (α = .87) assessed participants' negative mood (e.g., Reading my partner's email made me feel: "overwhelmed and/or stressed"; "anxious"). One item assessed seeker's perceived need for support: "Reading my partner's email made me feel concerned for my partner."

### 4.1.3.2 Responsiveness

Following data collection, three trained coders—who were unaware of hypotheses and participants' condition— independently rated reply emails for responsiveness, using seven items (e.g., "How caring is this message?" and "How supportive is this message?"; 1 = *none/not at all*; 9 = *extremely/a great* deal; see Appendix G for full measure). The coder-rated means were averaged across items to create a responsiveness composite (α = .94, interrater α = .87).

## 4.2 Results

Prior to analyses, I excluded data from three participants because they did not follow instructions for the response email task. One additional participant did not provide a written response, resulting in missing data for coder-rated responsiveness. Thus, the final sample comprised 490 participants in an exclusive romantic relationship, who wrote a response email that

could be reasonably coded for responsiveness. Table 13 shows descriptive statistics and correlations for key study variables.

### 4.2.1 Type-Specific Direct Effects on Responsiveness

An ANOVA with five levels revealed an overall effect of condition on responsiveness, $F(4, 485) = 3.10$, $p = .015$, *partial* $\eta^2 = 0.025$, 95% CI [0.001, 0.051]. Planned contrasts showed that the partner-oriented positivity condition increased responsiveness ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.23$) compared to the negativity-only/control condition ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.57$), $p = .014$. In contrast, neither the stressor-oriented positivity condition ($M = 5.52$, $SD = 1.33$) nor unspecified positivity condition ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.31$) significantly differed from the negativity-only/control condition ($p$s $= .078$ and .735, respectively).

Similarly, the partner-oriented positivity condition increased responsiveness ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.50$) compared to the plus-filler condition ($p = .013$), but neither the stressor-oriented nor unspecified positivity conditions differed from the plus-filler condition ($p$s $= .074$ and .754, respectively). Pairwise comparisons between the three positivity conditions showed that the partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity conditions, which did not differ from each other ($p = .472$), each increased responsiveness compared to the unspecified positivity condition ($p$s $= .006$ and .039, respectively). Lastly, no condition differences in responsiveness emerged between the negativity-only/control and plus-filled conditions ($p = .980$).

Taken together, these findings—relevant to Aim 3—suggest that the direct effect of positivity on responsiveness varied by the type of positivity expressed. The partner-oriented positivity condition had the strongest support-eliciting effects, eliciting more responsiveness than did every other condition, except for the stressor-oriented positivity condition. The stressor-

oriented positivity condition's direct effects on responsiveness were mixed: Although the stressor-oriented positivity and partner-oriented conditions elicited similarly high levels of responsiveness, the stressor-oriented positivity condition also elicited no more responsiveness than did the non-positivity (negativity-only/control and plus-filler) conditions. Yet, it did elicit more support than the unspecified positivity condition, which was neither beneficial nor harmful to responsiveness relative to the non-positivity conditions.

### 4.2.2 Type-Specific Indirect Effects on Responsiveness

### 4.2.2.1 Condition Effects on Potential Mechanisms

As in Study 2, I first tested effects of condition on the potential mechanism variables, individually entering each mechanism measure as the dependent variable in ANOVA. Table 14 contains omnibus test results for each mechanism variable and descriptive statistics by condition, showing which conditions differed from each other.

Condition effects emerged only on pro-relational sentiments, positive mood, and need appraisal (see Table 14). I used planned contrasts to identify specific condition differences in these potential mechanisms, comparing each plus-positivity (partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, and unspecified) condition to the negativity-only/control and plus-filler conditions. Compared to the negativity-only/control condition, partner-oriented condition, stressor-oriented condition, and unspecified condition increased pro-relational sentiments ($ps < .05$) and positive mood ($ps < .001$). The only condition difference in need appraisals that emerged was between the unspecified and negativity-only conditions, such that the unspecified (vs. negativity-only/control) condition decreased need appraisals, $p = .031$.

Compared to the plus-filler condition, participants reported higher levels of pro-relational sentiments in the partner-oriented ($p < .001$) and stressor-oriented conditions ($p = .042$), but not in the unspecified condition ($p = .071$). Lastly, positive mood in the partner-oriented condition ($p = .003$) and unspecified condition ($p = .009$) was significantly higher than in the plus-filler condition; but the stressor-oriented and plus-filler conditions did not differ, $p = .110$.

I retained the mechanism variables on which condition differences emerged for subsequent mediation analyses, following the same approach used in Study 2.

### 4.2.2.2 Mediation Analyses

In the first set of models, I tested indirect effects of each plus-positivity condition against the control condition. When each mechanism variable was entered into its own mediation model, indirect effects emerged through the pro-relational sentiments (for each plus-positivity condition) and through need appraisals (for the stressor-oriented and unspecified positivity conditions), but not through positive mood. Indirect effects via pro-relational sentiments and via need appraisals also emerged in a model that included pro-relational sentiments and need appraisals as simultaneous mediators, and the pattern of results for each of the indirect paths remained unchanged across models. In the interest of brevity, I therefore report results from the fuller, simultaneous mediation model.

When compared to the negativity-only condition, significant indirect effects through pro-relational sentiments emerged for the partner-oriented condition (indirect effect = .096, $SE = .046$, 95% CI = [.021, .199]), the stressor-oriented condition (indirect effect = .061, $SE = .035$, 95% CI = [.007, .140]), and the unspecified positivity condition (indirect effect = .060, $SE = .037$, 95% CI = [.004, .144]). Specifically, partner-oriented positivity ($b = 0.80$, $SE = .21$, $p < .001$), stressor-oriented positivity ($b = 0.51$, $SE = .21$, $p = .016$), and unspecified positivity ($b = 0.50$, $SE = .22$, $p$

= .021) increased pro-relational sentiments, which in turn predicted more responsiveness ($b = 0.12$, $SE = .04$, $p = .005$). In addition to the support-eliciting indirect effect via pro-relational sentiments, a simultaneous support-suppressing indirect effect via need appraisals also emerged for the unspecified positivity condition (indirect effect = -.140, $SE = .07$, 95% CI = [-.277, -.017]). The unspecified positivity (vs. negativity-only) condition diminished providers' perceived need ($b = -0.53$, $SE = .24$, $p = .031$), which in turn positively predicted provider responsiveness ($b = 0.27$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$. Thus, although no direct effect of the unspecified (vs. negativity-only) condition emerged on responsiveness, the unspecified condition was indirectly related to both more and less responsiveness through increased in pro-relational sentiments and lowered need appraisals, respectively.

In a second set of mediation analyses, I re-coded condition so that the plus-filler condition served as the reference category, and I tested indirect effects via pro-relational sentiments and via positive mood in separate models. Significant indirect effects through pro-relational sentiments emerged for the partner-oriented condition (indirect effect = .179, $SE = .07$, 95% CI = [.065, .318]) and the stressor-oriented condition (indirect effect = .107, $SE = .06$, 95% CI = [.005, .231]). Compared to the plus-filler condition, the partner-oriented and stressor-oriented conditions each increased pro-relational sentiments ($b = 0.72$, $SE = .22$, $p = .001$ and $b = 0.43$, $SE = .21$, $p = .042$, respectively), which in turn predicted more responsiveness, $b = 0.25$, $SE = .04$, $p < .001$. No indirect effects through positive mood emerged in the partner-oriented positivity condition (indirect effect = .009, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = [-.046, .070]) or in the unspecified positivity condition (indirect effect = .008, $SE = .03$, 95% CI = [-.041, .068]. Although the partner-oriented and unspecified positivity conditions (vs. plus-filler condition) each increased positive mood ($b = 0.74$,

*SE* = .25, *p* = .003, and *b* = 0.66, *SE* = .25, *p* = .009, respectively), positive mood did not predict responsiveness, *b* = 0.01, *SE* = .04, *p* = .745.

## 4.3 Discussion

Relevant to Exploratory Aim 1, findings from Study 3 suggest some types of positivity may hold more promise as a support-eliciting behavior than others—at least when expressed in the absence of other types of positivity. Partner-oriented positivity appeared to have the strongest support-eliciting effect, followed by stressor-oriented positivity, and, in turn, unspecified positivity. Whereas support-eliciting indirect effects emerged for partner-oriented and stressor-oriented positivity types (via increased pro-relational sentiments), unspecified positivity appeared to indirectly shape support in both support-eliciting (via increased pro-relational sentiments) and support-suppressing (via decreased need appraisals) ways, such that the direct effect was washed out. Thus, unspecified positivity may be a less effective support-seeking behavior than other types of positivity, because of the reduction it causes in providers' perceptions of the seeker's need for support.

The findings from Study 3 provide causal evidence linking different positivity types to responsive support. They also lend insight into the mechanisms through which each positivity type may affect support quality. However, these findings were observed in the context of an imagined disclosure paradigm that used email as the medium of communication. This approach allowed me to retain tight control of the disclosure contents—and to create disclosure messages that include only one type of positivity—but these features may not reflect how close partners most often

communicate about distressing events. Thus, in Study 4, I returned to a paradigm involving face-to-face live interactions between established romantic couples.

# 5.0 Study 4

Study 4 complements and extends Studies 1-3 several ways. First, I examined the capacity of seeker positive expressivity—as a broad unitary construct and type-specific dimensions—to predict provider responsiveness (Aim 2 and Exploratory Aim 1). Study 4 enabled me to do so in a non-student sample of more established romantic couples and using a naturalistic interaction paradigm that was higher in ecological validity than the video-exchange paradigm employed in Study 1. Study 4 also provided another chance to examine common types and levels of seeker-expressed positivity. Second, I investigated potential mechanisms of the hypothesized positivity-responsiveness link, focusing on efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, and need appraisal (Aim 3). I expected that positivity as a unitary construct would have an indirect support-eliciting effect on provider responsiveness through efficacy beliefs (H2A) and pro-relational sentiments (H2B), in addition to an indirect support-suppressing effect through need appraisal (H2D). I also conducted exploratory analyses for type-specific indirect effects (Exploratory Aim 2), using the positivity types identified in Study 1 and experimentally manipulated in Study 3. I also sought to replicate the Stressor-Oriented Positivity $\times$ Negativity interaction on responsiveness that emerged in Study 1 (which was not tested in Studies 2 and 3, which were experiments in which level of negativity was held constant across conditions).

To meet these aims, I analyzed data that were collected as part of a larger dyadic lab study, in which romantic couples discussed one member's (seeker's) greatest fear during a face-to-face

interaction.[6] These interactions were recorded and subsequently coded on dimensions including the seeker's positive and negative expressivity and the provider's responsive support. Before analyzing data for Study 4, I pre-registered my hypotheses, exclusion criteria, and data analytic plan on OSF (https://osf.io/prereg/).

## 5.1 Method

### 5.1.1 Participants

The sample comprised 103 romantic couples who responded to advertisements for a study on communication processes in close relationships. Advertisements appeared online (Craigslist, Pitt+ Me Registry, the Psychology Department Research Participation Pool) and on the University of Pittsburgh's campus and surrounding community areas. Grant budget constraints determined the sample size. In appreciation for their participation, each participant received either $25 or research credit for attending the lab session and a $5 e-gift card for completing the follow-up survey.

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[6] Data from this couples' study are also being used in another manuscript that investigates providers' feelings and relationship evaluations in response to receiving negative disclosures (Krueger & Forest, in preparation). However, the present investigation will be the first to use coder-ratings of seeker and provider behavior in the negative disclosure interaction, and will test different hypotheses (i.e., hypotheses regarding the seeker's expression of positivity and the consequences for provider responsiveness).

### 5.1.2 Procedure

The couple's behavioral observation study included a 90–120-minute lab session (from which the measures relevant to my analyses were drawn) and an online follow-up survey sent out one year after the lab session (which is not relevant to the hypotheses being tested in the current investigation). During the lab session, couple members first completed a series of background questionnaires independently and in separate rooms. They then reunited in a living room-style lab room, where they completed a Pictionary task that was intended to help acclimate participants to the lab setting and to being videotaped.

Next, participants independently responded to pre-interaction questionnaires. Couple members were once again reunited in the living room-style observation lab, where they jointly completed a 7-minute interaction task. One member of each couple was randomly assigned to the role of seeker; the other was assigned to the role of provider. Seekers were asked to talk about their greatest fear ("the thing in the world you are most afraid of"). Fear topics (hereafter referred to as the "stressor") included, for example, professional failure, personal or family health issues, and spiders. Providers were asked to respond in whatever way felt natural for them (for full instructions, see Appendix H). The videotaped interactions were later coded on a variety of dimensions (as described in the Measures section).

After the videotaped interaction, couple members completed a series of post-interaction questionnaires. They were then debriefed and compensated. One year after participants' lab session, participants were contacted by phone or email and invited to complete an online follow-up survey, which included measures that are unrelated to the current investigation.

### 5.1.3 Measures

Full materials for the Study 4 lab session are in Appendix H. Here, I describe only measures used in the current investigation. The measures described below appear in the order that participants completed them.

### 5.1.3.1 Pre-Interaction Questionnaires

Following the approach used in Study 1—and relevant to Aim 2 (and H1A and H1B; see Table 1)—analyses controlled for overall negative expressivity and some analyses also controlled for plausible third variables that might account for the hypothesized association between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness. These variables include seeker-reported stressor intensity and features of the seeker and of the provider.

### 5.1.3.1.1 Individual Differences

Embedded within the background questionnaires for seekers and providers were individual difference measures that assessed trait self-esteem (seeker $\alpha = .92$; provider $\alpha = .90$; Rosenberg, 1965), attachment anxiety (seeker $\alpha = .72$; provider $\alpha = .69$) and avoidance (seeker $\alpha = .84$; provider $\alpha = .77$; ECR-Short Form; Wei et al., 2007), and relationship quality (seeker $\alpha = .87$; provider $\alpha = .78$; PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000). To test whether positive expressivity reliably predicts provider responsiveness when controlling for each one of these key features of the seeker or provider, I planned to run supplemental analyses that include these measures in separate models as covariates (assuming they do not interact with other predictors in the model).

**5.1.3.1.2 Seeker-Reported Stressor Intensity**

Seekers answered two questions within the pre-interaction questionnaire about the intensity at which they personally experience their source of fear: "I feel really scared when I think about the target" and "I find the target extremely frightening" (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*), $r(92) = .81$, $p < .001$. These items were averaged to create a seeker-reported stressor intensity composite ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.41$).

**5.1.3.2 Post-Interaction Questionnaires**

Embedded among the provider's post-interaction questionnaires were items about their thoughts and feelings during the discussion with the seeker, which participants completed using 7-point response scales (1 = s*trongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree*). I used these items to assess potential mechanisms linking seeker positivity to provider responsiveness.

**5.1.3.2.1 Provider Efficacy Beliefs**

Three reverse-scored items that assessed the provider's expectations regarding their support efforts (e.g., "I felt like it was a waste of effort to try and support my partner because he/she will continue to have these fears" and "Trying hard to support my partner makes me feel bad about my support-providing abilities") were averaged to create an efficacy beliefs composite ($\alpha = .75$; $M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.45$). Higher efficacy belief scores indicate greater feelings of efficacy.

**5.1.3.2.2 Provider Pro-Relational Sentiments**

Twelve items ($\alpha = .86$) assessed provider pro-relational sentiments, such as "I felt like my partner wanted to connect with me" and "I felt like my partner deserved a very caring and

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supportive response." Items were averaged to create a pro-relational sentiments composite ($M$ = 5.20, $SD$ = 0.98).

### 5.1.3.2.3 Provider Appraisal of Seeker Need

Three items assessed the provider's understanding of how the seeker feels about the stressor (e.g., "My partner feels really scared when he/she thinks about the actual target" and "My partner finds the actual target extremely frightening"). I intended to combine these three items to create a need appraisal composite if they produced a reliable scale. However, a reliability analysis on the three items revealed low internal consistency ($\alpha$ = .41), and the corrected item-total correlation for "I felt like my partner did not need much support" (-.01) suggested that this item did not hang well with the other two items. In contrast, the other two items ("My partner feels really scared when he/she thinks about the actual target" and "My partner finds the actual target extremely frightening") were positively correlated, $r(95)$ = .72, $p$ < .001. I therefore created a 2-item need appraisal composite with these two highly-correlated items ($M$ = 5.25, $SD$ = 1.42) and considered "I felt like my partner did not need much support" ($M$ = 3.02, $SD$ = 2.01) as a separate index of need appraisals.

### 5.1.3.3 Observational Measures

Upon completion of data collection, the videotaped interactions were coded on several dimensions, described below (for full coding scheme, see Appendix H). Coders were unaware of study hypotheses. Coders used 7-point response scales for all items (1 = *never/not at all*; 4 = *occasionally/somewhat*; 7 = *very frequently/very much*), answering the question, "To what extent did the [seeker/provider] do each of the following?"

**5.1.3.3.1 Seeker Positivity**

Three coders rated seeker behavior in the interaction videos. Coders rated eight specific expressions of positivity (e.g., "express affection for his/her partner verbally or nonverbally"). As in Study 1, I combined coders' ratings of these eight items to form a positivity composite ($\alpha = .82$, interrater $\alpha = .82$) that represents positivity as a unitary construct. I also used the eight items to create positivity sub-composites that represent the three different types of positivity suggested by the PCA in Study 1 (and that I experimentally manipulated in Study 3): partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity. Four items assessed partner-oriented positivity (e.g., "express gratitude [e.g., *Thank his/her partner for listening to or supporting him/her*]"; "express affection for his/her partner verbally or nonverbally"; $\alpha = .88$; interrater $\alpha = .82$), two items assessed stressor-oriented positivity ("express optimism about the fear" and "find a 'silver lining' or good thing that has resulted from the fear"; $r[95] = .35$, $p < .001$; interrater $\alpha = .53$), and two items assessed unspecified positivity ("express happiness"; "use humor to try to lighten the mood"; $r[95] = .70$, $p < .001$; interrater $\alpha = .80$). Grouping specific expressions of positivity in this way is also consistent with the theoretically derived families of positivity that I have described earlier in this dissertation and in a recent theoretical review paper (see Walsh & Forest, 2021).

**5.1.3.3.2 Seeker Negativity**

The same coders who rated positivity also rated the extent to which seekers expressed fear, anxiety, sadness, and anger (see Appendix H). Consistent with my approach for assessing positive expressivity as a unitary construct, I intended to combine coders' ratings of these four specific negative expressions to create a unitary negativity composite, provided that these items formed an

internally consistent measure of negative expressivity. A reliability analysis of the four negative expressivity items showed that expressed anger did not hang well with the other negative expressivity items. The anger item had a low corrected item-total correlation of .09 (all other corrected item-total correlations = .59 -.66). Further, removing this item from the scale improved the unitary negativity composite's reliability from $\alpha$ = .69 to $\alpha$ = .81, with corrected item-total correlations for the remaining three items ranging from .56 to .74. The anger item (interrater $\alpha$ = .84) was therefore omitted from the final 3-item seeker negativity composite (interrater $\alpha$ = .79).

### 5.1.3.3.3 Provider Responsiveness

A separate set of three coders (i.e., different coders from those who rated seeker behavior) rated provider behavior in the interaction videos. Nine coder-rated items assessing responsiveness (e.g., "Be understanding of his/her partner" and "Be responsive to his/her partner's needs") were averaged to create a responsiveness composite ($\alpha$ = .96; interrater $\alpha$ = .91; $M$ = 5.38, $SD$ = 1.16).

### 5.2 Results

Analyses excluded data from one couple who had difficulty staying alert in the lab session. In addition, video data from six couples were lost due to technological failure, which resulted in missing data for seeker positivity, seeker negativity, and provider responsiveness. Thus, after accounting for exclusions and lost data, analyses included data from 96 couples. A sensitivity analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2009) indicated a sample of 96 would be sufficient to detect a small to medium population effect size ($f^2$ = 0.08) for the link between seeker positive expressivity and provider responsiveness while controlling for negativity with 80% power ($\alpha$ = .05).

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### 5.2.1 Seeker's Expression of Negativity and Positivity within Support Discussions

The support discussion task was intended to prompt disclosures from seekers about their greatest fear (stressor). Seekers expressed a moderate amount of negativity in support discussions with their partner: On a 7-point scale, the average level of expressed negativity (fear, anxiety, and sadness) was 3.23 ($SD$ = 1.05), which is significantly lower than the mid-point of the scale, $M_{difference}$ = -0.77, 95% CI = [-0.98, -0.56], $t(95)$ = -7.19, $p$ < .001. Seekers reported that their stressor was relatively intense: The mean seeker-reported stressor intensity rating ($M$ = 5.59 on a 7-point scale, $SD$ = 1.41) was higher than the mid-point of the scale, $M_{difference}$ = 1.59, 95% CI = [1.30, 1.88], $t(93)$ = 10.92, $p$ < .001.

Similar to Study 1, although the support discussion topics were intended to—and did— have a negative focus, seekers also tended to express positivity in the support discussions. Relevant to Q1 of Aim 1 (see Table 1), I found that more than three-quarters (79.2%) seekers expressed at least some positivity in their video, as indicated by positivity composite scores of at least 2 on a 7-point scale ($M$ = 2.78, $SD$ = 0.83). Regarding Q2 (see Table 1), the majority of seekers expressed at least some partner-oriented positivity (84.4%) and/or some unspecified positivity (81.3%). Stressor-oriented positivity was less commonly expressed, with only 14.6% of seekers expressing at least some stressor-oriented positivity, and levels of stressor-oriented positivity were relatively low (on a 7-point scale, $M$ = 1.46; $SD$ = 0.65). Table 15 contains descriptive statistics for the negativity and positivity composites, and individual items from each composite. For correlations between these variables, see Table 16. For additional correlations between unitary measures of seeker-expressed negativity and positivity, type-specific positivity sub-composites, and key features of the stressor, seeker, or provider, see Supplemental Table 2 in Appendix E.

### 5.2.2 Main Analyses

I first examined positivity as a unitary construct, testing the positivity composite as a predictor of provider responsiveness when controlling for seeker negativity. In addition to testing the conceptual model's direct path (Path I, Figure 1) using the positivity composite, I tested indirect pathways through which I expected seeker positivity might be related to more (and less) responsiveness: through higher levels of efficacy beliefs (H2A) and pro-relational sentiments (H2B) (and lower need appraisals; H2D). I then examined positivity as type-specific constructs— namely, partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, unspecified positivity—testing the positivity sub-composites as predictors of provider responsiveness when controlling for negativity. After testing type-specific direct links between positivity and responsiveness, I explored indirect pathways through which each type of positivity might be related to provider responsiveness, focusing on two potential support-eliciting mechanisms (efficacy beliefs and pro-relational sentiments) and one support-suppressing mechanism (need appraisals).

Consistent with my approach for analyses in Study 1, I conducted hierarchical linear regression analyses when testing the direct path from seeker positivity to provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1) because the outcome variable includes data from only one couple member—the person who was randomly assigned to the provider role—such that no nested data structure exists. As in Studies 2 and 3, I conducted mediation analyses using PROCESS (Model 4; Hayes, 2017) when testing hypotheses and research questions regarding indirect pathways (Paths A-B, C-D, and G-H, Figure 1).

**5.2.2.1 Positivity as a Unitary Construct**

**5.2.2.1.1 Direct Path from the Positivity Composite to Responsiveness (Path I)**

To examine the predictive power of positive expressivity as a unitary construct (Aim 1), I regressed provider responsiveness on the positivity composite, negativity (Block 1), and their interaction (Block 2). Together, the positivity composite and negativity explained 42% of the variance in provider responsiveness, $R^2 = .42$, $F(2, 93) = 34.07$, $p <. 001$. Consistent with H1A (see Table 1), a main effect of the positivity composite predictor emerged, indicating that seekers who expressed more (vs. less) positivity received more responsive support from providers, $\beta = .60$, $b = 0.85$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI = [0.63, 1.07], $t(93) = 7.63$, $p <.001$, $sr^2 = .36$. A main effect of the negativity predictor also emerged: Seekers who expressed more (vs. less) negativity received more responsive support from providers, $\beta = .31$, $b = 0.34$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI = [0.17, 0.51], $t(93) = 3.87$, $p <.001$, $sr^2 = .09$. The Positivity Composite × Negativity interaction effect was not significant, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI = [-0.12, 0.24], $t(92) = 0.64$, $p = .524$, $sr^2 = .00$.

I also conducted analyses to rule out potential third variables that might explain the observed positivity-responsiveness link (Aim 2). These regression models predicted provider responsiveness from the positivity composite, negativity, and each of the following covariates (mean-centered and entered in separate models): stressor intensity; seeker self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and relationship quality; and the same set of features of the provider. (This is the same set of potential third variables used in analyses for Study 1). Lending support to H1B (see Table 1), the positivity composite continued to (positively) predict provider responsiveness even when accounting for negativity and potential third variables (for full results, see Table 17).

**5.2.2.1.2 Exploratory Moderation Analyses Related to H1B**

When testing models that controlled for stressor intensity or for features of the seeker or provider (trait self-esteem, attachment insecurity, or relationship quality), I also examined whether any of these covariates moderated the link between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness (acknowledging that Study 4 has a sample size somewhat smaller than might be ideal to test such moderation effects). I controlled for main and interaction effects of negativity in these models. Two significant interaction effects involving the positivity composite emerged.

First, stressor intensity moderated the association between the positivity composite and responsiveness, $b = -0.17$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI = [-0.34, 0.00], $t(87) = -2.02$, $p = .047$. As shown in Figure 3, the positive link between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness weakened as stressor intensity increased. Specifically, tests of simple slopes at low and high levels of stressor intensity (1 $SD$ below and above the mean) revealed that seeker positivity's direct (positive) link to provider responsiveness was stronger for less intense stressors ($\beta = .81$, $b = 1.13$, $SE = 0.16$, 95% CI = [0.81, 1.46], $t(87) = 6.97$, $p <.001$) than for more intense stressors ($\beta = .47$, $b = 0.66$, $SE = 0.16$, 95% CI = [0.34, 0.97], $t(87) = 4.17$, $p <.001$). Simple slopes analyses also revealed that when seekers expressed low levels of positivity (-1 $SD$), stressor intensity was unrelated to provider responsiveness ($\beta = .08$, $b = 0.06$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI = [-0.16, 0.28], $t(87) = 0.57$, $p = .569$), but when seekers high levels of positivity (+1 $SD$), seekers who discussed more (vs. less) intense stressors received less responsive support from providers ($\beta = .64$, $b = 0.90$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI = [0.68, 1.11], $t(87) = 8.32$, $p <.001$). Taken together, these findings suggest that although individuals seeking support for more minor fears may especially benefit from expressing positivity in their support discussions, individuals seeking support for more impactful/concerning fears may also benefit—albeit to a lesser extent—from doing so.

Second, provider perceived relationship quality moderated the main effect of the positivity composite predictor on provider responsiveness, $\beta$ = -.18, $b$ = -0.31, $SE$ = 0.15, 95% CI = [-0.60, -0.01], $t(89)$ = -2.05, $p$ = .043. Simple slopes analyses revealed that more (vs. less) seeker positivity was associated with more responsive support across levels of provider perceived relationship quality, but that the positive link between seeker positivity and provider responsiveness was stronger for providers who reported low (-1 $SD$) relationship quality ($\beta$ = .65, $b$ = 0.91, $SE$ = 0.15, 95% CI = [0.61, 1.21], $t(89)$ = 5.96, $p$ <.001) than for providers who reported high (+1 $SD$) relationship quality ($\beta$ = .34, $b$ = 0.48, $SE$ = 0.15, 95% CI = [0.18, 0.78], $t(89)$ = 3.17, $p$ = .002). Thus, although positive expressivity appeared beneficial across levels of provider perceived relationship quality, seekers' expression of positivity appeared to be more beneficial in support discussions with providers who feel less (vs. more) favorably about their relationship. Moreover, when seekers expressed low levels of positivity (-1 $SD$), provider relationship quality predicted increases in responsive support, $\beta$ = .33, $b$ = 0.55, $SE$ = 0.14, 95% CI = [0.27, 0.82], $t(89)$ = 3.96, $p$ <.001. However, when seekers expressed high levels of positivity (+1 $SD$), provider relationship quality was not associated with responsive support, $\beta$ = .03, $b$ = 0.04, $SE$ = 0.24, 95% CI = [-0.43, 0.52], $t(89)$ = 0.18, $p$ = .860. Specifically, providers delivered comparable (and relatively high) levels of responsive support, regardless of their relationship quality. Figure 4 displays this pattern of results.

### 5.2.2.1.3 Indirect Pathways from the Positivity Composite to Responsiveness

Relevant to H2A and H2B (see Table 1), I conducted mediation analyses in PROCESS (Model 4; Hayes, 2017)—using the positivity composite—to test the conceptual model's support-eliciting indirect pathways through efficacy beliefs and pro-relational sentiments (Paths A-B and

C-D, Figure 1), in addition to its support-suppressing pathway through need appraisals (Paths G-H, Figure 1). See Table 18 for correlations between potential mediators and provider responsiveness.

The first set of mediation analyses tested indirect effects via efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, need appraisal (the need appraisal composite and "I felt like my partner did not need much support") in separate process models (Model 4, with 5,000 bootstrap samples), entering seeker negativity as a covariate across models. Table 19 displays results from these models. No indirect effect of the positivity composite on responsiveness via efficacy beliefs emerged, but each component path of this indirect pathway was significant. The positivity composite predicted heightened provider efficacy beliefs ($p < .001$), and provider efficacy beliefs positively predicted partner responsiveness ($p = .044$), but the indirect effect via efficacy beliefs was not significant, A significant indirect effect of the positivity composite on responsiveness did emerge through pro-relational sentiments: When seekers expressed more (vs. less) positivity, providers reported heightened pro-relational sentiments ($p < .001$), which in turn predicted more responsiveness from providers ($p < .001$). When accounting for pro-relational sentiments, the direct path from the positivity composite to provider responsiveness remained significant ($p < .001$). No indirect effects via the need composite or "If felt like my partner did not need much support" emerged, and no individual component path (X → M and M → Y) of the indirect pathway was significant. Thus, H2B was partially supported (see Table 1), with mediation analyses providing evidence for only the hypothesized support-eliciting mechanism via pro-relational sentiments (Paths C-D, Figure 1).

**5.2.2.2 Different Types of Positivity**

**5.2.2.2.1 Direct Links from Type-Specific Sub-Composites to Responsiveness (Path I)**

To examine how different types of positivity are related to responsiveness (Exploratory Aim 1), I regressed provider responsiveness on each type-specific positivity sub-composite (partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity). These models controlled for negativity. When sub-composites were entered in separate models, each type of positivity and negativity accounted for a significant amount of variance in provider responsiveness: partner-oriented model, $R^2 = .45$, $F(2, 93) = 38.50$, $p <. 001$; stressor-oriented model, $R^2 = .16$, $F(2, 93) = 8.83$, $p <. 001$; unspecified positivity model, $R^2 = .15$, $F(2, 93) = 7.96$, $p <. 001$. Consistent with a support-eliciting direct path linking seeker positivity to provider responsiveness (Path I, Figure 1), main effects of each positivity sub-composite predictor emerged: partner-oriented positivity, $\beta = .63$, $b = 0.63$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI = [0.47, 0.78], $t(93) = 8.16$, $p <.001$, $sr^2 = .39$; stressor-oriented positivity, $\beta = .31$, $b = 0.56$, $SE = 0.17$, 95% CI = [0.22, 0.90], $t(93) = 3.30$, $p = .001$, $sr^2 = .10$; unspecified positivity, $\beta = .33$, $b = 0.30$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.49], $t(93) = 3.04$, $p = .003$, $sr^2 = .08$. That is, when seekers expressed more (vs. less) partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, or unspecified positivity, providers behaved more responsively. A positive main effect of the negativity predictor also emerged in each type-specific sub-composite model, indicating that when seekers expressed more (vs. less) negativity, providers behaved more responsively: in the partner-oriented model, $\beta = .18$, $b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI = [0.03, 0.36], $t(93) = 2.28$, $p = .025$, $sr^2 = .03$; in the stressor-oriented model, $\beta = .25$, $b = 0.28$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI = [0.07, 0.49], $t(93) = 2.65$, $p = .010$, $sr^2 = .06$ ; in the unspecified model, $\beta = .40$, $b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI = [0.20, 0.67], $t(93) = 3.68$, $p <.001$, $sr^2$

= .12. None of the type-specific sub-composite predictors interacted with negativity (on Block 2) to predict responsiveness ($p$s > .152).

To rule out potential third variables that might explain the link between different types of positivity and responsiveness, I tested supplemental models, in which I entered (in separate models) an additional covariate across the three sub-composite models. As shown in Table 20, the positive main effects of the partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity predictors held when controlling for stressor intensity or for seeker (or provider) self-esteem, attachment insecurity, or relationship quality. Although the positive main effect of the unspecified positivity predictor held in most supplemental analyses, unspecified positivity no longer significantly predicted responsiveness ($p$ = .061) when controlling for provider relationship quality. The positive main effect of the negativity predictor held in all type-specific supplemental analyses.

To isolate the unique predictive value of each positivity sub-composite from that of negativity and each other positivity sub-composite (Exploratory Aim 1), I examined partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, unspecified positivity, and negativity as simultaneous predictors of provider responsiveness. Table 21 displays results from models with all individual predictors entered on Block 1 (Model 1), followed by two-way interactions on Block 2 (Model 2). Partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity each emerged as significant positive predictors of provider responsiveness, uniquely accounting for 26% and 3% of the variance in responsiveness, respectively. In contrast, unspecified positivity no longer significantly predicted responsiveness ($p$ = .427) and uniquely accounted for only 0.04% of responsiveness variance ($sr^2$ = .004). Interactive associations between positivity sub-composites accounted for an additional 10% of responsiveness variance, $\Delta R^2$ = .10, $F(6, 85)$ = 3.34, $p$ = .005. No interactions involving negativity emerged ($p$s > .069), but two-way interactions between each

type-specific sub-composite did emerge ($ps$ < .041). To decompose these two-way interactions, I tested the simple slopes of each type-specific sub-composite at one standard deviation above and below the mean of each other type-specific sub-composite.

As reported in Table 21 and shown in Figure 5, partner-oriented positivity's link to responsiveness depended on the level of seekers' stressor-oriented positivity, and stressor-oriented positivity's link to responsiveness depended on the level of seekers' partner-oriented positivity. Specifically, seekers' expression of partner-oriented positivity attenuated the positive path from stressor-oriented positivity to responsiveness, such that stressor-oriented positivity predicted increases in provider responsiveness when seekers expressed low (-1 $SD$) levels of partner-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = .44, $b$ = 0.79, $SE$ = 0.32, 95% CI = [0.16, 1.42], $t$[85] = 2.49, $p$ = .015), but the link between stressor-oriented positivity and provider responsiveness was eliminated when seekers expressed high (+1 $SD$) levels of partner-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = -.08, $b$ = -0.15, $SE$ = 0.22, 95% CI = [-0.57, 0.28], $t$[85] = -0.67, $p$ = .502). Moreover, to the extent that seekers expressed stressor-oriented positivity, the value of partner-oriented positivity become weaker, but the positive link between partner-oriented positivity and responsiveness emerged at both low (-1 $SD$) levels of stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = .86, $b$ = 0.85, $SE$ = 0.14, 95% CI [0.58, 1.13], $t$(85) = 6.25, $p$ <.001) and high (+1 $SD$) levels of stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta$ = .34, $b$ = 0.34, $SE$ = 0.17, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.67], $t$(85) = 2.03, $p$ = .045).

The link between partner-oriented positivity and provider responsiveness also depended on the level of unspecified positivity (see Figure 6). Simple slopes analyses revealed a positive link between partner-oriented positivity and provider responsiveness when seekers expressed less (-1 SD) unspecified positivity ($\beta$ = .80, $b$ = 0.79, $SE$ = 0.12, 95% CI = [0.56, 1.02], $t$(85) = 6.89, $p$ < .001) and when they expressed more (+1 $SD$) unspecified positivity ($\beta$ = .40, $b$ = 0.40, $SE$ = 0.13,

95% CI = [0.15, 0.65], $t(85) = 3.18$, $p = .002$). The unspecified positivity did not predict provider responsiveness when seekers expressed less (-1 *SD*) partner-oriented positivity ($\beta = .16$, $b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI = [-0.09, 0.37], $t(85) = 1.25$, $p = .214$) or when they expressed more (+1 *SD*) partner-oriented positivity ($\beta = -.24$, $b = -0.22$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% CI = [-0.45, 0.01], $t(85) = -1.88$, $p = .063$). Taken together, this pattern of results provides good evidence that partner-oriented positivity matters—especially if seekers also exhibit little unspecified positivity in their support discussions (but also if they exhibit high levels of unspecified positivity)—and that unspecified positivity may not be helpful.

Lastly, stressor-oriented positivity and unspecified positivity interacted to predict provider responsiveness (see Figure 7). Whereas unspecified positivity was not related to provider responsiveness when seekers expressed a high (+1 *SD*) level of stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta = .23$, $b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.16$, 95% CI = [-0.11, 0.52], $t(85) = 1.32$, $p = .192$), unspecified positivity was *negatively* related to provider responsiveness when seekers expressed a low (-1 *SD*) level of stressor-oriented positivity ($\beta = -.31$, $b = -0.29$, $SE = 0.14$, 95% CI = [-0.56, -0.01], $t(85) = -2.06$, $p = .042$). In contrast, more (vs. less) stressor-oriented positivity was associated with *more* responsiveness ($\beta = .45$, $b = 0.81$, $SE = 0.26$, 95% CI = [0.28, 1.33], $t(85) = 3.07$, $p = .003$) when seekers expressed a high level of unspecified positivity (+1 *SD*), but stressor-oriented positivity was not related to provider responsiveness ($\beta = -.09$, $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.30$, 95% CI = [-0.76, 0.43], $t(85) = -0.55$, $p = .587$) when seekers expressed a low level of unspecified positivity (-1 *SD*). These findings suggest increases in unspecified positivity may backfire if combined with high (but not low or average) levels of stressor-oriented positivity, and that stressor-oriented positivity may be valuable when combined with high and average (but not low) levels of unspecified positivity.

**5.2.2.2.2 Indirect Pathways from Type-Specific Sub-Composites to Responsiveness**

Relevant to Exploratory Aim 2, I conducted mediation analyses in PROCESS (Model 4; Hayes, 2017) to investigate type-specific indirect pathways through efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, and need appraisals. I entered partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity in separate models, and controlled for negativity across models (Model 4, with 5,000 bootstrap samples). Table 19 displays results from these models.

When mediators were entered in separate models, significant indirect effects through efficacy beliefs emerged in the partner-oriented model, the stressor-oriented model, and the unspecified positivity model, suggesting mediation that is consistent with Paths A-B of the conceptual model (see Figure 1). Specifically, when seekers expressed more (vs. less) partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, or unspecified positivity, providers reported higher efficacy beliefs ($ps < .01$), which in turn was associated with greater responsiveness from providers ($ps < .05$). A significant indirect effect through pro-relational sentiments also emerged in the partner-oriented model, but not in the stressor-oriented model or the unspecified positivity model. Consistent with the conceptual model's support-eliciting pathway via strengthened pro-relational sentiments (Paths C-D, Figure 1), when seekers expressed more (vs. less) partner-oriented positivity, providers experienced stronger pro-relationship sentiments ($p < .001$), which in turn predicted greater responsiveness ($p = .003$). However, when efficacy beliefs and pro-relational sentiments were entered in the same model as simultaneous mediators, partner-oriented positivity continued to predict each of these mediators ($ps < .001$), and pro-relational sentiments predicted responsiveness ($p = .018$) and efficacy beliefs did not ($p$ .183). However, neither indirect effect remained significant (see Table 22). No significant indirect effects through the need composite or through "I felt like my partner did not need much support" emerged in any of the sub-composite

models, and no individual component path (X → M and M → Y) of the indirect pathway was significant.

## 5.3 Discussion

Study 4 provided evidence regarding the prevalence and potential impacts of positive expressivity in a naturalistic interaction context between established romantic couples. As in Study 1, coders' ratings of seeker behavior in Study 4's fear disclosure interactions revealed that seekers spontaneously expressed both positivity and negativity when talking to their romantic partner about a stressor. Further, seekers' expressions of positivity and negativity independently (and positively) predicted their partner's responsiveness. Relevant to Aim 2 and consistent with H1A and H1B (see Table 1), the main effect of positivity as a unitary construct held when negativity and third variables were controlled. Taken together, these findings strongly support for the direct path in the conceptual model (Path I, Figure 1).

Results from exploratory moderation analyses suggested that the support-eliciting potential of seeker-expressed positivity as a unitary construct may be stronger under some conditions. Specifically, I found that provider relationship quality and seeker-reported stressor intensity each qualified the positivity composite's direct link to provider responsiveness. Seeker-expressed positivity (as a unitary construct) was positively associated with provider responsiveness across levels of stressor intensity and across levels of provider relationship quality, but positivity-responsiveness association was stronger for less (vs. more) intense stressor and for providers with lower (vs. higher) relationship quality. This pattern of results suggests that to the extent that providers' relationship quality is low or that the stressor that seekers are facing is mild, seekers

may increasingly benefit from expressing positivity in their negative disclosures. However, caution is warranted in interpreting these findings because these two-way interactions emerged from a large set of analyses that I conducted for the current study, which can increase the likelihood of false positives, and no such interactions emerged in Study 1. In Study 1, the positive main effect of unitary measures of positivity (single-item positivity, positivity composite) was not qualified by provider relationship quality, suggesting that seeker-expressed positivity mattered equally across level of provider relationship quality. Similarly, I found no interaction between unitary measures of positivity and stressor intensity in Study 1—although stressor intensity was operationalized differently in Study 1 (coder-rated measure of the intensity of the stressor itself) and Study 4 (seeker-reported measure of the intensity at which they personally experience the stressor). Future studies are needed to test whether results from these exploratory analyses replicate and to investigate the potential moderating roles of other relationship factors or characteristics of the seeker or provider.

Relevant to Aim 3, Study 4 also provided some evidence regarding mechanisms underlying a support-eliciting effect of positivity. Specifically, I found a support-eliciting indirect effect of the positivity composite via pro-relational sentiments, which lends support to Paths C-D of the conceptual model (see Figure 1). However, the positivity composite had no indirect effect via efficacy beliefs (Paths A-B, Figure 1). (Positive mood was not assessed in Study 4, so the indirect effect corresponding to Paths E-F in Figure 1 was not tested.) I also found no support for the hypothesized indirect support-suppressing mechanism via need appraisals (Paths G-H, Figure 1) in Study 4.

This set of findings related to mechanism is largely inconsistent with findings from Study 2, which showed only a support-suppressing indirect effect via decreased need appraisals. One

potential reason for these inconsistencies is that the measurement of pro-relational sentiments and perceived need differed between Studies 2 and 4. The pro-relational sentiments items in the current study (e.g., "I felt like my partner deserved a very caring and supportive response" and "I wanted to make my partner feel better") were more direct than the items used in Study 2 (e.g., "I felt like my partner valued me and/or our relationship" and "I was glad to have had the opportunity to help my partner with his/her situation"); perhaps the current study (vs. Study 2) provided a better test of pro-relational sentiments' potential mechanistic role. Relatedly, it seems possible that neither the perceived need composite nor the item "I felt like my partner did not need much support" adequately captured providers' perceptions of their partner's (seeker's) need for support in the current study, considering that past investigations have sometimes assessed need appraisals using items assessing perceptions of the discloser's distress/upset (see Study 1; Forest et al., 2014).

Beyond potential measurement issues, study differences in findings related to indirect effects via pro-relational sentiments and perceived need might reflect the possibility that the mechanisms through which seeker-expressed positivity as a unitary construct shapes responsive support depends on the communication medium (e.g., email, in-person dialogue). Couples' support interactions occurred face-to-face in Study 4 and over email in Study 2. It seems plausible that pro-relational sentiments drive provider behavior more in synchronous and/or face-to-face interactions (vs. asynchronous and/or via mediated communication) and that appraisals of need matter less in such contexts; even if one's partner does not need high levels of support, it likely feels good to behave responsively toward them, particularly when couple members are physically together and talking about a fear. When support interactions occur asynchronously and/or via mediated communication, perhaps pro-relational sentiments are less influential in guiding provider responsiveness.

In addition to forming an internally consistent unitary scale, items in the coding scheme involving seeker expressions of positivity formed also three reliable sub-scales to represent partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity—different types of positivity that are consistent with our theorizing (Walsh & Forest, 2021) and with principal component analyses results from Study 1. The most commonly expressed types of positivity involved exhibiting pleasant demeanors and expressing optimism about the upsetting event in Study1, whereas love and affection toward the provider were most common in Study 4.

Partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity emerged as the strongest and most robust predictors of responsiveness in Study 4, whereas unspecified positivity was a relatively poor predictor of responsiveness. When tested in separate models, each type of positivity positively predicted responsiveness when controlling for seeker-expressed negativity—which also predicted responsiveness—and partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity continued to do so even when potential third variables were (one at a time) controlled. The main effect of the unspecified positivity predictor did not hold in all models that controlled for potential third variables. Further, when all three types of positivity were tested in the same model, partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity continued to predict responsiveness, whereas unspecified positivity did not.

Findings related to type-specific direct effects are consistent with those from Study 3 but not Study 1. In Study 3, experimentally-manipulated partner-oriented positivity and stressor-oriented positivity each had direct support-eliciting effects on responsiveness, when compared to no-positivity control conditions, and experimentally-manipulated unspecified positivity had no effect on responsiveness compared to no-positivity control conditions. Yet, in Study 1—a behavioral observation study involving a video-message exchange procedure—unspecified

positivity was the strongest, most robust predictor of responsiveness, followed by stressor-oriented positivity—which predicted responsiveness at average and high (but not low) levels of negativity—and partner-oriented positivity was a poor predictor of responsiveness.

There are a few possible reasons for the inconsistent findings regarding unspecified positivity. On one hand, because the coding scheme used in the current study did not include a quintessential feature of unspecified positivity that was captured in Study 1—namely, exhibiting a pleasant demeanor—the unspecified positivity sub-composite might have been less likely to predict responsiveness, especially when controlling for the other types of positivity (partner-oriented and stressor-oriented positivity). On the other hand, the limited predictive value of unspecified positivity may suggest that this type of positivity has little potential as a support-eliciting seeker behavior. The latter possibility perhaps seems more likely, given the findings from Study 3 that unspecified positivity (vs. no-positivity control conditions) had no direct effect on responsiveness.

Study 4 revealed that partner-oriented positivity was relatively common and a robust predictor of partner responsiveness. The prevalence and predictive impact of partner-oriented positivity were greater in Study 4 than in Study 1. I suspect that both differences may be at least partly due to the different forms that support interactions took in Studies 1 and 4. Because support interactions took the form of in-person conversations in Study 4 (vs. a single video-message exchange in Study 1), seekers may have had more opportunity to express partner-oriented positivity through nonverbal behavior (e.g., loving eye contact or affectionate touch). In terms of differences partner-oriented positivity's predictive strength, it seems possible that partner-oriented positivity was the strongest type-specific predictor in Study 4 but the weakest predictor in Study 1 because seekers' expressions of partner-oriented positivity had the unique opportunity to trigger

an upward spiral of seeker's positive expressivity and providers' responsiveness. For example, when providers behave responsively during an ongoing support interaction, seekers might express gratitude or affection toward the provider, thereby eliciting further responsive behavior from providers, which in turn may encourage additional expressions of gratitude or affection from seekers, and so on.

Relevant to Exploratory Aim 2—to examine type-specific indirect effects—the current study provides initial evidence of provider efficacy beliefs as a mechanism through which partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, and unspecified positivity may have support-eliciting effects. Specifically, I found indirect effects through increased provider efficacy beliefs in the support-eliciting direction for each type-specific sub-composites (tested in separate mediation models). These findings suggest that when seekers express higher (vs. lower) levels of partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, or unspecified positivity), providers may feel more confident in their ability deliver effective support and, in turn, behave more responsively. Although the other study that tested efficacy beliefs as a mechanism of type-specific effects (Study 3) did not yield evidence supporting mediation, I suspect this may be attributable to features of the email exchange paradigm in Study 3. Specifically, providers may make inferences about the effectiveness of their support on the basis of seekers' reactions to providers' support attempts during an ongoing support interaction (Forest et al., 2021; see also, Barbee & Cunningham, 1995). Thus, because support interactions took the form of an interactive dialogue between seekers and providers in Study 4 (vs. an email exchange that consists of the seeker's disclosure followed by the provider's response in Study 3), seekers' expressions of positivity—especially those that followed some behavior from providers—might have been more likely to bolster providers' efficacy beliefs, and therefore serve as a support-eliciting mechanism Study 4 provided.

# 6.0 General Discussion

When seeking support for negative events, obtaining responsive support is critical yet often difficult. Recent theorizing about support elicitation, and an emerging body of research, point to the power of support-seeking behaviors to influence seekers' receipt of support (Forest et al., 2021; see also Barbee & Cunningham, 1995). However, little is known about seekers' contributions to their partner's supportive behavior (Feeney & Collins, 2015a). Further, research on support-seeking and distress-related communications has primarily focused on seekers' expressions of negativity (e.g., sadness, anxiety, fear)—which are virtually always present in disclosures about negative events or stressors—and such negativity's impact on providers' support-relevant thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (e.g., S. Graham et al., 2008; Forest et al., 2014). In contrast, the possibility that expressions of positivity may not only emerge in seekers' negative disclosures but may also be relevant to providers' supportive responses has received scant consideration (see Walsh & Forest, 2021). In this dissertation, I investigated the phenomenon of expressing positivity when disclosing about a personal stressor to one's romantic partner. Below, I summarize the five aims that guided this work and the findings relevant to each.

Aim 1 was to examine how people might express positivity in negative disclosures to their romantic partner. Using behavioral observation methods in Studies 1 and 4, I examined the extent to which individuals seeking support for personal stressors spontaneously expressed positivity in their negative disclosures to their romantic partner (Q1) and the kinds of positivity seekers express in such contexts (Q2). Both studies showed that most people expressed at least some positivity, unprompted—albeit at relatively low levels—when talking about a recent upsetting event (Study 1) or their greatest fear (Study 4) to their romantic partner. The most commonly-expressed types

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of positivity varied by study (e.g., pleasant demeanor and optimism in Study 1; love for and affection toward the partner/provider in Study 4), suggesting that contextual features may shape the types of positivity that people spontaneously include in their disclosures. Lastly, the specific positive expressions that seekers exhibited mapped on fairly well to three types of positivity that we (Walsh & Forest, 2021) have previously proposed in support-seeking contexts: partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, and unspecified positivity (referred to as "incidental positivity" in the theoretical review).

Aim 2 was to examine the direct path from seeker positivity (as a unitary construct) to provider responsive support (Path I, Figure 1). Relatedly, Exploratory Aim 1 was to examine the direct path from different types of positivity (i.e., partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, unspecified positivity) to provider responsiveness. Across two behavioral observation studies (Studies 1 and 4) and two experiments (Studies 2 and 3), I found good evidence for a support-eliciting effect of seeker-expressed positivity in negative disclosures within romantic relationships. In Studies 1 and 4, unitary measures of seeker-expressed positivity (as rated by coders) were robust positive predictors of provider responsiveness, even when statistically controlling for seeker-expressed negativity and for potential third variables. Moreover, experimentally-manipulated positivity (as a unitary construct) had a direct support-eliciting effect compared to a negativity-only condition (Study 2).

Relevant to Exploratory Aim 1, results from Studies 1, 3, and 4 also suggested that several types of positivity may be valuable in distress-related support-seeking contexts. Of the three types of positivity, I found the clearest evidence of partner-oriented positivity's value as a support-seeking behavior. Study 3 showed direct support-eliciting effects of partner-oriented expressions—which were experimentally-manipulated in a hypothetical disclosure that

participants (providers) imagined receiving from their romantic partner—compared to a negativity-only condition and to a plus-filler condition that controlled for disclosure length. When assessed in a sample of romantic couples that were having a real face-to-face discussion (Study 4), seeker-expressed partner-oriented positivity also emerged as the most robust predictor of responsiveness—even when controlling for negativity and potential third variables, such as seeker self-esteem or provider relationship quality. Seeker-expressed partner-oriented positivity also significantly predicted provider responsiveness in Study 1, although this effect did not remain significant when other types of positivity were entered as simultaneous predictors. The particularly low levels of partner-oriented positivity in Study 1 may be in part due to the video-message exchange procedure used to facilitate the support interaction, suggesting that people may have had less opportunity to express partner-oriented positivity and that when people did express partner-oriented positivity, it had less impact on their partner's supportive response. But studies in which partner-oriented positivity seemed to be most present and had the potential to be most noticed and impactful (Studies 3 and 4) provided strong, consistent evidence for the support-eliciting value of partner-oriented positivity: Support-eliciting direct effects and support-eliciting indirect effects via pro-relational sentiments emerged.

Evidence for stressor-oriented positivity's value as a support-seeking behavior was also relatively strong. I found a support-eliciting direct path from stressor-oriented positivity to provider responsiveness in Studies 1 and 4, as well as support-eliciting indirect effects of stressor-oriented positivity in Studies 3 (via pro-relational sentiments) and 4 (via efficacy beliefs). However, stressor-oriented positivity only predicted responsiveness at average and high (but not low) levels of negativity when controlling for the other types of positivity in Study 1. When stressor-oriented positivity was experimentally manipulated in Study 3, it had no direct effect on

provider responsiveness compared to a no-positivity control condition. It is noteworthy that I found no evidence that stressor-oriented positivity backfired, given that I reasoned in my theoretical review that this type of positivity could undermine provider support by diminishing providers' need appraisals. Even in Study 1, wherein stressor-oriented positivity only helped at moderate to high levels of negativity, this type of positivity was not harmful at low levels of negativity. The direct and indirect support-eliciting effects of stressor-oriented positivity that I found—including in studies involving real interactions about actual emotional topics between romantic partners— suggest that seeker-expressed stressor-oriented positivity often has value in such contexts.

Unspecified positivity's value as a support-seeking behavior is less clear. On one hand, spontaneously-expressed unspecified positivity was a robust predictor of provider responsiveness in Study 1, persisting even when other positivity types were entered as competing predictors. Further, unspecified positivity indirectly predicted provider responsiveness in the support-eliciting direction in Studies 3 and 4. On the other hand, evidence of unspecified positivity's predictive value for provider responsiveness was limited in Study 4, and experimentally-manipulated unspecified positivity (vs. a negativity-only condition and vs. a plus-filler condition) had no direct effect on provider responsiveness in Study 3. Thus, unspecified positivity may have some support-eliciting potential, but its value appears more limited or more context-dependent than the value of partner-oriented positivity or stressor-oriented positivity.

Taken together, this set of findings regarding type-specific effects of seeker-expressed positivity on provider responsiveness supports the proposal from our earlier theoretical review (Walsh & Forest, 2021) that partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity may each have the potential to elicit support, but that some types of positivity may be more likely than others to elicit support. Future research that examines the extent of each

type of positivity's support-eliciting potential and the conditions under which different types of positivity are especially (un)likely to elicit responsiveness is warranted.

Aim 3 and Exploratory Aim 2 were related to mechanisms through which seeker-expressed positivity's effects on provider responsiveness might emerge. Regarding support-eliciting mechanisms, I found the clearest evidence for the mediating role of pro-relational sentiments (H2B), some evidence for the mediating role of efficacy beliefs (H2A), and no evidence for the mediating role of positive mood (H2D). Lending support to Paths C-D of the conceptual model (Figure 1), I found that increased pro-relational sentiments mediated indirect support-eliciting effects of spontaneously-expressed positivity as a unitary construct (Study 4), spontaneously-expressed and experimentally-manipulated partner-oriented positivity (Studies 4 and 3, respectively), and experimentally-manipulated stressor-oriented positivity and unspecified positivity (Study 3). Evidence of a support-eliciting indirect effect of seeker positivity via efficacy beliefs (Paths A-B, Figure 1) emerged in Study 4 (but not Studies 2 or 3): Partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity each indirectly predicted heightened responsiveness through increases in provider efficacy beliefs. Lastly, I found no evidence for Paths E-F (Figure 1) in either study that tested positive mood potential mediator of positivity's effect on responsiveness. No indirect effects on responsiveness via positive mood emerged when partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity were combined in one negative disclosure (Study 2) or separated into three type-specific positivity conditions (Study 3).

Results from mediation analyses in Studies 2 and 3 also provided some evidence for the hypothesized indirect support-suppressing pathway through decreased provider need appraisals (H2D; Paths G-H, Figure 1). Although the net effect of experimentally-manipulated positivity (vs.

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a negativity-only condition) was in the support-eliciting direction in Study 2, decreased need appraisals mediated an indirect support-suppressing effect of the seeker-expressed positivity compared to a negativity-only condition and to a plus-filler condition. Similarly, although unspecified positivity had no direct effect on responsiveness compared to no-positivity control conditions, unspecified positivity indirectly predicted *less* responsiveness through decreased need appraisals. Thus, expressing positivity in negative disclosures may have simultaneous support-eliciting effect (directly or via pro-relational sentiments) and support-suppressing effect (via need appraisals) on partner responsiveness.

In sum, evidence across four studies employing correlational, experimental, and behavioral observation approaches, suggest that expressing positivity when disclosing personal negative events has the potential to elicit partner responsiveness within ongoing romantic relationships. Mediation analyses suggested that such support-eliciting effects of positivity may emerge because seeker-expressed positivity—especially partner-oriented positivity—strengthens providers' pro-relational sentiments and because it bolsters provider's efficacy beliefs regarding their support attempts. However, the cost of seeker-expressed positivity to providers' appraisals of the seeker's support needs may indirectly suppress providers' responsive behavior. Nevertheless, in the current studies, positivity's overall effect on responsiveness was positive (i.e., support-eliciting) even when indirect support-suppressing effects emerged. This suggests that any need appraisal reductions due to seeker-expressed positivity often do not diminish support quality.

## 6.1 Strengths and Limitations

The current set of studies has several strengths. The behavioral observation methods used in Studies 1 and 4 allowed me to examine spontaneously-occurring expressions of positivity in conversations between romantic couple members, to identify different types of positivity that emerged in these conversations (partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, and unspecified positivity), and to assess the predictive value of seeker's positive expressivity (as a unitary construct and as type-specific dimensions) for provider responsiveness. In both studies, I statistically controlled for seeker-expressed negativity to demonstrate that the expression of positivity—rather than the presence or absence of negativity—was a meaningful predictor of provider responsiveness. I also controlled for key individual differences (e.g., provider self-esteem) and relationship variables (e.g., seeker's relationship quality) to rule out several plausible third variables. Given the importance of "focus[ing] on actual support behaviors that are enacted in dyadic interaction and the degree to which those behaviors are responsive to the needs of recipients" (Feeney & Collins, 2018, p. 292) that close relationship and support scholars have highlighted, another strength of the observational methods used in Studies 1 and 4 is that they enabled me behaviorally assess providers' responsive support toward their support-seeking romantic partner. I additionally pre-registered Study 4's hypotheses and data analysis plan.

Complementing this correlational work with experimental methods, Studies 2 and 3 used tightly controlled manipulations of positive expressivity, which permit causal conclusions regarding seeker-expressed positivity's role in shaping provider responsiveness. Separate type-specific positivity conditions in Study 3 helped to disentangle the direct effects of partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, and unspecified positivity on provider responsiveness. Further, I examined full mediated support-eliciting and support-suppressing pathways in Studies 2, 3, and 4. The full set of

studies additionally focused on various kinds of stressors (a recent upsetting event, interpersonal conflict, and greatest fear), probed the effects of stressor severity when possible, used different modes of communication (video-message, email, face-to-face discussions), and included samples of undergraduate students (and their romantic partner), romantically-involved individuals throughout the United States (recruited online), and established romantic couples from the broader Pittsburgh metropolitan area.

A major strength of the current investigation is the consistency of findings (within and across studies) that lend evidence to the basic tenet of my theoretical review (Walsh & Forest, 2021): that seekers' expressions of positivity when disclosing about personal stressors shapes support from potential providers. I elaborate below on the contributions of these findings, as well as the nuance they offer regarding why and when positive expressivity affects responsive support.

The current work also has some limitations. Each of the correlational studies (Studies 1 and 4) had different limitations, which the design of the other helped to address. The support interaction for Study 1 involved a video-message exchange task—wherein seekers made a video disclosure for providers and providers subsequently responded—which some might argue has low ecological validity. Study 4 involved face-to-faces discussions comprising both seekers' disclosures and providers' responses, which opens the possibility that provider responsiveness caused changes in seeker positive expressivity. As such, the face-to-face support discussions in Study 4 address the low ecological validity of the support interaction in Study 1, and the fact that seekers' negative disclosures were temporally separated from (and preceded) providers' replies renders the reverse causality explanation implausible (provider responsiveness in the interaction affects seeker-expressed positivity).

Some studies (Studies 2 and 3) used imagined support scenarios, in which participants (providers) wrote a response to a negative disclosure that they imagined receiving from their partner. Although this tightly controlled experimental manipulations of seeker-expressed positivity in the negative disclosure, the use of imagined scenario paradigms and hypothetical stressors is a step removed from studying actual interactions. I attempted to minimize this limitation within the experiments by asking participants to actually write a response to their partner's disclosure (rather than relying on their self-reports of intended or likely behavior), such that generating highly responsive written support would require a real investment of time and effort from participants even in a hypothetical imagined scenario context. Collecting a coder-rated behavioral outcome in the current online studies indeed strengthens this work, given that that the shift to online data collection over the last decade in social psychology has resulted in strong reliance on self-reported measures, at the expense of behavioral assessments (Sassenberg & Ditrich, 2019). Additionally, past work has shown that these imagined scenario paradigms are effective and have yielded similar results to studies looking at same processes in live interactions or assessing actual behavior (e.g., Forest et al., 2014; Jakubiak & Feeney, 2016). Moreover, I complemented these well-powered experiments with behavioral observation studies (Studies 1 and 4), in which seekers disclosed about a real personal stressor to providers, and providers' actual behavior in response was coded for responsiveness. Converging evidence that positivity often does elicit responsive support across these different types of studies increases confidence in robustness of effects.

Although the current findings, overall, provide much evidence to support for my hypotheses regarding direct path from positive expressivity to responsive support, and the indirect paths via efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, and need appraisal, there were some mixed findings across studies. For example, some studies yielded evidence that partner-oriented positivity

was particularly robust predictor of heightened responsiveness, whereas other studies yielded evidence that unspecified positivity was a particularly robust predictor. Additionally, regarding mechanisms, some studies provided evidence for either the conceptual model's support-eliciting indirect pathway through efficacy beliefs or for the conceptual model's support-suppressing indirect pathway through need appraisals, but not both. Such inconsistencies in findings point to the importance of considering moderating variables. Once more nuanced understanding of positive expressivity's effects on responsive support is achieve, work in this area could ultimately be useful to seekers who want to optimize their receipt of responsive support and—if people can be encouraged to express positivity sincerely and under the right conditions—to professionals help individuals cope with difficult life events. I return to the possibility of prescribing positive expressivity as a support-seeking behavior shortly.

## 6.2 Future Directions

The current findings lay the groundwork for further research on positive expressivity's effects in support-seeking contexts. The literature to date provides little understanding of moderators and boundary conditions of seeker-expressed positivity's effect on responsive support. In my theoretical review (Walsh & Forest, 2021), my co-author and I speculated about some potential moderators of the direct path (Path I, Figure 1) within each of six categories: features of the seeker, provider, relationship, support communication, and cultural context. Although not a primary aim of the current investigation, I did test several of these moderators (across five of the broad categories) in the current work, using behavioral observation methods in Studies 1 and 4. For example, I tested whether seeker self-esteem, provider attachment avoidance, relationship

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quality, negative expressivity moderated the direct path (Path I, Figure 1) from seeker-expressed positivity to provider responsiveness. However, research specifically aimed at testing these variables as moderators still needed, given that the current work may not have been well-powered enough to adequately assess and that results from moderation analyses were inconsistent across studies.

I also suspect that value of seeker-expressed positivity is likely to hinge on the extent to which positive expressions are perceived as authentic (vs. insincere) and socially appropriate (vs. deviant). If providers think that seekers are insincere, seekers' positive expressions may backfire. Indeed, past work has shown that people tend to view insincere emotional expressions as inappropriate (van Kleef, 2016) and feel that individuals whose expressions are fake (vs. genuine or neutral) are less likable, attractive, and trustworthy (Krumhuber et al., 2007). Similarly, work on affective deviance suggests that if the type(s) of positivity that seekers express or the intensity at which they express it violates social norms, seeker-expressed positivity is likely to be ineffective at—if not counterproductive to—eliciting partner responsiveness (e.g., Jachimowicz et al., 2019). Given the importance of perceived authenticity of expressed emotion, understanding whether people can be instructed to add positive expressions to their negative support-seeking disclosures in a way that feels sincere to providers will be an important step. This knowledge will permit a deeper understanding of the extent to which individuals might be taught to effectively use positive expressivity in support-seeking distress-related contexts, and consequently elicit responsive support from close relationship partners when needed. As Greenaway and Kalokerinos (2017) aptly articulated, "individuals should be mindful to express positive emotion authentically if their aim is to reap social rewards" (p. 152).

In addition to the perceived authenticity and appropriateness of positive expressivity, it seems possible that communication medium could affect the impact of seeker-expressed positivity on providers. Given the mix of media used in the current studies, and the somewhat different findings across them, different media may afford/convey the expression of certain types of positivity particularly well. For example, based on their review of work on nonverbal positive emotion expression, Sauter and colleagues (2014) note that touch is the preferred modality through which people nonverbally display "intimate" or "prosocial" emotions (e.g., love, gratitude). As such, particularly low levels of partner-oriented positivity (and its limited predictive value for provider responsiveness) observed in Study 1 may be (partially) due to limitations that communicating via video-message imposes on gestural/postural expressions of partner-oriented positivity. In Study 4, when couple members engaged in a face-to-face interaction, partner-oriented positivity occurred at higher levels and was the most robust predictor of provider responsiveness. Future research could investigate communication medium as a potential moderator of positivity's type-specific effects—especially the effect of partner-oriented positivity.

In this dissertation, I focused on romantic partners, as couple members commonly seek support from and provide support to each other. It would be useful to examine whether the current pattern of findings emerges in other types of close relationships (e.g., adult-child/parent, mentor-mentee relationships, doctor-patient relationships, friendships). My theoretical review revealed that most evidence for the direct path (Path I, Figure 1) comes from non-close relationship contexts (e.g., strangers, acquaintances. Coupled with my empirical findings in the current studies examining romantic relationships, this may suggest that positive expressivity can be valuable in eliciting support across a variety of relationship types. Future research should examine the function

of positive expressivity in different types of relationship, as well as consider the potentially moderating role of variables related to the quality and closeness of particular relationships.

Additional research on positive expressivity's type-specific direct and indirect effects on provider responsiveness, more generally, is also needed. The current work examined how particular types of positivity (partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity) might differentially predict or affect partner responsiveness, and shed light on some mechanisms through they operate. The predictive power of some types of positivity (partner-oriented and stressor-oriented positivity) seemed to be more robust than others (unspecified positivity), but each of the three types of positivity showed at least some support-eliciting potential—even if only through its (e.g., unspecified positivity's) support-eliciting indirect pathways to provider responsiveness. Additional work is also needed to understand which positivity types are most strongly linked with responsive support, and in what contexts.

In our theoretical review (Walsh & Forest, 2021)—in addition to proposing partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity (previously called "incidental positivity") as particular types of positivity in support-seeking contexts—we also proposed fourth type: self-oriented positivity. In the current work, I combined self- and stressor-oriented forms of positivity because of high conceptual similarity between these two types and because we reasoned in the theoretical review that they would have the same pattern of effects on responsiveness and operate through the same mechanisms. Future work should investigate whether there is indeed a separate self-oriented positivity construct and, if so, whether and if so, whether there are any differences in the ways in which each type affects support.

Additional, related lines of inquiry that researchers might pursue involve questions about who tends to use positive expressivity in distress-related support-seeking contexts and what goals

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drive this behavior. Little is known about who is (un)likely to express positivity when seeking support for negative events (see Forest et al., 2021), but Studies 1 and 4 provide some evidence that individuals who have higher (vs. lower) attachment security, self-esteem, or relationship quality tend to express more positivity in their negative support-seeking disclosures (see Appendix E). A better understanding of the kinds of people who fail to express positivity when seeking support for negative events from their romantic partner (or when) could offer insight into who could benefit from seeker-expressed positivity's support-eliciting potential.

Several goals might drive seekers' use of positive expressivity in their negative disclosures. For example, people may express positivity to comply with social norms regarding emotion expression, such as when people share fond memories of deceased loved ones at funerals or when people express gratitude for listening when they have made a lengthy disclosure about a stressor. Seekers might sometimes include positive expressions in their negative disclosures to hint at what form(s) of support would be responsive to their needs. For example, expressing partner-oriented positivity statements, such as "You always know what to say to make me feel less alone in my struggles," with the intention of eliciting a warm hug and comforting words about how the provider will always be there for them. Relatedly, perhaps seekers express positivity to convey how they do *not* want to be supported. If the support that their partner tends to deliver involves reframing the negative situation, seekers might pre-emptively find some benefits of their troubling experience or express optimism about their ability to cope with the situation, in hopes that doing so will prompt more responsive forms of support from providers.

The extent to which people *intentionally* use positive expressivity in negative support-seeking contexts with their romantic partner is unclear. Given that negative affect induces self-focus (Wood et al., 1990) and reduces self-regulation (Simons et al., 2016; see also Wood & Forest,

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2016), the possibility that distressed seekers are typically expressing positivity in their negative disclosures intentionally seems unlikely. However, more consciously conrolled uses of positive expressivity also seem possible (e.g., when self-presentation concerns drive seekers' positivity). Future research should investigate these possibilities.

The current studies focused on one person's negative event or personal stressor for which they turned to their romantic partner for support. But couples often co-experience stressor s (e.g., natural disasters, financial challenges) and work together to cope with such troubles. Future work is needed to examine whether expressing positivity about a co-experienced or shared stressor can enhance versus undermine support processes and relational outcomes. I suspect that expressing positivity in such contexts could have benefits through processes similar to the ones described in my conceptual model (see Figure 1). However, it seems likely that expressing positivity in the context of a shared or co-experienced stressor would be costly when individuals express positivity that conflicts with how their partner is appraising the situation. For example, consider a situation in which a couple's child suffers a life-altering injury, and one parent expresses optimism about the many possibilities that the child's life still holds or exhibits a pleasant demeanor in discussions about their child's prognosis, but their co-parent cannot see beyond their own grief for the life they once expected their child to have. In such a case, positive expressions from the first parent may create an upward social comparison for the co-parent or violate their worldview, leaving them to feel bad about their grief and alone.

Lastly, the current work focuses on interpersonal pathways through which seekers can benefit from expressing positivity. For example, these studies revealed that expressing positivity elicited partner responsiveness by boosting providers' efficacy beliefs and strengthening their pro-relational sentiments; and past work suggests that receiving responsive support should promote

seekers' well-being (e.g., Maisel & Gable, 2009; Reis et al., 2004). However, I suspect that positive expressivity in distress-related support-seeking contexts may work through both inter- and *intra*personal pathways to improve seeker well-being. Research on the saying-is-believing effect, for example, shows that when individuals (speakers) are describing a target person to a non-close other (listener), speakers use an evaluative tone (positive or negative) that aligns with the listener's ostensible attitude about the target person; and that speakers' subsequent (minutes to weeks later) memories of and feelings about the target person matches the evaluative tone that speakers had previously used in their descriptions to the listener. Similarly, perhaps when seekers express positivity when disclosing about personal stressors, they subsequently view the stressor as less threatening and feel more capable of navigating the situation, and these effects emerge above and beyond the effects of their partner's responsive support on these outcomes. Future work that investigates inter- and intra-pathways work in tandem would more complete understanding of positive expressivity's value within distress-related support-seeking contexts, and would help answer van Kleef's (2021) recent call for a "unified theory of emotions that can account for their intrapersonal as well as their interpersonal effects" (p. 9).

In sum, achieving a better understanding of contextual factors that govern the effects of seeker-expressed positivity on provider responsiveness will be critical in advancing scholarship in this area. Future high-power studies with large samples—ideally of romantic couples—that test the moderators of seeker-expressed positivity's effects on responsiveness are especially needed to better understand when and for whom expressing positivity in negative disclosures confers benefits. Questions regarding who uses positive expressivity in negative support-seeking contexts, why they do so, and potential intrapersonal pathways through which seeker-expressed positivity

might yield benefits in distress-related contexts point to addition lines of inquiry that could expand knowledge on this topic in potentially fruitful ways.

## 6.3 Contributions

As the first empirical investigation focusing on positive expressivity as a support-seeking behavior, this research complements and extends my recent theoretical work on this topic (Walsh & Forest, 2021). Although there is evidence scattered across a variety of literatures that suggests the support-eliciting potential of positive expressivity in negative disclosures or distress-related contexts, no empirical work had systematically investigated this proposition. Instead, much of the existing evidence came from research that was designed to test other hypotheses. Findings from past studies relevant to the direct path in my model (Path I, Figure 1) have not been focal—and the potential support-eliciting value of positive expressivity in negative/distress-related contexts is given little, if any, consideration—in reports of the work.

Moreover, the existing body of evidence bearing the direct path (Path I, Figure 1) that I summarized in my review (Walsh & Forest, 2021) has key limitations. The bulk of this evidence comes from samples of non-close relationship partners (e.g., strangers, coworkers), and close relationship samples are especially rare in the existing experimental evidence; live support interactions are often missing in study designs; the evidence bearing on support quality is thin; and different types of positivity and their effects on support have been rarely considered in the same study. My literature review (Walsh & Forest, 2021) further revealed that few studies have tested full mediated pathways (Paths A-B, C-D, E-F, and G-H, Figure 1), that no studies directly compared the effects of different types of positivity, and that positivity's type-specific mediated

pathways to provider support are especially underexplored. The current work begins to fill several of these gaps.

Using samples of romantic couples (Studies 1 and 4) or romantically-involved individuals (Studies 2 and 3) in the current work, I examined support transactions— specifically positivity's impacts on the quality (vs. the quantity of) support—in both observational studies with live interactions and experiments with systematic manipulations of positive expressivity. I additionally tested full mediated pathways through provider efficacy beliefs, pro-relational sentiments, positive mood, and need appraisals; and I examined seeker-expressed positivity's type-specific indirect pathways to provider responsiveness. As such, this work lays the groundwork for further research on the prevalence, antecedents, and consequences of expressing positivity in distress-related support-seeking contexts.

This work also makes several contributions to the social support, emotion, self-disclosure, and close relationship literatures. Contributing to the social support literature, this work focuses on the seldom-considered active role of support-seekers in obtaining support. The predominant perspective on support interactions in existing literature emphasizes what support-recipients (or seekers) need within support interactions and how providers meet (or fail to meet) those needs. In contrast, the perspective that I adopted in the current work emphasizes what *providers* need to deliver responsive support to upset or distressed individuals, and how upset or distressed individuals—through the behaviors that they enact within support transaction—can help to meet those provider needs and thereby maximize their own support outcomes (see Walsh & Forest, 2021; see also, Forest et al., 2021). My findings are also consistent with recent theorizing about support eliciting, wherein my collaborators and I (Forest et al., 2021) proposed that support-seeking behaviors that enhance providers' understanding of seekers' support needs and boost

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providers' willingness to deliver support that corresponds to the seekers' support needs—namely, by bolstering providers' efficacy beliefs and strengthening providers' pro-relational sentiments—pull for high-quality support. In the case of positive expressivity, results from the current work suggests that some positive expressions (unspecified positivity) can constrain providers' ability to provide support (via decreasing need appraisals), but that positivity (including unspecific positivity) tends to motivate responsive support (via efficacy beliefs and pro-relational sentiments).

Answering Feeney and Collins's (2015a) call for researchers to investigate the seeker's role in constructing their support outcomes, I investigated positive expressivity as one cluster of support-seeking behaviors that has the potential to motivate support provision efforts—and might also poorly facilitate providers' understanding seeker's support needs. More generally, this work highlights the utility of considering the psychological experiences of *providers* within support interactions, and the power of seekers to shape those experiences, when generating novel hypotheses about what support-seeking behaviors have the potential to elicit responsive support from providers and why. Uncovering other support-seeking behaviors that impact supportive responses and support-related experiences represents is an area ripe for future research.

Correlational findings from Studies 1 and 4 not only corroborate a large body of existing evidence that negative emotional expressions often prompt supportive responses from others (e.g., Forest et al., 2014; S. Graham et al., 2008), but also extends this work by showing additive effects of seeker-expressed positivity and negativity. The additive predictive contributions of seeker positivity and seeker negativity suggest that each of these seeker behaviors may provide unique support-relevant information to providers—a possibility that is consistent with recent perspectives on support (e.g., the facilitate and model of support; Forest et al., 2021) that emphasize the

importance of seeker behaviors within distress-related support-seeking interactions for the supportive responses of close others. Relatedly, in Studies 1 and 4, I found that that seeker-expressed positivity and seeker-expressed negativity accounted for more variance in provider responsiveness than did several factors related to the stressor (stressor intensity, according to coders or seekers), individual partners (seeker or provider: self-esteem, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance) or their relationship (relationship quality). This pattern of results suggest that what seekers do within a support interaction indeed matters for their partner's subsequent responsiveness. Such findings that underscore the importance of situational factors—namely, the extent to which support-seeking communications contain positivity and negativity—in shaping responsive support are particularly notable, given that research examining characteristics of seeker, providers, or relationships constitutes much of the existing literature on antecedents of high-quality support or responsiveness.

By demonstrating how and why support-seekers' expressions of positivity in negative disclosures may affect provider responsiveness, this work also makes important contributions to the literatures on emotion and self-disclosure, which provide little understanding of interpersonal processes within contexts involving contemporaneously-expressed positivity and negativity. Emotion scholars (e.g., van Kleef, 2016) have acknowledged the paucity of research on the interpersonal effects of expressed emotion in contexts involving a mix of positive and negative emotion. This is a key shortcoming of the literature, given that people can and commonly do feel and display a combination of positive and negative emotion in response to the same stimulus. Relatedly, past research on self-disclosure has often focused on positive disclosures or negative disclosures, or the value of disclosing about positive events to others (e.g., Gable & Reis, 2010; Peters et al., 2018). Yet, the potential value of expressing positivity when disclosing about negative

events—and particularly within support-seeking contexts—has received scant consideration. The current work addresses these gaps by examining how support-seekers' positive expressions in negative disclosures about an upsetting event, interpersonal conflict, or source of fear predict or affect their partner's responsiveness.

The current work also advances existing work on positive emotion. Disagreement about the best way to group discrete positive emotions into different positivity types continues among emotion scholars (see L. Graham et al., 2019; Keltner, 2019). The current work suggests a meaningful way to parse seeker-expressed positivity as broad, unitary positivity construct into separate (but sometimes) related types of positivity, showing that partner-oriented, stressor-oriented, and unspecified positivity had different patterns of interpersonal effects. Accordingly, that partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified positivity may convey theoretically distinct sets of social information, consistent to what I proposed my theoretical review (Walsh & Forest, 2021). Accordingly, this work may inform the ways in which emotion researchers think about and group different types of positive emotion. Future work should investigate the utility of these type-specific groupings in contexts outside of stressor-related support contexts.

More generally, the current work highlights the value of adopting more granular (vs. unitary) definition of positivity to achieve a more nuanced understanding of positivity expressivity and how it operates—at least within distress-related support contexts. No previous studies have directly compared the impacts of different types of seeker-expressed positivity in negative disclosures within support contexts. This dissertation helps to fill that gap by examining seeker-expressed positivity as both a unitary construct and a multi-dimensional construct to assess the relative impacts of partner-oriented positivity, stressor-oriented positivity, and unspecified

positivity. Although I found evidence of seeker-expressed positivity's predictive value when using a broad, unitary definition of positive expressivity, findings regarding type-specific effects suggest that there are theoretically important distinctions regarding the social functions of expressed positive emotion—at least within distress-related support-seeking contexts. A more complete understanding of specific sets of social information that each of these three types of positivity convey would improve predictions about when and why seeker-expressed positivity is (un)likely to elicit responsive support and guide novel hypotheses about positive expressivity's effects on other interpersonal outcomes. To this end, further work is needed. Future work should consider also whether there is a fourth type of positivity expressivity—self-oriented positivity--that is distinct from stressor-oriented positivity.

Finally, this work contributes literature on close relationships. First, in addition to demonstrating the benefits of positive expressivity for provider efficacy beliefs and pro-relational sentiments, the current work also illustrates a potential cost of expressing positivity in support-seeking contexts: it may sometimes diminish providers' perceptions of the seeker's need for support. In doing so, this work extends past work on the interpersonal effects of expressing positivity to close others, which has primarily focused on the benefits of positive expressivity without much consideration of coinciding drawbacks. Second, whereas previous work has focused on the personal and relational benefits of disclosing about positive events and experiences (e.g., Gable & Reis, 2010; Peters et al., 2018), findings from the current work suggest that expressing positivity in negative contexts may also have benefits for seekers, providers, and their relationships.

Given that the current findings suggest that seeker-expressed positivity may increase responsive support from providers, it seems likely that both seekers and providers would derive

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additional downstream benefits from seeker-expressed positivity. Although I did not assess the effects of providers' responsive support on seekers, a wealth of theory and research points to a host of personal and relational benefits that partner responsiveness confers. Accordingly, seekers' receipt of responsive support might not only help seekers navigate times of distress more effectively, but also heighten seekers' feelings of closeness to the provider and relationship satisfaction. Likewise, providers' recognition that their support attempts have been effective may leave providers feeling good about themselves (Karimiha et al., 2015), close to their support-seeking partner and more satisfied in their relationship (Marigold et al., 2014).

Although the current investigation focused on the effects of positive expressivity within the support interaction, the support-eliciting mechanisms linking seeker-expressed positivity to provider responsiveness that emerged Studies 3 and 4 (i.e., pro-relational sentiments and efficacy beliefs) suggest that seeker-expressed positivity may confer benefits beyond the support interaction to the relationship more generally. For example, given that seeker-expressed positivity may strengthen providers' pro-relational sentiments (Studies 3 and 4)—and potentially enhance providers' efficacy beliefs (Study 4)—if seekers tend to express positivity across multiple support interactions, pro-relational relational benefits that extend beyond the support transaction seem likely to emerge. Future studies might investigate these possibilities.

### 6.4 Conclusion

In the current work, I tested direct and indirect pathways of a conceptual process model (see Figure 1) that explains why support-seekers' positive expressivity can often elicit—but may sometimes suppress—supportive responses from partners (providers) within negative event

contexts (Walsh & Forest, 2021). My findings highlight the potential value (Walsh & Forest, 2021) of positive expressivity (as a broad, unitary construct) as an elicitor of high-quality support in close relationship contexts, answering the call of support researchers to investigate how people can cultivate support (e.g., Feeney & Collins, 2015a). This work also yielded evidence supporting several of my conceptual model's indirect pathways—for two support-eliciting pathways (via efficacy beliefs and pro-relational sentiments), as well as a support-suppressing pathway (via need appraisal)—revealing why positivity often enhances (but may sometimes suppress) responsive support. In terms of particular types of positivity, these studies revealed that partner-oriented positivity especially holds promise as a support-seeking behavior that can help motivate responsiveness from support-providing partners, without clouding their understanding of the seeker's support needs. This work also suggests that stressor-oriented positivity and unspecified positivity may have value for eliciting support, at least in some contexts. Taken together, these studies highlight the active role of support-seekers in obtaining support, provide empirical evidence linking positive expressivity to responsiveness in distress-related support-seeking contexts, offer insight into the mechanisms through which positivity operates in such contexts, and deepen understanding of the value of particular types of positivity in such contexts. When facing bad times, expressing the good—positive thoughts and feelings individuals have about their partner, the stressor, or perhaps even unspecified forms of positivity may help them cultivate support that meets their needs.

# Appendix A Tables

## Table 1

### Summary of Aims, Associated Studies, and Questions or Hypotheses

| Aim | Description | Associated Studies | Questions or Hypotheses |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aim 1 | Examine how people might express positivity in negative disclosures to their romantic partner | 1, 2, 4 | Q1: To what extent do people spontaneously express positivity when seeking support for negative events from their romantic partner?<br>Q2: What kinds of positivity do seekers most commonly express in such contexts? |
| Aim 2 | Examine the direct path from seeker-expressed positivity as a unitary construct to responsive support | 1, 4 | Unitary measures of positivity will predict (+) provider responsiveness when controlling for:<br>- H1A: seeker-expressed negativity<br>- H1B: and potential third variables.<br>Experimentally-manipulated positivity will increase provider responsiveness versus:<br>- H1C: a no-positivity control condition<br>- H1D: a neutral-filler control condition |
| Aim 3 | Examine indirect pathways linking seeker-expressed positivity as a unitary construct to responsive support | 2, 4 | Indirect effects of positivity (as a unitary construct) on provider responsiveness will emerge via:<br>- H2A: increased efficacy beliefs (+)<br>- H2B: increased pro-relational sentiments (+)<br>- H2C: increased positive mood (+)<br>- H2D: decreased need appraisal (−) |
| Exploratory Aim 1 | Explore type-specific direct paths to responsiveness | 1, 3, 4 | I advanced no hypotheses regarding the relative impacts of different types of positivity (but see, Walsh & Forest, 2021, for speculation about type-specific direct effects) |
| Exploratory Aim 2 | Explore type-specific indirect pathways to responsiveness | 3, 4 | I advanced no hypotheses regarding type-specific indirect pathways (but see, Walsh & Forest, 2021, for speculation about type-specific indirect effects) |

*Notes.* Positive mood was not examined as a potential mechanism in Study 4. (+) = effect is in the support-eliciting direction; (−) = effect is in the support-suppressing direction.

**Table 2**

**Descriptive Statistics for Seeker-Expressed Negativity, Unitary Measures of Seeker-Expressed Positivity, and**

**Individual Items from the Positivity Composite (Study 1)**

|  | *M* | *SD* | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Negativity | 6.08 | 1.16 | 2.67 | 8.67 |
| Single-item positivity | 3.59 | 1.84 | 1.00 | 8.67 |
| Positivity composite | 2.51 | 0.91 | 1.17 | 5.83 |
| Considerate item | 2.07 | 1.16 | 1.00 | 7.67 |
| Grateful item | 1.83 | 1.81 | 1.00 | 8.67 |
| Like partner item | 1.91 | 1.67 | 1.00 | 8.67 |
| Silver lining item | 2.63 | 1.51 | 1.00 | 6.33 |
| Optimism item | 3.04 | 1.60 | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Pleasant demeanor item | 4.59 | 0.95 | 2.33 | 6.67 |
| Humor item | 1.54 | 0.72 | 1.00 | 5.00 |
| Happiness item | 2.49 | 1.13 | 1.00 | 5.67 |

*Note*. N = 125

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**Table 3**

**Correlations for Seeker-Expressed Negativity, Unitary Measures of Seeker-Expressed Positivity, and Individual Items from the Positivity Composite**

**(Study 1)**

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Negativity | -- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Single-item positivity | -.20* | -- | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Positivity composite | -.12 | .73*** | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Considerate | .07 | .37*** | .75*** | -- | | | | | | | |
| 5. Grateful | .03 | .41*** | .78*** | .82*** | -- | | | | | | |
| 6. Like partner | -.01 | .38*** | .79*** | .83*** | .91*** | -- | | | | | |
| 7. Bright side | -.13 | .67*** | .63*** | .20* | .25** | .16 | -- | | | | |
| 8. Optimism | -.25** | .57*** | .64*** | .17 | .17 | .16 | .78*** | -- | | | |
| 9. Pleasant demeanor | -.08 | .44*** | .51*** | .21* | .16 | .21* | .27** | .35*** | -- | | |
| 10. Humor | -.13 | .35*** | .48*** | .25** | .21* | .38*** | .11 | .22* | .37*** | -- | |
| 11. Happiness | -.21* | .73*** | .74*** | .36*** | .36*** | .42*** | .46*** | .56*** | .57*** | .48*** | -- |

*Note.* Variables 4-11 are individual items from the extended positivity coding scheme. ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$.

Table 4

**Supplemental Regression Models Predicting Provider Responsiveness from a Potential Third Variable, a**

**Unitary Measure of Seeker-Expressed Positivity, Negativity, and Condition (Study 1)**

| Model | Positivity | | | Negativity | | | Potential third variable | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *b* | *SE* | β | *b* | *SE* | β | *b* | *SE* | β |
| Single-item positivity | | | | | | | | | |
| Single-item positivity | **0.30** | (.07) | .41 | **0.30** | (.11) | .26 | -0.10 | (.07) | -.13 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.27** | (.06) | .38 | **0.25** | (.10) | .22 | 0.08 | (.09) | .08 |
| Anxiety | **0.23** | (.06) | .32 | **0.26** | (.10) | .23 | **-0.29** | (.11) | -.23 |
| Avoidance | **0.25** | (.06) | .34 | **0.20** | (.10) | .17 | -0.24 | (.13) | -.16 |
| PRQC | **0.25** | (.06) | .35 | **0.22** | (.10) | .19 | 0.29 | (.20) | .12 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.26** | (.06) | .36 | **0.23** | (.10) | .20 | -0.07 | (.09) | -.07 |
| Anxiety | **0.26** | (.06) | .36 | **0.23** | (.10) | .21 | -0.01 | (.10) | -.01 |
| Avoidance | **0.28** | (.06) | .39 | **0.23** | (.10) | .20 | 0.08 | (.14) | .05 |
| PRQC | **0.26** | (.06) | .37 | **0.23** | (.10) | .21 | 0.04 | (.21) | .02 |
| Positivity composite | | | | | | | | | |
| Positivity composite | **0.54** | (.13) | .37 | **0.23** | (.10) | .20 | -0.06 | (.07) | -.07 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.53** | (.13) | .37 | **0.22** | (.10) | .19 | 0.08 | (.09) | .08 |
| Anxiety | **0.43** | (.13) | .30 | **0.22** | (.10) | .20 | **-0.27** | (.11) | -.22 |
| Avoidance | **0.48** | (.13) | .33 | 0.17 | (.10) | .15 | -0.24 | (.13) | -.16 |
| PRQC | **0.48** | (.13) | .33 | 0.18 | (.10) | .16 | 0.27 | (.20) | .11 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.51** | (.12) | .35 | 0.19 | (.10) | .17 | -0.08 | (.09) | -.07 |
| Anxiety | **0.52** | (.13) | .36 | **0.21** | (.10) | .18[*] | 0.03 | (.10) | .02 |
| Avoidance | **0.52** | (.13) | .37 | 0.19 | (.10) | .17 | 0.05 | (.14) | .03 |
| PRQC | **0.51** | (.13) | .35 | **0.20** | (.10) | .17[*] | 0.06 | (.21) | .02 |

*Note*. Models control for condition (-0.5 = low threat, 0.5 = high threat). Values in bold denote significant predictors ($p < .05$).

Table 5

**Results from a Principal Component Analysis of Coded Seeker Positive Expressivity Items (Study 1)**

| | Rotated factor loading | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Factor 1: Partner-oriented positivity | | | |
|    Gratitude/appreciation for partner/provider | **.95** | .13 | .07 |
|    Liking/affection for partner/provider | **.94** | .04 | .24 |
|    Considerate of disclosure's effect on partner/provider | **.91** | .10 | .14 |
| Factor 2: Stressor-oriented positivity | | | |
|    Bright side/silver lining | .12 | **.93** | .06 |
|    Optimism | .05 | **.90** | .24 |
| Factor 3: Unspecified positivity | | | |
|    Humor | .19 | -.05 | **.82** |
|    Pleasant demeanor | .04 | .25 | **.77** |
|    Happiness | .27 | .48 | **.68** |

*Note*. N = 125. The extraction method was principal component analysis with an orthogonal (Varimax with Kaiser Normalization) rotation. Factor loadings in bold denote each item's corresponding component

**Table 6**

**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Type-Specific Positivity Sub-Composites (Study 1)**

| Type-specific sub-composite | *M* | *SD* | *1* | *2* | *3* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Partner-oriented | 1.94 | (1.48) | — | | |
| 2. Stressor-oriented | 2.84 | (1.47) | .20* | — | |
| 3. Unspecified | 2.87 | (0.76) | .37*** | .46*** | — |

*Note*. N = 125. ***$p < .001$. *$p < .05$.

Table 7

**Hierarchical Regressions of Provider Responsiveness on One Type of Positivity, Negativity, Condition, and Interactions (Study 1) Hierarchical Regression of Provider Responsiveness on Different Types of Positivity, Negativity, Condition, and Interactions (Study 1)**

| | Block 1 | | | | | Block 2 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $b$ | $SE$ | 95% CI | $t$ | $sr^2$ | $b$ | $SE$ | 95% CI | $t$ | $sr^2$ |
| **Partner-oriented positivity** | | | | | | | | | | |
| PO | **0.17** | **(.08)** | **[0.02, 0.33]** | **2.20** | **.04** | **0.16** | **(.08)** | **[0.00, 0.32]** | **2.03** | **.03** |
| Neg | 0.14 | (.10) | [-0.06, 0.34] | 1.41 | .02 | 0.14 | (.10) | [-0.06, 0.34] | 1.38 | .01 |
| Con | -0.12 | (.23) | [-0.59, 0.34] | -0.54 | .00 | -0.11 | (.23) | [-0.57, 0.36] | -0.46 | .00 |
| PO × Neg | | | | | | -0.07 | (.07) | [-0.20, 0.06] | -1.08 | .01 |
| PO × Con | | | | | | 0.08 | (.16) | [-0.24, 0.40] | 0.49 | .00 |
| Neg × Con | | | | | | -0.19 | (.20) | [-0.59, 0.22] | -0.92 | .01 |
| Model statistics | $R^2 = .06$, $F(3, 121) = 2.46$, $p = .066$ | | | | | $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(3, 118) = 0.80$, $p = .495$ | | | | |
| **Stressor-oriented positivity** | | | | | | | | | | |
| SO | **0.29** | **(.08)** | **[0.14, 0.45]** | **3.75** | **.10** | **0.36** | **(.08)** | **[0.20, 0.52]** | **4.46** | **.14** |
| Neg | **0.23** | **(.10)** | **[0.03, 0.42]** | **2.28** | **.04** | **0.21** | **(.10)** | **[0.01, 0.41]** | **2.04** | **.03** |
| Con | -0.06 | (.23) | [-0.50, 0.39] | -0.26 | .00 | -0.19 | (.23) | [-0.64, 0.27] | -0.83 | .00 |
| SO × Neg | | | | | | 0.13 | (.07) | [-0.01, 0.28] | 1.83 | .02 |
| SO × Con | | | | | | 0.19 | (.16) | [-0.13, 0.51] | 1.17 | .01 |
| Neg × Con | | | | | | -0.32 | (.20) | [-0.72, 0.09] | -1.55 | .02 |
| Model statistics | $R^2 = .12$, $F(3, 121) = 5.59$, $p = .001$ | | | | | $\Delta R^2 = .07$, $F(3, 118) = 3.42$, $p = .020$ | | | | |
| **Unspecified positivity** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Uns | **0.59** | **(.15)** | **[0.30, 0.89]** | **3.95** | **.11** | **0.62** | **(.15)** | **[0.31, 0.92]** | **4.02** | **.12** |
| Neg | **0.22** | **(.10)** | **[0.03, 0.41]** | **2.24** | **.04** | **0.21** | **(.10)** | **[0.01, 0.40]** | **2.10** | **.03** |
| Con | -0.02 | (.22) | [-0.46, 0.43] | -0.07 | .00 | -0.01 | (.23) | [-0.46, 0.44] | -0.06 | .00 |
| Uns × Neg | | | | | | -0.01 | (.12) | [-0.24, 0.23] | -0.07 | .00 |
| Uns × Con | | | | | | 0.07 | (.32) | [-0.55, 0.70] | 0.23 | .00 |
| Neg × Con | | | | | | -0.27 | (.20) | [-0.67, 0.13] | -1.33 | .01 |
| Model statistics | $R^2 = .13$, $F(3, 121) = 6.13$, $p < .001$ | | | | | $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F(3, 118) = 0.68$, $p = .564$ | | | | |

*Note.* PO = Partner-oriented positivity. SO = Stressor-oriented positivity. Uns = Unspecified positivity. Neg = Negativity. Con = Condition (-0.5 = low threat, 0.5 = high threat). Values corresponding to significant ($p < .05$) predictors are bolded.

**Table 8**

**Hierarchical Regression of Provider Responsiveness on Different Types of Positivity, Negativity, Condition, and Interactions (Study 1)**

| | Block 1 | | | | | Block 2 | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | *b* | *SE* | 95% CI | *t* | *sr²* | *b* | *SE* | 95% CI | *t* | *sr²* |
| PO | 0.06 | .08 | [-0.10, 0.22] | 0.70 | .00 | 0.00 | .11 | [-0.21, 0.20] | -0.04 | .00 |
| SO | **0.19** | **.09** | **[0.02, 0.36]** | **2.26** | **.04** | **0.26** | **.09** | **[0.08, 0.44]** | **2.86** | **.05** |
| Unc | **0.39** | **.17** | **[0.04, 0.73]** | **2.22** | **.03** | **0.38** | **.18** | **[0.03, 0.73]** | **2.16** | **.03** |
| Neg | **0.24** | **.10** | **[0.05, 0.44]** | **2.48** | **.04** | **0.26** | **.10** | **[0.06, 0.47]** | **2.56** | **.04** |
| Con | -0.02 | .22 | [-0.46, 0.42] | -0.08 | .00 | -0.17 | .23 | [-0.62, 0.28] | -0.77 | .00 |
| PO × Neg | | | | | | -0.08 | .06 | [-0.21, 0.04] | -1.29 | .01 |
| SO × Neg | | | | | | **0.25** | **.09** | **[0.07, 0.43]** | **2.74** | **.05** |
| Uns × Neg | | | | | | -0.20 | .14 | [-0.48, 0.07] | -1.45 | .01 |
| PO × SO | | | | | | -0.04 | .05 | [-0.14, 0.07] | -0.70 | .00 |
| PO × Unc | | | | | | 0.06 | .11 | [-0.16, 0.27] | 0.50 | .00 |
| SO × Unc | | | | | | 0.17 | .13 | [-0.08, 0.43] | 1.34 | .01 |
| PO × Con | | | | | | 0.05 | .18 | [-0.32, 0.41] | 0.26 | .00 |
| SO × Con | | | | | | 0.35 | .18 | [-0.01, 0.72] | 1.91 | .02 |
| Uns × Con | | | | | | -0.35 | .37 | [-1.08, 0.37] | -0.96 | .01 |
| Neg × Con | | | | | | -0.26 | .21 | [-0.68, 0.16] | -1.23 | .01 |
| Model statistics | $R^2 = .17$, $F(5, 119) = 4.95$, $p < .001$ | | | | | $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $F(10, 109) = 1.79$, $p = .071$ | | | | |

*Note*. PO = Partner-oriented positivity. SO = Stressor-oriented positivity. Uns = Unspecified positivity. Neg = Negativity. Con = Condition (-0.5 = low threat, 0.5 = high threat). Values corresponding to significant ($p < .05$) predictors are bolded.

**Table 9**

**Supplemental Regression Models Predicting Provider Responsiveness from a Potential Third Variable, a**

**Type-Specific Positivity Sub-Composite, Negativity, and Condition (Study 1)**

| Model | Positivity sub-composite | | | Negativity | | | Potential third variable | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE* | β | *B* | *SE* | β | *B* | *SE* | β |
| **Partner-oriented positivity** | | | | | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **0.18** | (.08) | .20 | 0.15 | (.11) | .13 | -0.02 | (.07) | -.03 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.19** | (.08) | .22 | 0.16 | (.10) | .14 | 0.09 | (.09) | .09 |
| Anxiety | 0.15 | (.08) | .16 | 0.19 | (.10) | .16 | **-0.35** | (.11) | -.28 |
| Avoidance | **0.17** | (.08) | .19 | 0.11 | (.10) | .09 | **-0.31** | (.14) | -.20 |
| PRQC | 0.15 | (.08) | .17 | 0.13 | (.10) | .11 | 0.38 | (.21) | .16 |
| Provider feature | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.16** | (.08) | .18 | 0.14 | (.10) | .12 | -0.07 | (.09) | -.07 |
| Anxiety | **0.18** | (.08) | .20 | 0.15 | (.10) | .13 | 0.00 | (.11) | .00 |
| Avoidance | **0.18** | (.08) | .21 | 0.13 | (.10) | .11 | -0.01 | (.14) | .00 |
| PRQC | **0.17** | (.08) | .19 | 0.14 | (.10) | .12 | 0.19 | (.22) | .08 |
| **Stressor-oriented positivity** | | | | | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **0.30** | (.08) | .34 | **0.25** | (.11) | .22 | -0.04 | (.07) | -.05 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.29** | (.08) | .33 | **0.23** | (.10) | .20 | 0.02 | (.09) | .02 |
| Anxiety | **0.24** | (.08) | .27 | **0.25** | (.10) | .22 | **-0.29** | (.11) | -.23 |
| Avoidance | **0.27** | (.08) | .30 | 0.18 | (.10) | .16 | -0.26 | (.13) | -.17 |
| PRQC | **0.27** | (.08) | .30 | **0.21** | (.10) | .18 | 0.31 | (.20) | .13 |
| Provider feature | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.31** | (.08) | .34 | **0.22** | (.10) | .19 | -0.14 | (.09) | -.13 |
| Anxiety | **0.29** | (.08) | .32 | **0.23** | (.10) | .20 | -0.01 | (.11) | -.01 |
| Avoidance | **0.29** | (.08) | .32 | **0.22** | (.10) | .19 | 0.03 | (.14) | .02 |
| PRQC | **0.29** | (.08) | .32 | **0.22** | (.10) | .20 | 0.05 | (.21) | .02 |
| **Unspecified positivity** | | | | | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **0.60** | (.15) | .35 | **0.23** | (.11) | .21 | -0.02 | (.07) | -.03 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.59** | (.15) | .34 | **0.23** | (.10) | .20 | 0.03 | (.09) | .03 |
| Anxiety | **0.48** | (.16) | .28 | **0.24** | (.10) | .21 | **-0.27** | (.11) | -.21 |
| Avoidance | **0.52** | (.16) | .30 | 0.18 | (.10) | .16 | -0.21 | (.14) | -.14 |
| PRQC | **0.55** | (.15) | .32 | **0.20** | (.10) | .18 | 0.29 | (.20) | .12 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | **0.59** | (.15) | .34 | **0.21** | (.10) | .19 | -0.09 | (.09) | -.09 |
| Anxiety | **0.59** | (.15) | .34 | **0.22** | (.10) | .20 | 0.02 | (.11) | .02 |
| Avoidance | **0.60** | (.15) | .35 | **0.21** | (.10) | .19 | -0.01 | (.14) | .00 |
| PRQC | **0.59** | (.15) | .34 | **0.22** | (.10) | .19 | 0.06 | (.21) | .02 |

*Note.* All models control for condition. PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components. Values in bold denote significant predictors ($p < .05$).

**Table 10**

**Supplemental Regression Models that Predict Provider Responsiveness from a Potential Third Variable, All Three Type-Specific Positivity Sub-Composites, Negativity, and Condition (Study 1)**

| Potential third variable | Partner-oriented | | | Stressor-oriented | | | Unspecified | | | Negativity | | | Potential third variable | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *B* | *SE* | β | *B* | *SE* | β | *B* | *SE* | β | *B* | *SE* | β | *B* | *SE* | β |
| Stressor intensity (coder-rated) | 0.07 | (.08) | .07 | 0.20 | (.09) | .23 | 0.39 | (.17) | .22 | 0.27 | (.11) | .24 | -0.06 | (.07) | -.07 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | 0.07 | (.08) | .08 | 0.19 | (.09) | .21 | 0.38 | (.18) | .22 | 0.25 | (.10) | .22 | 0.05 | (.09) | .05 |
| Anxiety | 0.06 | (.08) | .07 | 0.17 | (.09) | .19 | 0.31 | (.18) | .18 | 0.26 | (.10) | .23 | -0.23 | (.11) | -.19 |
| Avoidance | 0.07 | (.08) | .08 | 0.19 | (.09) | .21 | 0.31 | (.18) | .18 | 0.21 | (.10) | .18 | -0.20 | (.13) | -.13 |
| PRQC | 0.05 | (.08) | .06 | 0.18 | (.09) | .20 | 0.36 | (.18) | .21 | 0.23 | (.10) | .20 | 0.24 | (.20) | .10 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-esteem | 0.04 | (.08) | .04 | 0.21 | (.09) | .23 | 0.38 | (.17) | .22 | 0.24 | (.10) | .21 | -0.11 | (.09) | -.11 |
| Anxiety | 0.06 | (.08) | .07 | 0.19 | (.09) | .21 | 0.38 | (.18) | .22 | 0.25 | (.10) | .22 | 0.03 | (.10) | .02 |
| Avoidance | 0.07 | (.08) | .08 | 0.18 | (.09) | .20 | 0.40 | (.17) | .23 | 0.23 | (.10) | .21 | 0.05 | (.14) | .03 |
| PRQC | 0.06 | (.08) | .06 | 0.19 | (.09) | .22 | 0.39 | (.18) | .22 | 0.24 | (.10) | .22 | -0.01 | (.21) | .00 |

*Note.* All models control for condition. PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components. Values in bold denote significant predictors ($p < .05$).

**Table 11**

**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Key Study Variables (Study 2)**

| | $M$ | $SD$ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Responsiveness | 4.54 | (1.31) | -- | | | | | |
| 2. Perceived positivity | 3.84 | (2.07) | .04 | -- | | | | |
| 3. Perceived negativity | 6.19 | (1.89) | .05 | -.45*** | -- | | | |
| 4. Efficacy beliefs | 7.55 | (1.46) | .45*** | -.07 | .13* | -- | | |
| 5. Pro-relational sentiments | 6.76 | (1.17) | .34*** | .19*** | .04 | .58*** | -- | |
| 6. Positive mood | 4.89 | (2.37) | .04 | .25*** | -.05 | .09 | .30*** | -- |
| 7. Need appraisal | 6.84 | (1.34) | .29*** | -.31*** | .41*** | .23*** | .20*** | -.08 |

*Note.* ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$

**Table 12**

**Effects of Condition on Potential Mechanism Variables (Study 2)**

| Outcome | Plus-Positivity M (SD) | Control M (SD) | Plus-Filler M (SD) | Test Statistic F | p | $\eta_p^2$ [95% CI] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficacy beliefs | 7.51 (1.61) | 7.51 (1.41) | 7.63 (1.35) | 0.24 | .790 | .001 [.000, .014] |
| Pro-relational sentiments | 6.88 (1.25) | 6.70 (1.09) | 6.68 (1.17) | 1.02 | .364 | .006 [.000, .029] |
| Positive mood | 5.30 (2.32)a | 4.77 (2.21)ab | 4.57 (2.53)b | 2.94 | .054 | .018 [.000, .051] |
| Need appraisal | 6.49 (1.31)a | 7.07 (1.29)b | 6.97 (1.37)b | 6.15 | .002 | .036 [.005, .080] |

*Note.* Different letters within rows indicate conditions that significantly differ (*p* < .05) from each other.

**Table 13**

**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Key Study Variables (Study 3)**

| | *M* | *SD* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Responsiveness | 5.32 | (1.41) | -- | | | | |
| 2. Efficacy beliefs | 7.02 | (1.59) | .18*** | -- | | | |
| 3. Pro-relational sentiments | 5.84 | (1.53) | .28*** | .41*** | -- | | |
| 4. Positive mood | 3.63 | (1.80) | .03 | .19*** | .59*** | -- | |
| 5. Concerned | 7.30 | (1.69) | .37*** | .25*** | .39*** | .02 | -- |

*Note.* ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$

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**Table 14**

**Effects of Type-Specific Positivity Conditions on Potential Mechanism Variables (Study 3)**

| Outcome | Partner-oriented M (SD) | Stressor-oriented M (SD) | Unspecified M (SD) | Negativity-only M (SD) | Plus-filler M (SD) | F | p | ηp2 [95% CI] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Efficacy beliefs | 7.04 (1.54) | 7.12 (1.50) | 6.96 (1.81) | 6.97 (1.52) | 7.01 (1.60) | 0.16 | .956 | .001 [.000, .003] |
| Pro-relational sentiments | 6.28 (1.42)a | 5.99 (1.42)a | 5.95 (1.60)ac | 5.48 (1.43)b | 5.55 (1.64)bc | 4.73 | <.001 | .038 [.007, .069] |
| Positive mood | 4.12 (1.85)a | 3.78 (1.64)ac | 4.04 (1.87)a | 2.91 (1.63)b | 3.38 (1.78)bc | 8.04 | <.001 | .062 [.022, .101] |
| Need appraisal | 7.39 (1.57)ab | 7.19 (1.73)ab | 7.10 (1.81)a | 7.62 (1.47)b | 7.21 (1.84)ab | 1.51 | .199 | .012 [.000, .031] |

*Note.* Different letters within rows indicate conditions that significantly differ ($p < .05$) from each other.

**Table 15**

**Descriptive Statistics for Indices of Seeker Positivity and Negativity (Study 4)**

|  | *M* | *SD* | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Negativity composite | 3.23 | (1.05) | 1.22 | 6.56 |
| Fear | 3.45 | (1.11) | 1.00 | 6.33 |
| Anxiety | 3.67 | (1.22) | 1.00 | 6.33 |
| Sadness | 2.57 | (1.35) | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Positivity composite | 2.78 | (0.83) | 1.04 | 4.46 |
| Partner-oriented sub-composite | 3.24 | (1.16) | 1.08 | 5.67 |
| Love item | 3.98 | (1.42) | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Acknowledgment item | 2.89 | (1.07) | 1.00 | 6.33 |
| Gratitude item | 2.49 | (1.21) | 1.00 | 5.33 |
| Affection item | 3.61 | (1.67) | 1.00 | 7.00 |
| Stressor-oriented sub-composite | 1.46 | (0.65) | 1.00 | 5.17 |
| Optimism item | 1.58 | (0.77) | 1.00 | 4.33 |
| Silver lining item | 1.34 | (0.80) | 1.00 | 6.33 |
| Unspecified sub-composite | 3.17 | (1.27) | 1.00 | 6.00 |
| Humor item | 2.82 | (1.44) | 1.00 | 6.33 |
| Happiness item | 3.52 | (1.31) | 1.00 | 6.50 |

*Note.* N = 96

**Table 16**

**Correlations for the Negativity and Positivity Composites, and their Individual Items (Study 4)**

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Negativity composite | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Fear | .86*** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Anxiety | .89*** | .75*** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Sadness | .82*** | .49*** | .55*** | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Positivity composite | -.10 | -.07 | -.01 | -.16 | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Love | .06 | .03 | .06 | .06 | .85*** | | | | | | | |
| 7. Acknowledgment | .13 | .10 | .22* | .03 | .68*** | .56*** | | | | | | |
| 8. Gratitude | .14 | .11 | .22* | .03 | .75*** | .69*** | .54*** | | | | | |
| 9. Affection | .09 | .05 | .05 | .12 | .84*** | .90*** | .55*** | .63*** | | | | |
| 10. Optimism | -.01 | -.02 | .09 | -.09 | .40*** | .17 | .34*** | .27** | .16 | | | |
| 11. Silver lining | -.01 | .05 | -.03 | -.04 | .30** | .09 | .21* | .14 | .10 | .35*** | | |
| 12. Humor | -.39*** | -.27** | -.28** | -.43*** | .57*** | .28** | .14 | .18 | .31** | .09 | .05 | |
| 13. Happiness | -.45*** | -.33*** | -.28** | -.53*** | .76*** | .53*** | .36*** | .43*** | .47*** | .22* | .10 | .70*** |

*Notes.* Variables 2-4 = Items from negativity composite. Variables 6-13 = Items from positivity composite. ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$.

**Table 17**

**Supplemental Regression Models Predicting Provider Responsiveness from a Potential Third Variable, the Positivity Composite, and Negativity (Study 4)**

| Model | Positivity | | | Negativity | | | Potential third variable | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *b* | *SE* | β | *b* | *SE* | β | *b* | *SE* | β |
| | | | | Positivity composite | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **0.84** | (0.11) | .60 | **0.38** | (0.09) | .35 | -0.12 | (0.07) | -.15 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **0.85** | (0.11) | .61 | **0.36** | (0.09) | .33 | 0.06 | (0.06) | .07 |
|   Anxiety | **0.81** | (0.11) | .58 | **0.36** | (0.09) | .33 | **-0.19** | (0.08) | -.19 |
|   Avoidance | **0.83** | (0.12) | .59 | **0.35** | (0.09) | .32 | -0.08 | (0.10) | -.06 |
|   PRQC | **0.84** | (0.12) | .60 | **0.34** | (0.09) | .31 | 0.02 | (0.11) | .01 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **0.82** | (0.11) | .58 | **0.36** | (0.09) | .32 | 0.10 | (0.06) | .13 |
|   Anxiety | **0.71** | (0.11) | .50 | **0.36** | (0.08) | .32 | **-0.39** | (0.10) | -.30 |
|   Avoidance | **0.68** | (0.12) | .49 | **0.36** | (0.08) | .33 | **0.47** | (0.14) | .29 |
|   PRQC | **0.84** | (0.11) | .60 | **0.34** | (0.09) | .31 | 0.02 | (0.06) | .03 |

*Notes*. PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components. Values in bold denote significant predictors ($p <$ .05).

**Table 18**

**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Mechanism Variables and Provider Responsiveness (Study 4)**

|  | *M* | *SD* | *1* | *2* | *3* | *4* | *5* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Efficacy beliefs | 5.64 | (1.45) | -- | | | | |
| 2. Pro-relational sentiments | 5.20 | (0.98) | .44*** | -- | | | |
| 3. Need composite | 5.25 | (1.42) | -.05 | .06 | -- | | |
| 4. Need item | 3.02 | (2.01) | -.11 | -.25* | .01 | -- | |
| 5. Responsiveness | 5.38 | (1.16) | .35** | .46*** | .13 | -.18 | -- |

*Note.* ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$

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**Table 19**

**Results from Separate PROCESS Models Used to Test the Indirect Effects of the Positivity Composite on**

**Provider Responsiveness (Study 4)**

| | b (SE) | | | Indirect effect | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | X → M | M → Y | X → Y | Coefficient | SE | 95% CI |
| **Positivity composite** | | | | | | |
| Efficacy beliefs | **0.71 (.16)** | **0.14 (.07)** | **0.75 (.12)** | .100 | .066 | [-.006, .250] |
| Pro-relational sentiments | **0.43 (.12)** | **0.33 (.09)** | **0.71 (.11)** | **.141** | **.07** | **[.023, .275]** |
| Need appraisal | 0.12 (.18) | 0.05 (.07) | **0.84 (.11)** | .005 | .02 | [-.028, .047] |
| Need item | -0.34 (.23) | -0.01 (.05) | **0.84 (.11)** | .003 | .02 | [-.032, .060] |
| **Partner-oriented** | | | | | | |
| Efficacy beliefs | **0.46 (.12)** | **0.15 (.07)** | **0.56 (.08)** | **.068** | **.04** | **[.006, .162]** |
| Pro-relational sentiments | **0.35 (.08)** | **0.29 (.10)** | **0.53 (.08)** | **.100** | **.05** | **[.001, .201]** |
| Need appraisal | 0.63 (.13) | 0.05 (.06) | **0.62 (.08)** | .003 | .01 | [-.018, .031] |
| Need item | -0.34 (.16) | 0.21 (.09) | **0.63 (.08)** | -0.006 | 0.02 | [-.039, .038] |
| **Stressor-oriented** | | | | | | |
| Efficacy beliefs | **0.60 (.22)** | **0.26 (.08)** | **0.40 (.17)** | **0.161** | **0.08** | **[.052, .354]** |
| Pro-relational sentiments | 0.01 (.16) | **0.54 (.10)** | **.056 (.15)** | 0.003 | 0.11 | [-.121, .306] |
| Need appraisal | -0.13 (.23) | 0.10 (.08) | **0.57 (.17)** | -0.013 | 0.04 | [-.094, .092] |
| Need item | 0.08 (.30) | -0.07 (.06) | **0.56 (.17)** | -0.006 | 0.03 | [-.059, .066] |
| **Unspecified positivity** | | | | | | |
| Efficacy beliefs | **0.34 (.13)** | **0.27 (.08)** | **0.21 (.10)** | **0.093** | **0.04** | **[.017, .193]** |
| Pro-relational sentiments | **0.18 (.09)** | **0.49 (.10)** | **0.21 (.09)** | 0.087 | 0.05 | [-.009, .201] |
| Need appraisal | 0.15 (.13) | 0.05 (.08) | **0.29 (.10)** | 0.008 | 0.02 | [-.030, .047] |
| Need item | -0.04 (.17) | -0.06 (.06) | **0.30 (.10)** | 0.002 | 0.01 | [-.024, .038] |

*Note.* Need item = "I felt like my partner did not need much support." All models control for seeker-expressed negativity. Bolded values indicate significant paths.

**Table 20**

**Supplemental Regression Models Predicting Provider Responsiveness from a Potential Third Variable, a**

**Positivity Sub-Composite, and Negativity (Study 4)**

| Model | Positivity | | | Negativity | | | Potential third variable | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *b* | *SE* | β | *b* | *SE* | β | *b* | *SE* | β |
| **Partner-oriented sub-composite** | | | | | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **.24** | (.09) | .22 | **.62** | (.08) | .62 | **-.14** | (.07) | -.16 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **.22** | (.09) | .20 | **.63** | (.08) | .63 | .05 | (.06) | .07 |
|   Anxiety | **.22** | (.08) | .20 | **.60** | (.08) | .60 | **-.19** | (.08) | -.19 |
|   Avoidance | **.21** | (.09) | .19 | **.61** | (.08) | .62 | -.08 | (.10) | -.06 |
|   PRQC | **.20** | (.09) | .18 | **.62** | (.08) | .63 | .01 | (.11) | .01 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **.22** | (.09) | .20 | **.61** | (.08) | .61 | .09 | (.06) | .12 |
|   Anxiety | **.20** | (.09) | .18 | **.62** | (.08) | .62 | -.03 | (.08) | -.03 |
|   Avoidance | **.24** | (.08) | .21 | **.53** | (.08) | .53 | -.37 | (.10) | -.28 |
|   PRQC | **.24** | (.08) | .22 | **.52** | (.08) | .52 | **.47** | (.13) | .28 |
| **Stressor-oriented sub-composite** | | | | | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **.31** | (.11) | .28 | **.54** | (.18) | .30 | -.07 | (.09) | -.09 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **.29** | (.11) | .26 | **.56** | (.17) | .31 | .03 | (.08) | .04 |
|   Anxiety | **.31** | (.10) | .28 | **.52** | (.17) | .29 | **-.24** | (.09) | -.24 |
|   Avoidance | **.31** | (.11) | .28 | **.55** | (.17) | .31 | -.22 | (.12) | -.18 |
|   PRQC | **.32** | (.11) | .29 | **.55** | (.17) | .31 | .23 | (.13) | .17 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **.31** | (.10) | .28 | **.53** | (.17) | .30 | **.16** | (.08) | .20 |
|   Anxiety | **.29** | (.10) | .26 | **.52** | (.17) | .29 | -.14 | (.10) | -.14 |
|   Avoidance | **.32** | (.10) | .29 | **.39** | (.16) | .22 | **-.54** | (.11) | -.42 |
|   PRQC | **.33** | (.09) | .30 | **.40** | (.15) | .22 | **.73** | (.14) | .44 |
| **Unspecific sub-composite** | | | | | | | | | |
| Stressor intensity | **.51** | (.12) | .46 | **.32** | (.10) | .35 | **-.17** | (.08) | -.20 |
| Seeker features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **.47** | (.13) | .42 | **.30** | (.10) | .33 | .06 | (.08) | .08 |
|   Anxiety | **.47** | (.12) | .42 | **.29** | (.10) | .31 | **-.26** | (.09) | -.26 |
|   Avoidance | **.45** | (.12) | .40 | **.27** | (.10) | .30 | -.19 | (.12) | -.15 |
|   PRQC | **.45** | (.12) | .41 | **.27** | (.10) | .29 | .18 | (.13) | .14 |
| Provider features | | | | | | | | | |
|   Self-esteem | **.46** | (.12) | .42 | **.28** | (.10) | .31 | **.16** | (.08) | .20 |
|   Anxiety | **.43** | (.12) | .39 | **.27** | (.10) | .30 | -.14 | (.10) | -.14 |
|   Avoidance | **.45** | (.11) | .41 | **.25** | (.09) | .27 | **-.57** | (.11) | -.44 |
|   PRQC | .42 | (.11) | .38 | **.17** | (.09) | .19 | **.73** | (.15) | .44 |

*Notes*. Values in bold denote significant predictors ($p < .05$).

**Table 21**

**Hierarchical Regression of Provider Responsiveness on Positivity Sub-Composites and Negativity (Study 4)**

| | Model 1 | | | | | | Model 2 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $b$ | $SE$ | 95% CI | $t$ | $p$ | $sr^2$ | $b$ | $SE$ | 95% CI | $t$ | $p$ | $sr^2$ |
| (Constant) | 5.38 | .09 | [5.20, 5.55] | 61.91 | <.001 | | 5.59 | .11 | [5.37, 5.80] | 51.54 | <.001 | |
| PO | 0.62 | .09 | [0.44, 0.81] | 6.81 | <.001 | .26 | 0.60 | .09 | [0.42, 0.78] | 6.59 | <.001 | .21 |
| SO | 0.30 | .14 | [0.03, 0.58] | 2.18 | .032 | .03 | 0.32 | .16 | [0.01, 0.64] | 2.03 | .046 | .02 |
| Unspecified | -0.07 | .09 | [-0.26, 0.11] | -0.80 | .427 | .00 | -0.04 | .09 | [-0.22, 0.14] | -0.42 | .675 | .00 |
| Negativity | 0.16 | .10 | [-0.04, 0.36] | 1.56 | .124 | .01 | 0.20 | .10 | [0.00, 0.39] | 2.00 | .049 | .02 |
| PO × Negativity | | | | | | | -0.12 | .08 | [-0.27, 0.04] | -1.48 | .144 | .01 |
| SO × Negativity | | | | | | | 0.02 | .13 | [-0.24, 0.28] | 0.17 | .863 | .00 |
| Unspecified × Negativity | | | | | | | 0.12 | .06 | [-0.01, 0.24] | 1.83 | .070 | .02 |
| PO × SO | | | | | | | -0.40 | .19 | [-0.78, -0.03] | -2.13 | .036 | .02 |
| PO × Unspecified | | | | | | | -0.16 | .06 | [-0.28, -0.03] | -2.50 | .014 | .03 |
| SO × Unspecified | | | | | | | 0.38 | .18 | [0.02, 0.75] | 2.09 | .040 | .02 |
| $R^2$ | .48*** | | | | | | .58*** | | | | | |
| $F$ for $\Delta R^2$ | 21.25*** | | | | | | 3.34** | | | | | |

*Note.* PO = Partner-oriented positivity. SO = Stressor-oriented positivity. Unspecified = Unspecified positivity. ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$.

**Table 22**

**Results from a PROCESS Model Used to Test Simultaneous Indirect Effects of the Partner-Oriented Sub-**

**Composite on Provider Responsiveness (Study 4)**

| | *b* (*SE*) | | | Indirect effect | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | X → M | M → Y | X → Y | Coefficient | *SE* | 95% CI |
| Efficacy beliefs | **0.46 (.12)** | 0.09 (.07) | **0.51 (.08)** | .042 | .03 | [-.014, .116] |
| Pro-relational sentiments | **0.35 (.08)** | **0.24 (.08)** | | .084 | 05 | [-.008, .182] |

*Note.* The model controlled for seeker-expressed negativity. Bolded values indicate significant paths.
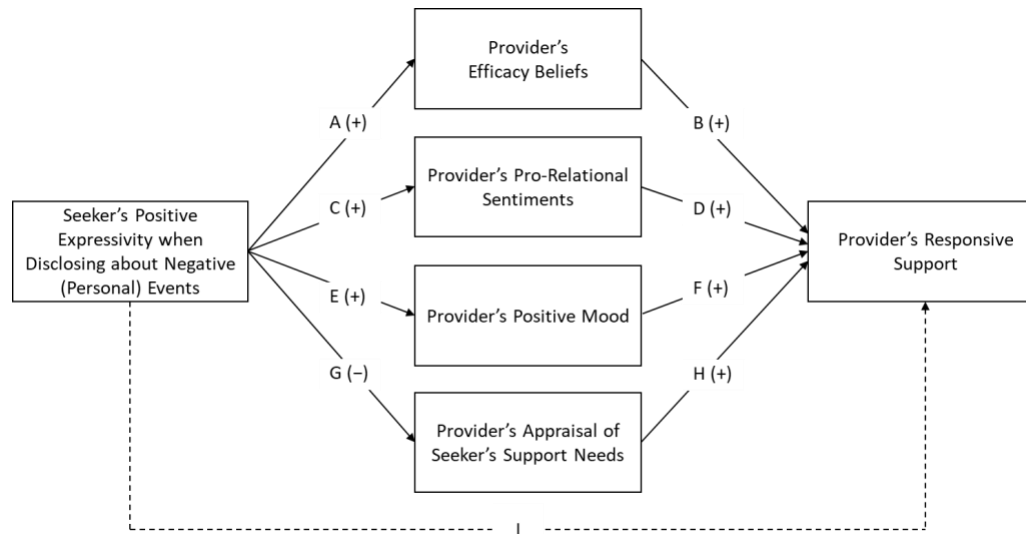
**Figure 1**

**Theoretical Process Model (Adapted from Walsh & Forest, 2021) Linking A Support-Seeker's Positive Expressivity to the Provider's Responsive**

**Support Through the Provider's Efficacy Beliefs, Pro-Relational Sentiments, Positive Mood States (Support-Eliciting Pathways), and Appraisal of the**

**Seeker's Support Needs (Support-Suppressing Pathway)**

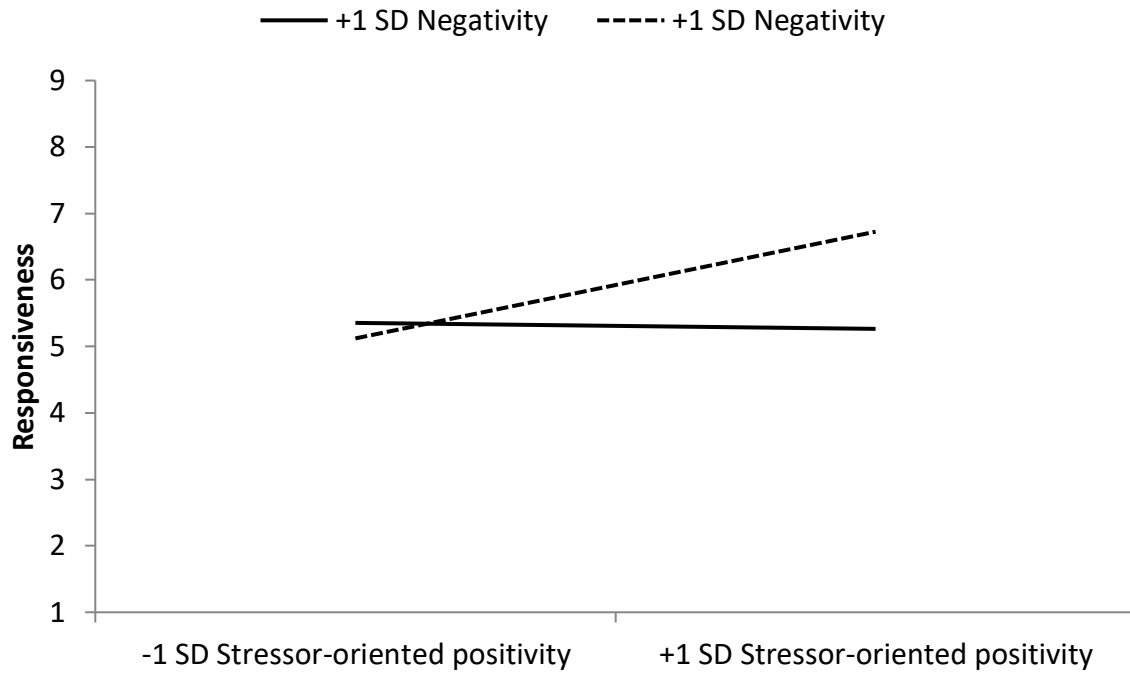*Note*. **Signs in parentheses denote the expected direction of effects.**

**Figure 2**

**Stressor-Oriented Positivity Predictor × Negativity Predictor Interaction on Provider Responsiveness (Study 1)**

*Note.* **The model controls for partner-oriented positivity, unspecified positivity, condition, and interactions.**
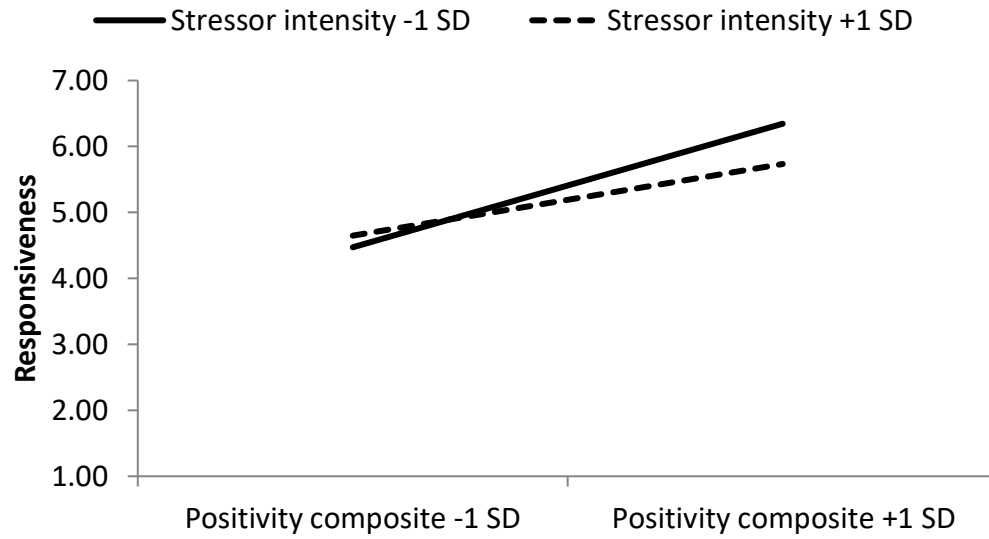
**Figure 3**

**Positivity Composite Predictor × Stressor Intensity Predictor Interaction on Provider Responsiveness (Study 4)**

*Note*. **The model controls for seeker negativity and its two-way interactions with the positivity composite and stressor intensity (seeker-reported).**
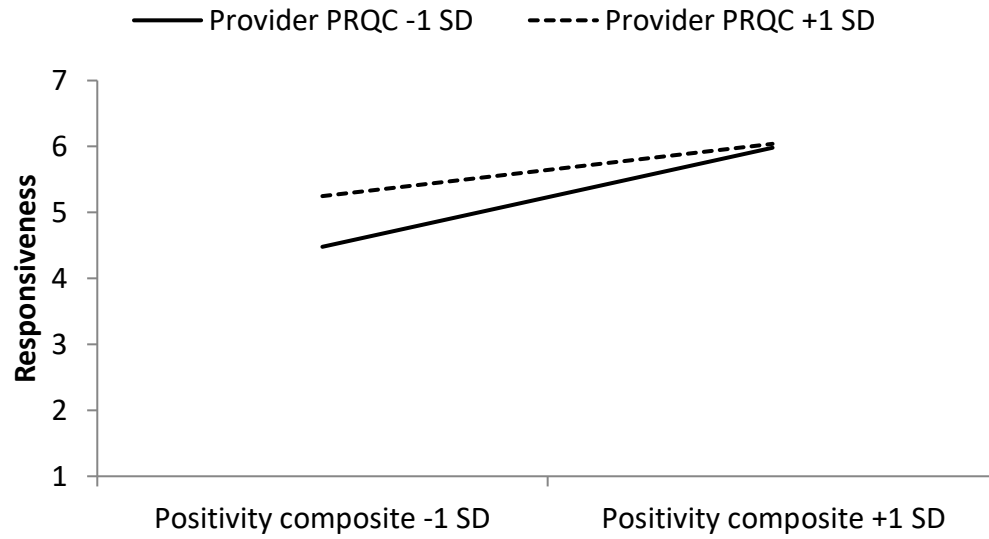
**Figure 4**

**Positivity Composite Predictor × Provider Relationship Quality (PRQC) Interaction on Provider**

**Responsiveness (Study 4)**

*Note.* **The model controls for seeker negativity and its two-way interactions with the positivity composite and**
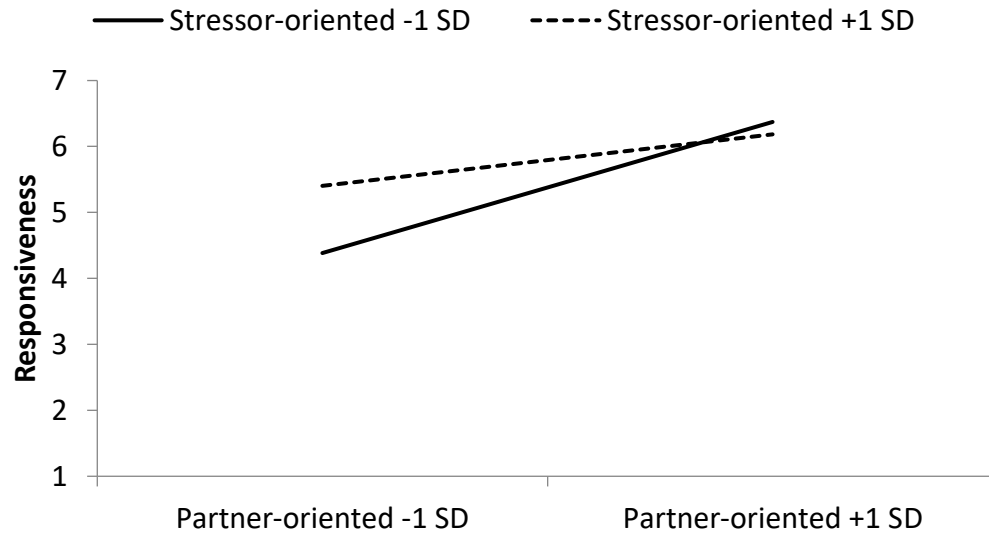
**provider relationship quality.**

**Figure 5**

**Partner-Oriented Sub-Composite Predictor × Stressor-Oriented Sub-Composite Predictor Interaction on**

**Provider Responsiveness (Study 4)**

*Note.* **The model controls for seeker negativity, unspecified positivity, and interactions.**
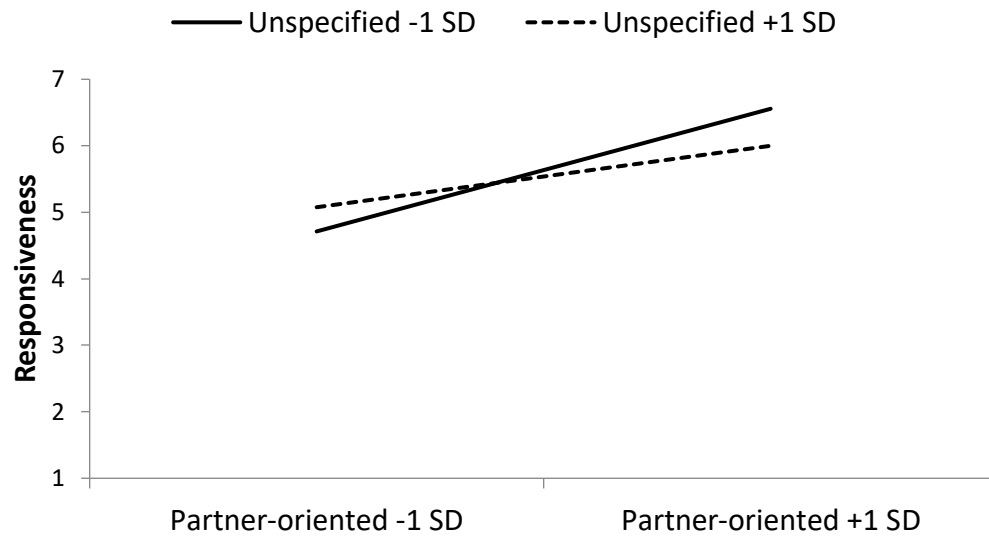
**Figure 6**

**Partner-Oriented Sub-Composite Predictor × Unspecified Sub-Composite Predictor Interaction on Provider**

**Responsiveness (Study 4)**

*Note.* **The model controls for seeker negativity, stressor-oriented positivity, and interactions.**
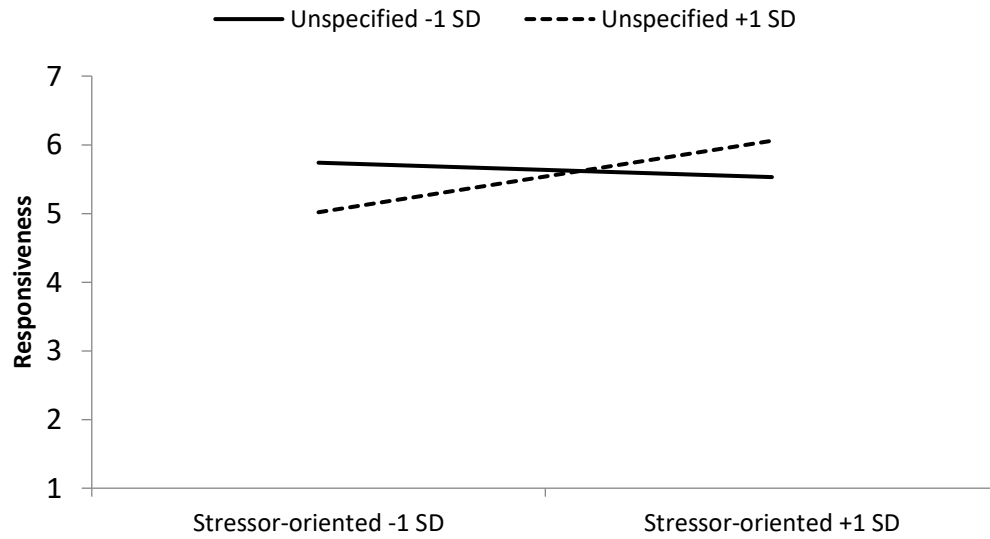
**Figure 7**

**Stressor-Oriented Sub-Composite Predictor × Unspecified Sub-Composite Predictor Interaction on Provider**

**Responsiveness (Study 4)**

*Note.* **The model controls for seeker negativity, partner-oriented positivity, and interactions.**

**Appendix C** Study 1 Attempted Manipulation Details and Manipulation Checks

In the high threat condition, providers were led to believe that their partners were interacting with a single person who was the same gender as the provider (i.e., a viable alternative partner for the discloser in this study of heterosexual couples). In the low threat condition, providers were led to believe that their partners were interacting with a romantically involved person who was a different gender as the provider (i.e., an unlikely rival). In addition to varying these features of the discloser's ostensible interaction partner, our threat manipulation involved attempting to manipulate providers' beliefs about the extent to which disclosers favorably evaluated the other participant's capacity as a romantic partner. During w writing task in which disclosers and providers were sitting back-to-back, we varied disclosers' instructions: Disclosers in the high threat condition were given a time-consuming task (to list as many items in their dorm/bedroom, but no fewer than 25), whereas disclosers in the low threat condition were given a brief task (to list only five items in their dorm/bedroom). However, providers--who were seated back-to-back with their partner and could therefore hear their partner working on their condition-specific task--were led to believe that their partner was tasked with listing romantically desirable qualities of the other participant: Provided that disclosers indeed wrote for a longer in the high (vs. low) threat condition, we had hoped that providers would draw corresponding conclusions about how many desirable qualities disclosers had identified and the extent to which the other participant embodied various sought-after qualities.

Indeed, a one-way ANOVA confirmed that disclosers in high threat condition spent more time writing during this task ($M = 247.42$ seconds, $SD = 53.61$) than did disclosers in the low threat condition ($M = 62.84$ seconds, $SD = 24.17$), $F(1, 126) = 617.02$, $p < .001$ and believed that their partner had listed a larger quantity of desirable qualities of the rival ($M = 6.66$, $SD = 3.42$) than did providers in the low threat condition ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.64$), $F(1, 119) = 46.48$, $p < .001$.

As such, we expected our threat manipulation to produce condition differences in feelings of threat and jealousy.

However, unexpectedly, the aforementioned differences did not produce the psychological experience we had anticipated in providers. Examination of a six-item rival desirability measure (e.g., attractive, interesting, likeable; $\alpha = .73$) revealed that providers in the high threat condition did not think that their partners viewed the other participant as any more desirable than did providers in the low threat condition, $F(1, 126) = 1.48$, $p = .226$.

In addition, providers reported feeling comparable—and remarkably low—levels of jealousy across conditions (high and low threat condition $M$s = 1.34 and 1.37, respectively, on a 5-point scale; $1 = not\ at\ all$, $5 = extremely$ scale), $F(1, 125) = 0.06$, $p = .808$. Thus, given that jealousy is central to the experience of rival threat (e.g., Pfeiffer & Wong, 1989; White, 1981), these results suggest that our attempt to manipulate rival threat was largely unsuccessful.

## Seeker and Provider Pre-Interaction Questionnaires

**Background Information**

Please fill in the following information about yourself in order to help us understand which background variables may be related to features of social interactions. **All** information provided will be kept confidential. You may decline to answer any of the questions.

1. Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ethnicity (e.g., White, Black, Asian, Hispanic): _____
4. Country of Birth: _____
5. First language: _____
6. How would you describe your relationship status:
_____ married
_____ not married, but in a committed relationship
_____ single, and dating
_____ single, and not currently dating
7. How long have you been in a relationship with your current romantic partner? _____

months

8. Are you romantically interested in: \_\_\_\_\_ Men \_\_\_\_\_Women \_\_\_\_\_Both

\_\_\_\_\_Neither

Self-esteem

How do you feel generally?

Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree

with it on the following scale.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| very strongly disagree | | moderately disagree | | neutral | | moderately agree | | very strongly agree |

_____ I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.

_____ I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
_____ All in all I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
_____ I am able to do things as well as most other people.
_____ I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
_____ I take a positive attitude toward myself.
_____ On the whole I am satisfied with myself.
_____ I wish I could have more respect for myself.
_____ I certainly feel useless at times.
_____ At times, I think I am no good at all.

## TIPI

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| disagree strongly | disagree moderately | disagree a little | neither agree nor disagree | agree a little | agree moderately | agree strongly |

I see myself as:
_____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
_____ Critical, quarrelsome.
_____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
_____ Anxious, easily upset.
_____ Open to new experiences, complex.
_____ Reserved, quiet.
_____ Sympathetic, warm.
_____ Disorganized, careless.
_____ Calm, emotionally stable.
_____ Conventional, uncreative.

## Regulatory Mode

Read each of the following statements and decide how much you agree with each according to your beliefs and experiences. Please respond according to the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| strongly disagree | moderately disagree | slightly disagree | slightly agree | moderate agree | strongly agree |

_____ I don't mind doing things even if they involve extra effort.
_____ I never evaluate my social interactions with others after they occur.
_____ I am a "workaholic."
_____ I feel excited just before I am about to reach a goal.
_____ I enjoy actively doing things, more than just watching and observing.

_____I spend a great deal of time taking inventory of my positive and negative characteristics.

_____I like evaluating other people's plans.

_____I am a "doer."

_____I often compare myself with other people.

_____I don't spend much time thinking about ways others could improve themselves.

_____I often critique work done by myself and others.

_____I believe one should never engage in leisure activities.

_____When I finish one project, I often wait awhile before getting started on a new one.

_____I have never been late for work or for an appointment.

_____I often feel that I am being evaluated by others.

_____When I decide to do something, I can't wait to get started.

_____I always make the right decision.

_____I never find faults with someone I like.

_____I am a critical person.

_____I am very self-critical and self-conscious about what I am saying.

_____By the time I accomplish a task, I already have the next one in mind.

_____I often think that other people's choices and decisions are wrong.

_____I have never hurt another person's feelings.  24. I am a "low energy" person.

_____Most of the time my thoughts are occupied with the task that I wish to accomplish.

_____I feel that there is no such thing as an honest mistake.

_____I rarely analyze the conversations I have had with others after they occur.

_____When I get started on something, I usually persevere until I finish.

_____I am a "go-getter."

_____When I meet a new person I usually evaluate how well he or she is doing on various dimensions (e.g., looks, achievements, social status, clothes)

**PRQC**
Please rate your current romantic partner and relationship on each item.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all | | | | | | Extremely |

_____How satisfied are you with your relationship?

_____How content are you with your relationship?

_____How happy are you with your relationship?

_____How committed are you to your relationship?

_____How dedicated are you to your relationship?

_____How devoted are you to your relationship?

_____How intimate is your relationship?

_____How close is your relationship?

_____How connected are you to your partner?

_____How much do you trust your partner?

_____How much can you count on your partner?

_____How dependable is your partner?
_____How passionate is your relationship?
_____How lustful is your relationship?
_____How sexually intense is your relationship?
_____How much do you love your partner?
_____How much do you adore your partner?
_____How much do you cherish your partner?

**ECR-R**

The statements below concern how you feel in **emotionally in your current romantic relationship**. Respond to each statement by to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | Moderately disagree | Disagree a little | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree a little | Moderately agree | Strongly agree |

1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
3. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
4. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
5. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
6. I worry a lot about my relationships.
7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.
8. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.
9. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.
11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
12. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
13. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.
14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
15. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.
16. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.
17. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
18. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.
19. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
22. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.

23. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
24. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
25. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
26. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
27. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.
28. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
29. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
30. I tell my partner just about everything.
31. I talk things over with my partner.
32. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
33. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
34. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
36. My partner really understands me and my needs.

### Chronic Emotional Capital

Please indicate the extent to which your current romantic partner has engaged in each of the following behaviors in the past month:

| 1<br>Not at all | 2<br>Very little | 3<br>Somewhat | 4<br>Quite a bit | 5<br>A great deal |
|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Complimented me
2. Told me he/she loves me
3. Smiled at me
4. Greeted me when I came home
5. Told me he/she was thinking about me
6. Looked at me in a loving way
7. Enjoyed seeing me get enthusiastic about something
8. Said thank you when I did something for him/her
9. Made me laugh
10. Said something that made me feel good about myself
11. Held my hand

### SEEKER AND PROVIDER WRITING TASKS
### Provider Writing Task

Please list qualities about the stranger that make him/her a desirable romantic partner. There is no need to write more than one appealing quality about the stranger, if that is all that comes to mind. Once you are finished, fold this piece of paper and put it back in its envelope.

### High Threat Seeker Writing Task

Please list as many items in your bedroom/dorm as you can recall (a minimum of 25 items is required). Once you are finished, fold this piece of paper and put it back in its envelope.

### Low Threat Seeker Writing Task

Please list 5 items in your bedroom/dorm. Once you are finished, fold this piece of paper and put it back in its envelope.

**SEEKER'S POST-DISCLOSURE QUESTIONNAIRES**
Please answer the following questions about the message you made for your partner:
Please indicate how you found the content of the message you made for your partner:

1. How expressive was the message? (1 = Extremely unexpressive; 9 = Extremely expressive)
2. How pleasant was the message? (1 = Extremely unpleasant; 9 = Extremely pleasant)
3. How boring or exciting was the message? (1 = Extremely boring; 9 = Extremely exciting)
4. What was the length of the message? (1 = Extremely short; 9 = Extremely long)
5. How much negativity did you express in your message? (1 = None at all; 9 = A great deal)
6. How much positivity did you express in your message? (1 = None at all; 9 = A great deal)
7. To what degree did you express the following in your message? (1 = None at all; 9 = A great deal)
    a) Excitement
    b) Physical ailments or unpleasant physical sensations
    c) Sadness
    d) Disgust
    e) Frustration
    f) Boredom
    g) Interest
    h) Enthusiasm

Please indicate how you found the content of the message you made for your partner:
1. How expressive was the message? (1 = Extremely unexpressive; 9 = Extremely expressive)
2. How pleasant was the message? (1 = Extremely unpleasant; 9 = Extremely pleasant)
3. How boring or exciting was the message? (1 = Extremely boring; 9 = Extremely exciting)
4. What was the length of the message? (1 = Extremely short; 9 = Extremely long)
5. How much negativity did you express in your message? (1 = None at all; 9 = A great deal)
6. How much positivity did you express in your message? (1 = None at all; 9 = A great deal)
7. To what degree did you express the following in your message? (1 = None at all; 9 = A great deal)
    a) Excitement
    b) Physical ailments or unpleasant physical sensations
    c) Sadness
    d) Disgust
    e) Frustration
    f) Boredom
    g) Interest
    h) Enthusiasm

Your Reactions
Please answer the following questions about how you anticipate your partner will respond to your message: (1 = Not at all; 9 = Extremely)

1.How concerned will your partner feel?
2. How sympathetic toward you will your partner be?
3. How attentive will your partner be?
4. How patient will your partner be?
5. How supportively will you partner respond to your message?
6. How caring will your partner's behavior be toward you?
7. How critical will your partner be of your message?
8. How judgmental will your partner be of your message?
9. How warm will your partner be toward you?
10. How loving will your partner be toward you?
11. How interested will you partner be in your message?

About My Relationship
Using the scale below, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements right now, at this very moment: (1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree)
1. Right now, I am extremely happy with my current romantic relationship.
2. Right now, I want our relationship to last forever.
3. Right now, I am perfectly satisfied in my relationship.
4. Right now, I feel distant from my partner.
5. Right now, I am completely committed to my relationship.
6. Right now, I would NOT be very upset if my relationship were to end.
7. Right now, I feel that my partner is a part of me.
8. Right now, I do NOT feel that my current relationship is successful.
9. Right now, I feel connected to my partner.
10. Right now, I trust my partner completely.
11. Right now, I feel close to my partner.

**Provider Post-Manipulation Questionnaires**
This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then select the appropriate answer next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way right now, that is, at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers. (1 = Very slightly or not at all; 2 = a little; 3 = moderately; 4 = quite a bit; 5 = extremely)
1. Interested
2. Distressed
3. Excited
4. Upset
5. Strong
6. Guilty
7. Scared
8. Hostile
9. Enthusiastic
10. Proud
11. Threatened
12. Irritable
13. Alert

14. Ashamed
15. Inspired
16. Nervous
17. Determined
18. Attentive
19. Jittery
20. Active
21. Grateful
22. Jealous
23. Afraid

**Provider Perceptions of the Rival**
What are your general impressions of the stranger? Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale. (1 = very strongly disagree; 4 = neutral; 9 = very strongly agree)
1.Smart
2.Funny
3.Attractive
4.Interesting
5.Likable
6.Extroverted

How many desirable qualities did you list about the stranger? _____

**Desirability Composite**
What do you think your partner's general impressions of the stranger are?
Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale. (1 = very strongly disagree; 4 = neutral; 9 = very strongly agree)

1.The stranger is smart
2.The stranger is funny
3.The stranger is attractive
4.The stranger is interesting
5.The stranger is likable
6.The stranger is extroverted

Estimate the number of desirable qualities your partner listed about the stranger: _____

**Provider Perceptions of Seeker's Disclosure Video**
Please answer the following questions about the message you received from your partner.
Please indicate how you found the content of your partner's message:

1 (extremely unexpressive)23456789 (extremely expressive)

123456789

Extremely unpleasantExtremely pleasant

123456789
Extremely boringExtremely exciting

123456789
Extremely shortExtremely long

How much negativity did your partner express?
123456789
None at allA great deal

How much positivity did your partner express?
123456789
None at allA great deal

To what degree did your partner express the following in his/her message? (1 = none at all; 9 = a great deal)
1. Excitement
2. Physical ailments or unpleasant physical sensations
3. Sadness
4. Disgust
5. Frustration
6. Boredom
7. Interest
8. Enthusiasm

**Self-Reported Responsiveness**
(1 = not at all; 9 = extremely)
1. How much concern did you express in your response?
2. How sympathetic was your response?
3. How attentive were you to your partner's message?
4. How patient were you with your partner's message?
5. How supportively did you respond to your partner's message?
6. How caring was your reply to your partner?
7. How critical was your message to your partner?
8. How judgmental was your message to your partner?
9. How warm was your message to your partner?
10. How loving was your message to your partner?
11. How much interest in your partner's disclosure did you express in your response message?

Compared to how you think you should have responded to your partner, how did you respond to your partner? (1 = I was much less supportive and caring then I should have been; 5 = I was exactly as supportive and caring as I should have been; 9 = I was more supportive and caring than I should have been)

**Provider State Relationship Quality**

About My Relationship Using the scale below, please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements right now, at this very moment. (1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree)

1. Right now, I am extremely happy with my current romantic relationship.
2. Right now, I want our relationship to last forever.
3. Right now, I am perfectly satisfied in my relationship.
4. Right now, I feel distant from my partner.
5. Right now, I am completely committed to my relationship.
6. Right now, I would NOT be very upset if my relationship were to end.
7. Right now, I feel that my partner is a part of me.
8. Right now, I do NOT feel that my current relationship is successful.
9. Right now, I feel connected to my partner.
10. Right now, I trust my partner completely.
11. Right now, I feel close to my partner

**Exploratory Rival Video Task Questionnaires**

[Providers introduced themselves to the ostensible other study participant via video-message and then answered questions about what they did in that video-message.]

Please answer the following questions about the message you created for the stranger.

To what degree did you express the following in your message?

(1 = not at all; 9 = extremely)

1. Warmth
2. Hostility
3. Friendliness
4. Negativity
5. Humor
6. Information about your relationship

To what degree did the following goals direct what you expressed in your message?

(1 = not at all; 9 = a great deal)

1. Make the stranger like you
2. Intimidate the stranger
3. Make the stranger find you attractive
4. Make the stranger dislike your partner
5. Affirm your and your partner's love for one another
6. Make the stranger dislike you
7. Affirm your and your partner's commitment to your relationship

**Seeker and Provider Relationship Affirmation**

A Value My Romantic Partner and I Share

Below is a list of values. Please circle a value that you and your romantic partner both share—specifically, circle the value that is most important to you and your partner:

Please write a few sentences explaining why the value you chose is important to you and your partner:

**Seeker and Provider Comments Sheet**
1. Do you have any questions about the study so far?
2. Did you find anything odd or confusing?
3. Do you know what the study is about?
4. Do you think there might be more going on in the study than meets the eye?
5. If yes, what?


## STUDY 1 CODING SCHEME [items used in the current investigate are highlighted]

### Phase 1: Disclosure Videos
(1 = *not at all*; 9 = *extremely*)
1. How emotionally expressive was this message?
2. How open and self-revealing was this message?

(1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great deal*)
**Single-item positivity measure**
1. How much negativity did the partner express in his/her message?
**Single-item negativity measure**
1. How much positivity did the partner express in his/her message?

(1 = *extremely boring*; 9 = *extremely exciting*)
1. How boring or exciting was this message?

### Phase 1: Provider Response Videos
**Responsiveness measure [items are highlighted]**
(1 = *not at all*; 9 = *extremely*)
1. How concerned does this person seem about his/her partner?
2. How supportive is this response?
3. How caring is this response?
4. How critical is this response (i.e., expresses criticism or has a critical tone)?
5. How warm is this person's message?
6. How interested does this person seem in his/her partner's disclosure?
7. How engaged in making his/her message does this person seem to be?
(1 = *not at all*; 9 = *a great deal*)
8. How much does this person try to reframe his/her partner's thinking or offer an alternative way of looking at his/her partner's experience/event?
9. How much does this person offer practical advice and/or suggestions to deal with his/her partner's event or issue?
(1 = *Very slightly or not at all*; 5 = *Moderately*; 9 = *Extremely*)
10. Based on the response video you just watched, how jealous does this person seem to be feeling?

## Phase 2: Disclosure Videos

(1 = N*ot at all*; 9 = *A great deal/Extremely*)

1. How physically attractive is this person?

### Positivity composite [items are highlighted]

To what extent did this person . . .

1. seem like s/he was talking about this event only because s/he was required to (i.e., not because s/he really wanted to share this with his/her partner)?
2. seem like the event is no longer a source of distress/upset for him/her?
3. express liking/affection for his/her partner?
4. describe his/her efforts to cope (e.g., discussed what s/he has done or is doing to cope with this event/situation)?
5. express happiness?
6. express gratitude/appreciation for his/her partner?
7. make clear what type of response s/he would like or find helpful?
8. express warmth or affection s/he feels for other people (i.e., people apart from the partner)? *[ultimately removed from final positivity composite]*
9. find a bright side or silver lining to the event (e.g., grew or learned from the event)?
10. seem to be considerate about how his/her disclosure would affect his/her partner?
11. seem like s/he wants support/help/to feel better?
12. express optimism about being able to resolve, come to terms with, or recover from the event in the future?
13. seem to dwell on the negative event and/or the negative emotions it caused?
14. use humor?
15. Overall, how pleasant was this person's demeanor? *[Coders were instructed to base their ratings for this item on their overall take on the discloser's vibe/tone/etc.]*

### Stressor intensity

1. How severe is this event? (1 = *Not at all*; 9 = *Extremely*)
2. How would you describe the consequences of this event for someone's life? (1 = *Extremely trivial*; 9 = *Extremely disruptive*)

**Supplemental Table 23**

**Correlations for Seeker-Expressed Negativity, Seeker-Expressed Positivity (Unitary and Types), and Features of Seekers and Providers (Study 1)**

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Negativity | -- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Single-item positivity | .33*** | -- | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Positivity composite | -.20* | .24** | -- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. PO | -.12 | .16 | .73*** | -- | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. SO | .03 | .17 | .41*** | .81*** | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Unspecified | -.21* | .09 | .66*** | .68*** | .20* | -- | | | | | | | |
| 7. Seeker self-esteem | -.18 | .04 | .66*** | .73*** | .37*** | .46*** | -- | | | | | | |
| 8. Seeker anxiety | -.16 | -.24** | -.10 | -.12 | -.25** | .07 | .02 | -- | | | | | |
| 9. Seeker avoidance | .15 | .15 | -.24** | -.28** | -.12 | -.27** | -.30** | -.30** | -- | | | | |
| 10. Seeker PRQC | -.16 | .08 | -.12 | -.15 | -.07 | -.11 | -.21* | -.19* | .46*** | -- | | | |
| 11. Provider self-esteem | .08 | -.10 | .16 | .21* | .14 | .16 | .18* | .01 | -.32*** | -.56*** | -- | | |
| 12. Provider anxiety | -.08 | -.03 | -.06 | -.06 | -.17 | .12 | -.01 | .25** | -.17 | -.12 | .15 | -- | |
| 13. Provider avoidance | -.02 | .06 | -.06 | -.14 | -.12 | -.06 | -.13 | -.21* | .38*** | .37*** | -.36*** | -.56*** | -- |
| 14. Provide PRQC | .04 | .07 | -.21* | -.18* | -.13 | -.18 | -.10 | -.06 | .28** | .18* | -.36*** | -.24** | .43*** |

*Note.* PO = Partner-oriented positivity sub-composite. SO = Stressor-oriented positivity sub-composite. Unspecified = Unspecified positivity sub-composite. PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components. ***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$.

**Correlations for the Negativity and Positivity Composites, Positivity Sub-Composites, and Features of the Stressor, Seeker, or Provider (Study 4)**

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Negativity composite | -- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Stressor intensity | .24* | -- | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Positivity composite | -.10 | -.08 | -- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. PO | .11 | .00 | .92*** | -- | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. SO | -.01 | -.29** | .43*** | .25* | -- | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Unspecified | -.45*** | -.06 | .71*** | .43*** | .15 | -- | | | | | | | |
| 7. Seeker self-esteem | -.31** | -.13 | .01 | -.05 | .05 | .09 | -- | | | | | | |
| 8. Seeker anxiety | .12 | .16 | -.15 | -.13 | -.14 | -.09 | -.22* | -- | | | | | |
| 9. Seeker avoidance | .12 | .02 | -.24* | -.21* | -.09 | -.22* | -.32** | .52*** | -- | | | | |
| 10. Seeker PRQC | -.19 | .04 | .31** | .27** | .08 | .28** | .17 | -.40*** | -.73*** | -- | | | |
| 11. Provider self-esteem | -.16 | -.19 | .18 | .16 | .09 | .14 | .36*** | -.24* | -.28** | .13 | -- | | |
| 12. Provider anxiety | .05 | .13 | -.28** | -.25* | -.16 | -.20 | -.11 | .23* | .34*** | -.34*** | -.34*** | -- | |
| 13. Provider avoidance | .09 | .19 | -.34*** | -.34*** | -.23* | -.14 | -.10 | .42*** | .39*** | -.34*** | -.33** | .50*** | -- |
| 14. Provider PRQC | -.11 | -.08 | .42*** | .38*** | .21* | .29** | .12 | -.33*** | -.46*** | .48*** | .31** | -.46*** | -.69*** |

*Note.* PO = Partner-oriented positivity sub-composite. SO = Stressor-oriented positivity sub-composite. Unspecified = Unspecified positivity sub-composite. PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components. ***$p$ < .001. **$p$ < .01. *$p$ < .05.

**Appendix F** Study 2 Materials

About You
Are you currently in an exclusive, romantic relationship? [Yes; No]
What is your gender?
    a) Male
    b) Female
    c) Other [if selected, text response: Please enter your gender.]

[Relationship quality; PRQC]
Please use the following scale to rate your current romantic partner and relationship on each item.
(1 = *not at all*; 7 = *extremely*)
1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2. How committed are you to your relationship?
3. How intimate is your relationship?
4. How much do you trust your partner?
5. How passionate is your relationship?
6. How much do you love your partner?

[Perceptions of Romantic Partner's Expressivity scale; adapted from Forest et al., 2014]
About Your Partner
The following questions ask about things your romantic partner expresses to you.
Please think about the average week when answering the following questions. This can include things that your partner expresses to you in face-to-face conversations as well as through email, text, phone conversations, etc… (1 = *very strongly agree;* 3 = *moderately disagree;* 5 = *neutral;* 7 = *moderately agree;* 9 = *very strongly disagree*)
In general . . .
    1.. . . my partner expresses a great deal of negativity.
    2.. . . my partner talks a lot about things that are bothering him/her.
    3.. . . my partner expresses a lot of sadness or upset.
    4.. . . my partner expresses a lot of uncertainty.
    5.. . . my partner expresses a great deal of positivity.
    6.. . . my partner talks a lot of about things that s/he enjoys.
    7.. . . my partner express a great deal of warmth.
    8.. . . my partner talks a lot of people's positive attributes.
    9.. . . my partner expresses gratitude a lot.

**[Manipulation]**
We are interested in how couple members communicate with one another.
Please imagine that you received this email on a Friday afternoon from your partner. Your partner had plans to get lunch with one of his/her male/female friends.
Please read the email carefully, and take a moment to really visualize what it would be like if you actually received this email from your partner. What would you be thinking and feeling?

You will be asked questions about this email.

**[Negativity-only condition]**
Hi [your name],
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend this afternoon? Well, we met and we somehow got talking about politics.
I assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.
We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!
I had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. I'm really upset right now.
Anyway, I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now. I'm not sure if [s/he] and we can actually fix this.

**[Plus-positivity condition]**
Hi [your name],
I hope you've been having a great day so far!
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend this afternoon? We ended up going to that new place we wanted to check out since it's gotten really good reviews. (I have to say, it was fantastic! we would definitely go back ☺) So we met there, and we were having a really great time catching up, but then we somehow got talking about politics.
One of the reasons we enjoy [his/her] company so much is because we can usually have these great discussions about hot topics, and we feel comfortable sharing my views with [him/her]. we assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.
We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!!
[S/he] is the type of person who would never want to make someone feel offended or bad about themselves—[s/he]'s a genuinely kind person, you know—and we had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. we know that we won't feel like this forever, but I'm really upset right now.
Anyway, I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now. We have had arguments before, which we've been able to work out, so I'm hoping that we can fix this . . . if we can, I'm sure our friendship will be even stronger than before.
Thanks for taking the time to read this! I'm lucky that we have you to share these things with. Can't wait to see you tonight!

**[Plus-filler condition]**
Hi [your name],
Just wanted to check in. Can't believe it's almost 4:00.
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend this afternoon? We ended up going to that new restaurant that's not too far from [his/her] place since we've both seen a few ads for it. (In my opinion, it was OK. we wouldn't mind going back.) So we met there, and we were catching up for a bit, but then we somehow got talking about politics.

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Usually [s/he] and we will have discussions about hot topics, including topics that some people might feel sensitive discussing with others, and we do not mind sharing my views with [him/her]. we assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.

We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!! Obviously the country is pretty polarized right now and not everyone is going to feel the same way about everything—that seems to be pretty clear, you know—but we had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. I'm really upset right now.

Anyway, I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now. We have had arguments before, and our friendship is not new—now that we think of it, I've known [him/her] for some time now—but I'm not sure if [s/he] and we can actually fix this.

I'm not sure when you'll check your email or if it'll be before we see you tonight. we figured I'd send this when we had the chance.

I will see you later tonight.

**[Attention Check]**
In order to move ahead in the survey, you must answer the following question correctly.
What was your partner's email about?
a. A problem at work
b. A conflict with a friend
c. Financial problems
d. I don't know. Take me back to the email so we can read it again. [If selected, return to email disclosure page for a minimum of 75 seconds.]

Please answer the following questions about your partner's email using the following scale.
(1 = *none at all*; 9 = *a great deal*)
1. To what degree did your partner express negative thoughts and feelings? **[perceived negativity]**
2. To what degree did your partner express positive thoughts and feelings? **[perceived positivity]**

**[Reply email]**
Next, we would like you to write a reply email to your partner in the text box below. Although the reply email that you write will not be sent to your partner, please write your email as though you really were sending a reply email to your partner. [text response]

**[Potential mechanisms measures]**
**[N] need appraisal item**
**[E] = efficacy beliefs item**
**[R] = pro-relational sentiments item**
**[M]= positive mood item**

Please use the following scale to indicate what your beliefs about your partner's experience.
(*1 = not at all; 9 = extremely*)

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1. How severe does your partner think the conflict with his/her friend is? **[N]**
2. How severe do you think your partner's conflict with his/her friend is? **[N]**
3. How upset is your partner about the conflict with his/her friend? **[N]**

Now we would like you to answer some questions about what you were thinking and feeling while you were writing your reply email to your partner.

Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agreed with each statement when you were replying to your partner's email. (1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*)
1. I felt like we could say things to my partner that would make him/her feel comforted. **[E]**
2. I did not know how to help my partner. **[E]**
3. I felt like we would be able to provide effective support to my partner. **[E]**
4. I felt like had the power to positively impact my partner's day. **[E]**
5. It would have been impossible to help my partner, so there was no point in trying. **[E]**
6. My partner wanted to feel better.
7. My partner wanted my advice or input on his/her experience.
8. If we had responded very supportively, my partner would feel grateful of my support.
9. If we had responded very supportively, my partner would express appreciation for my support.
10. My partner wanted support from me specifically (i.e., rather than support from just anyone).
11. I felt like my partner valued me and/or our relationship. **[R]**
12. My partner was reaching out to me for support.
13. I felt like my partner trusted me with his/her thoughts and feelings. **[R]**
14. I had the opportunity to connect with my partner through my response to his/her email.
15. I was glad to have had the opportunity to help my partner with his/her situation. **[R]**
16. In his/her email to me, my partner tried to talk about his/her experience in a way that was sensitive to how it would make me feel. **[R]**
17. My partner tried to make my experience reading his/her email pleasant. **[R]**
18. When writing his/her email to me, my partner was considerate about not burdening me with his/her thoughts and feelings about his/her experience. **[R]**
19. Reading my partner's email made me feel an increase in positive emotion(s) (e.g., more inspiration, happiness, gratitude, hope, contentment than we felt before reading it). **[M]**
20. I felt obligated or forced to help my partner
21. I felt like there were many different ways in which we could respond would have been well-received.
22. I felt free to respond to my partner in whatever way we thought was best
23. Reading my partner's email made me feel an increase in negative emotion(s) (e.g., more resentment, frustration, upset, overwhelmed, boredom than we felt before reading it).

### [Self-reported responsiveness]
Please answer the following questions about the reply email that you wrote to your partner using the scale below. (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *extremely/a great deal*)
1. How sympathetic was your response to your partner?
2. How supportively did you respond to your partner?
3. How caring was your reply to your partner?
4. How judgmental was your message to your partner?

5. How loving was your message to your partner?
6. How much interest did you express in your partner's experience?
7. To what extent did your response convey that you understand your partner's feelings?

Background Information
Please fill in the following information about yourself in order to help us understand which background variables may be related to people's social interactions. **All** information provided will be kept confidential. You may decline to answer any of the questions.
1. How old are you (in years)? [numeric response]
2. Please indicate the ethnicity with which you identify. [Multiple choice]
   a) White
   b) Black or African American
   c) Hispanic
   d) American Indian or Alaska Native
   e) Asian
   f) Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   g) Multiracial [if selected, text box: Please enter the identities with which you identify.]
   h) Not listed here [if selected, text box: Please enter the ethnicity with which you identify below.]
3. How would you describe your relationship status? [Multiple choice]
   a. Single, and not currently dating anyone
   b. Dating two or more people
   c. Not married, but exclusively dating one person
   d. Cohabiting
   e. Engaged
   f. Married
   g. Other [if selected, text response: Please enter your relationship status.]
4. How long have you been in your current relationship (in months)? [numeric response]
5. What is your **partner's** gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Not listed here [if selected, text box: Please enter your **partner's** gender.]

**[Participant's Comments]**
You are now finished our study.
Before explaining more about our predictions, we would appreciate your answering a few questions about your experience of our study. It is of great value to us if you answer honestly.
1. Are you really in a relationship? Please answer truthfully. You will still get credit regardless of your response. [Yes; No]
2. Do you have any ideas about the hypotheses we may have been investigating? [Text box]
3. Do you have any comments on what it was like for you to complete this study (e.g., were any parts particularly confusing, interesting, boring or awkward)? Were there any parts you think you may have completed improperly? [Text box]
4. Do you have any final comments or anything else to add? [Text box]

## STUDY 2 CODING SCHEME

| 1<br>Not at all/none at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9<br>Extremely/ A great deal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

1. How sympathetic is this message?
2. How supportive is this message?
3. How caring is this message?
4. How judgmental is this message?
5. How loving is this message?
6. How much interest did the writer express in his/her partners' experience?
7. To what extent does this message convey that the writer understands his/her partner's feelings?

Coder's comments, if any: _____

**Appendix G** Study 3 Materials

I identify as a:
a) Woman
b) Man
c) I don't identify with any of the options above [if selected, text box: Please enter your gender]
d) I prefer not to answer

About Your Relationship
Please use the following scale to rate your current feelings about your relationship. (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *extremely*)
1. How satisfied are you with your romantic relationship right now?
2. How committed are you to your romantic relationship right now?

**[Partner's typically expressivity]**
About Your Partner
The following questions ask about things your romantic partner expresses to you.
Please think about the average week when answering the following questions. This can include things that your partner expresses to you in face-to-face conversations as well as through email, text, phone conversations, etc. (1 = *very strongly disagree; 5 = neutral; 9 = strongly agree*]

In general, my partner . . .
1. expresses a great deal of negativity.
2. talks a lot about things that are bothering him/her.
3. expresses a lot of sadness or being upset.
4. expresses a lot of uncertainty.
5. frequently talks about conflicts s/he has.
6. expresses a great deal of positivity.
7. talks a lot of about things that s/he enjoys or finds exciting.
8. expresses a great deal of happiness.
9. expresses a great deal of liking or affection for me.
10. expresses a lot of gratitude/appreciation for me and my skills/qualities.
11. expresses a lot of optimism or hope.
12. finds the bright side of situations.

Emails were be formatted to look like they were downloaded from Outlook. In the email that participants received, instances of [male/female], [s/he], [him/her], and [his/her]—which refer to the partner's friend—were be replaced the pronoun that does not match the participant's pronoun, in an attempt to limit the possibility that participants will view the partner's hypothetical friend as a threat to his/her romantic relationship. The italicized text below indicates the preamble that all participants received before viewing the partner's email.

*We are interested in how couple members communicate with one another.*

*Please imagine that you received this email on a Friday afternoon from your partner. Your partner had plans to get lunch with one of his/her male/female friends.*
*Please read the email carefully, and take a moment to really visualize what it would be like if you actually received this email from your partner. What would you be thinking and feeling?*
*You will be asked questions about this email.*

**Negativity-Only Condition**

Hi [your name],
This afternoon didn't go the way we had hoped it would.
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend today? Well, we met and we somehow got talking about politics.
I assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.
We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!
I had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. I'm really upset right now.
I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened.
I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now or if we can actually fix this.
See you later tonight.

**Plus-Filler Condition**

Hi [your name],
I just looked at the time and we can't believe it is almost 4:00.
This afternoon didn't go the way we had hoped it would.
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend today? Well, we met and we somehow got talking about politics.
I assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.
We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!
I had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction was one that caught me off-guard. I'm really upset right now.
I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened between us at the restaurant earlier this afternoon. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. At the end of the day, I'm not sure where we stand now or if we can actually fix this.
I had planned to run two or three errands at some point before we go home for the day, so we am headed out to do that in the next hour or so.
See you later tonight.

**Partner-Directed Positivity Condition**

Hi [your name],

I hope you're having a great day so far! I've been thinking about you ☺
This afternoon didn't go the way we had hoped it would.
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend today? Well, we met and we somehow got talking about politics.
I assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.
We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!
I had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. we wanted to share this with you because I'm really upset right now, and we know you have a good sense of how to handle situations like this.
I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now or if we can actually fix this.
Thanks for taking the time to read this! I'm lucky that we have you to share these things with.
I love you and can't wait to see you later tonight!

**Stressor-Oriented Condition**

Hi [your name],
I'm sure I'll be able to laugh about this one day, but this afternoon didn't go the way we had hoped it would.
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend today? Well, we met and we somehow got talking about politics.
I assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.
We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!
I had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. we feel good about how we handled myself in the situation and we know I'll feel better in time, but I'm really upset right now.
I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now or if we can actually fix this.
We've been able to move past arguments that we've had before, so I'm hopeful that we can resolve this too. If we can, this could be an opportunity for us to strengthen our friendship.
See you later tonight.

**Unspecified Positivity Condition**

Hi [your name],
This morning turned out to be really nice! Things are going great with work and I've been planning some fun activities for the weekend! This afternoon didn't go the way we had hoped it would though.
Remember how we told you that we had plans to get lunch with my friend today? Well, we met and we somehow got talking about politics.

I assumed we were on the same page about Trump's policies, but turns out that is not at all the case.

We got into a pretty heated argument, and [s/he] basically told me that I'm an idiot for my views on the Trump administration . . . and then [s/he] just left the restaurant in the middle of lunch!

I had NO IDEA that's how [s/he] felt about this, so [his/her] reaction caught me off-guard. we have a lot to be thankful for these days, but I'm also really upset right now.

I've been distracted since lunch because I'm still trying to wrap my head around what happened. I'm feeling really shaken up about this whole thing. I'm not sure where we stand now or if we can actually fix this.

I unexpectedly stumbled upon a nearby street fair that looked interesting, so I'm going to check it out for a bit. Should be a good time!

See you later tonight!

**[Attention check]**
In order to move ahead in the survey, you must answer the following question correctly.
1.  What was your partner's email about?
    a.  A problem at work [Exclude if selected]
    b.  A conflict with a friend
    c.  Financial problems [Exclude if selected]
    d.  I don't know. [Exclude if selected]

[Participants wrote a reply email]

Please answer the following questions about the reply email that you wrote to your partner using the scale below. (1 = *not at all*; 9 = *extremely/a great deal*)
1.  How sympathetic was your response to your partner?
2.  How supportively did you respond to your partner?
3.  How caring was your reply to your partner?
4.  How judgmental was your message to your partner?
5.  How loving was your message to your partner?
6.  How much interest did you express in your partner's experience?
**7.**  To what extent did your response convey that you understand your partner's feelings?

Now we would like you to answer some questions about what you were thinking and feeling while you were reading your partner's email to you and writing your reply email to your partner. Please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. (1 = *strongly disagree*; 9 = *strongly agree*)

**Efficacy beliefs**
When we was replying to my partner, we felt:
    1.  Confident in my ability to effectively help my partner
    2.  Uncertain that we could meet my partner's needs
    3.  Capable of supporting my partner

**Pro-Relational Sentiments**

Reading my partner's email made me feel:
1. Compassionate
2. Grateful/appreciative
3. Fond of my partner
4. Appreciated or valued by my partner

In my partner's email to me, we thought that my partner tried to:
5. Talk about his/her experience in a way that was sensitive to how it would make me feel.
6. Make my experience reading his/her email pleasant.
7. Be considerate about not burdening me with his/her thoughts and feelings about his/her experience.

**Positive Mood**

Reading my partner's email made me feel:
1. Content
2. Inspired
3. Happy
4. Proud

**Need Appraisal**

Reading my partner's email made me feel:
1. Concerned for my partner

**Negative Mood**

Reading my partner's email made me feel:
1. Overwhelmed and/or stressed
2. Upset
3. Angry
4. Anxious
5. Frustrated and/or irritated

**Perceived effort**
1. My partner put a lot of effort into writing his/her email.

**Relationship satisfaction and commitment**

Please use the following scale to rate your current feelings about your relationship. (1 = not at all; 7 = extremely)
1. How satisfied are you with your romantic relationship right now?
2. How committed are you to your romantic relationship right now?

**Demographic questionnaires**

Please fill in the following information about yourself in order to help us understand which background variables may be related to people's social interactions. **All** information provided will be kept confidential. You may decline to answer any of the questions.

1. How old are you (in years)? [numeric response]
2. Please indicate the ethnicity with which you identify. [Multiple choice]
    a. White
    b. Black or African American
    c. Hispanic
    d. American Indian or Alaska Native
    e. Asian
    f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    g. Multiracial [if selected, text response: Please enter the identities with which you identify.]
    h. Not listed here [if selected, text response: Please enter the ethnicity with which you identify below.]
3. How would you describe your relationship status? [Multiple choice]
    a. Single, and not currently dating anyone [Exclude if selected]
    b. Dating two or more people [Exclude if selected]
    c. Not married, but exclusively dating one person
    d. Cohabiting
    e. Engaged
    f. Married
    g. Other [if selected, text response: Please enter your relationship status.]
4. How long have you been in your current relationship (in months)? [numeric response]
5. My partner identifies as a: [Multiple choice]
    a. Woman
    b. Man
    c. My partner doesn't identify with any of the options above [if selected, text box: Please enter your partner's gender]
    d. I prefer not to answer

You are now finished our study.

Before explaining more about our predictions, we would appreciate your answering a few questions about your experience of our study. It is of great value to us if you answer honestly.

1. Are you really in a relationship? Please answer truthfully. You will still get credit regardless of your response. [Yes; No]
2. Do you have any final comments or anything else to add? [text box]

**STUDY 3 CODING SCHEME**

| 1<br>None/<br>Not at<br>all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9<br>Extremely<br>/A great<br>deal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

1. How sympathetic is this message?

2. How supportive is this message?
3. How caring is this message?
4. How judgmental is this message?
5. How loving is this message?
6. How much interest did the writer express in his/her partners' experience?
7. To what extent does this message convey that the writer understands his/her partner's feelings?

Coder's comments, if any: _____

**Background Information**
Please provide the following information about yourself in order to help us identify any background factors that may be related to our findings.
1. Gender: _____ Male _____ Female _____ Other/Do not identify as Male or Female
2. Age: _____
3. Ethnicity (e.g., White, Black, Asian, Hispanic): _____
4. Please characterize your relationship with your partner. (**Select one**)

> FRIENDS
> CASUALLY DATING
> SERIOUSLY DATING
> COHABITING
> ENGAGED
> MARRIED
> OTHER_____

5. For how long (in months) have you known your partner (**Fill in**)? _____ Months
6. Were you and your partner platonic friends before you became romantically involved?
(**Select one**) YESNO
7. For how long (in months) have you been romantically involved with your partner?
_____ Months

8. On average how often do you see your partner in a week:

> _____ fewer than 1 time/week
> _____ 1-3 times a week
> _____ 4-6 times a week
> _____ 7+ times a week

9. Are you and your partner currently in a long distance relationship?(**Circle one**)
**YES, DURING THE ACADEMIC YEA**
**YES, DURING THE SUMMER**
**YES, DURING BOTH THE YEAR AND THE SUMMER**
**NO, WE ARE NEVER LONG DISTANCE**
10. Are you a daily smoker? Yes / No

**First, we would like you to answer some questions about yourself.**
**Self-Esteem**
Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale.

| 1<br>Very strongly disagree | | 3<br>Moderately disagree | | 5<br>Neural | | 7<br>Moderately agree | | 9<br>Very strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. _____ I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. _____ I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. _____ All in all I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
4. _____ I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. _____ I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. _____ I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. _____ On the whole I am satisfied with myself.
8. _____ I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. _____ I certainly feel useless at times.
10. _____ At times, I think I am no good at all.

**MEANING IN LIFE**
Please take a moment to think about what makes your life and existence feel important and significant to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below:
    1 = *Absolutely Untrue*; 7 = *Absolutely true*

    1. I understand my life's meaning.
    2. My life has a clear sense of purpose.
    3. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
    4. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
    5. My life has no clear purpose.

    Please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements
    (*strongly disagree)* to 5 (*strongly agree).*

1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.
3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.
4. Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like.
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
7. Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself.
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day.
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I could tell someone what I'm really like.
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.[*]

**TIPI**

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Neither | | | |
| Disagree strongly | Disagree moderately | Disagree little | agree nor disagree | Agree a little | Agree moderately | Agree strongly |

I see myself as:
1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.

## My Life Satisfaction

Please answer the following questions about yourself by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

| Strongly Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|

1. In most ways, my life is close to ideal.

2. The conditions of my life are excellent.

3. I am satisfied with my life.

4. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.

5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost everything.

## My Beliefs

Using the scale below, please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers. [KS]

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | | | | | | Strongly agree |

1. A person's level of empathy is something very basic about them, and it can't be changed much.
2. People can always change how much empathy they generally feel for others.
3. People can't really change how much empathy they tend to feel for others.

4. Some people are very empathic and some aren't and they can't change that much.
5. No matter who somebody is, they can always change how empathic a person they are.
6. Whether a person is empathic or not is deeply ingrained in their personality. It cannot be changed very much.
7. Anybody can change how empathic a person they are.

**My Health**

Mark the number for each statement that best describes how much that problem has bothered or distressed you **IN THE PAST MONTH**. Mark only one number for each item. At one extreme, 0 means that you have not been bothered by the problem. At the other extreme, 4 means that the problem has been an extreme bother.

0 = Never; 1 = Almost never; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Somewhat frequently; 4 = Very frequently

HOW MUCH WERE YOU BOTHERED BY:
1. Sleep problems (can't fall asleep, wake up in middle of night or early in morning)
2. Weight change (gain or loss of 5 lbs. or more)
3. Back pain
4. Constipation
5. Dizziness
6. Diarrhea
7. Faintness
8. Constant fatigue
9. Headache
10. Migraine headache
11. Nausea and/or vomiting
12. Acid stomach or indigestion
13. Stomach pain (e.g., cramps)
14. Hot or cold spells
15. Hands trembling
16. Heart pounding or racing
17. Poor appetite
18. Shortness of breath when not exercising or working hard
19. Numbness or tingling in parts of your body
20. Felt weak all over
21. Pains in heart or chest
22. Feeling low in energy
23. Stuffy head or nose
24. Blurred vision
25. Muscle tension or soreness
26. Muscle cramps
27. Severe aches and pains
28. Acne
29. Bruises
30. Nosebleed

31. Pulled (strained) muscles
32. Pulled (strained) ligaments
33. Cold or cough

## ES-D
Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved. Please tell us how often you have felt this way during the past week.

During the Past Week

| Rarely or none of the time (less than one day) | Some or a little of the time (1-2 days) | Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days) | Most or all of the time (5-7 days) |
|---|---|---|---|

1. I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.
2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.
3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family or friends.
4. I felt I was just as good as other people.
5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.
6. I felt depressed.
7. I felt that everything I did was an effort.
8. I felt hopeful about the future.
9. I thought my life had been a failure.
10. I felt fearful.
11. My sleep was restless.
12. I was happy.
13. I talked less than usual.
14. I felt lonely.
15. People were unfriendly.
16. I enjoyed life.
17. I had crying spells.
18. I felt sad.
19. I felt that people dislike me.
20. I could not get "going."

**Next, we would like you to answer some questions about your relationship. All responses will be kept strictly confidential.**

PRQC **randomize order**
Please rate your current romantic partner and relationship on each item.
    1 = not at all; 7 = extremely
1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2. How committed are you to your relationship?
3. How intimate is your relationship?
4. How much do you trust your partner?
5. How passionate is your relationship?
6. How much do you love your partner?

**The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS)**

Instructions: Please circle the picture that best describes your current relationship with your romantic partner.

(You may need to scroll down to see all of the options).
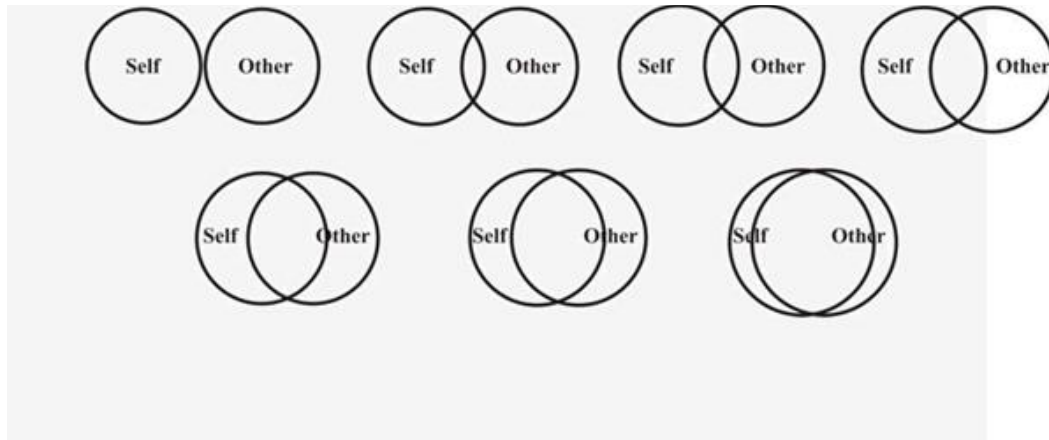


**Commitment**

Instructions:

To what extent does each of the following statements describe your feelings regarding your relationship? Please use the following scale to record an answer for each statement listed below.
Response Scale: 012345678

Response

1. I will do everything I can to make our relationship last for the rest of our lives.
2. I feel completely attached to my partner and our relationship.
3. I often talk to my partner about what things will be like when we are very old.
4. I feel really awful when things are not going well in our relationship.
5. I am completely committed to maintaining our relationship.
6. I frequently imagine life with my partner in the distant future.
7. When I make plans about future events in life, I carefully consider the impact of my decisions on our relationship.
8. I spend a lot of time thinking about the future of our relationship.
9. I feel really terrible when things are not going well for my partner.
10. I want our relationship to last forever.
11. There is no chance at all that I would ever become romantically involved with another person.
12. I am oriented toward the long-term future of our relationship (for example, I imagine life with my partner decades from now).
13. My partner is more important to me than anyone else in life – more important than my parents, friends, etc.
14. I intend to do everything humanly possible to make our relationship persist.
15. If our relationship were ever to end, I would feel that my life was destroyed.

**ECR-S: Specific to Current Partner**
*** the order in which these items are presented should be randomized***

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The statements below concern how you feel in **emotionally in your current romantic relationship**. Respond to each statement by [*web: clicking a circle*] [*paper: circling a number*] to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.
Each item is rated on a 7-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*.

1. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
2. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
3. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
4. I find that my partner doesn't want to get as close as I would like.
5. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
6. My desire to be very close sometimes scares my partner away.
7. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
8. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
9. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
10. I get frustrated if my partner is not available when I need him/her
11. I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.
12. I worry that my partner won't care about me as much as I care about him/her.

## How My Partner Sees Me
1 = *Not at all true*; 4 = *Somewhat true*; 7 = *Very true*
1. I am confident that my partner accepts and loves me.
2. My partner believes I have many good qualities.
3. My partner is responsive to my needs.
4. My partner would not help me if it meant he/she had to make sacrifices.
5. My partner values and admires my personal qualities and abilities.
6. My partner is committed to our relationship.
7. Though times may change and the future is uncertain, I know my partner will always be ready and willing to offer me strength and support.
8. My partner is never concerned that unpredictable conflicts and serious tensions may damage our relationship because he/she knows we can weather any storm.
9. Whenever we have to make an important decision in a situation we have never encountered before, I know my partner will be concerned about my welfare.

## My Romantic Partner's Expressivity
The following questions ask about **things your romantic partner expresses to you.**
Please think about the typical week over the past month when answering the following questions.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree strongly | | Moderately disagree | | Neutral | | Moderately agree | | Very strongly agree |

In a typical week . . .
1. My partner expresses a great deal of negativity.
2. My partner expresses a great deal of positivity.

3. My partner talks a lot about things that bother him/her.
4. My partner talks a lot about physical ailments.
5. My partner talks a lot about things that are going poorly for him/her.
6. My partner complains a lot.
7. My partner whines a lot.
8. My partner expresses sadness a lot.
9. My partner expresses anger a lot.
10. My partner expresses guilt a lot.
11. My partner expresses frustration a lot.
12. My partner expresses fear a lot.
13. My partner I express anxiety a lot.
14. My partner expresses boredom a lot.
15. My partner expresses shame a lot.
16. My partner talks a lot about things that are going well for him/her.
17. My partner expresses excitement a lot.
18. My partner expresses happiness a lot.
19. My partner expresses interest a lot.
20. My partner expresses enthusiasm a lot.
21. My partner expresses pride a lot.
22. My partner expresses joy a lot.
23. My partner expresses gratitude a lot.
24. My partner expresses love a lot.

## My Expressivity

The following questions ask about **things you express to your romantic partner.**
Please think about the typical week over the past month when answering the following questions.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Disagree strongly | | Moderately disagree | | Neutral | | Moderately agree | | Very strongly agree |

In the typical week:
1. I express a great deal of negativity.
2. I express a great deal of positivity.
3. I talk a lot about things that bother him/her.
4. I talk a lot about physical ailments.
5. I talk a lot about things that are going poorly for him/her.
6. I complain a lot.
7. I whine a lot.
8. I express sadness a lot.
9. I express anger a lot.
10. I express guilt a lot.
11. I express frustration a lot.
12. I express fear a lot.
13. I express anxiety a lot.
14. I express boredom a lot.
15. I express shame a lot.

16. I talk a lot about things that are going well for him/her.
17. I express excitement a lot.
18. I express happiness a lot.
19. I express interest a lot.
20. I express enthusiasm a lot.
21. I express pride a lot.
22. I express joy a lot.
23. I express gratitude a lot.
24. I express love a lot.

**My Romantic Partner's Responsiveness to Me**
Please answer the following questions about how **your romantic partner feels and behaves toward you.** (1 = not at all true; 9 = completely true)

**My partner usually:**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1.... is an excellent judge of my character.
\_\_\_\_\_ 2.... sees the "real" me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 3.... sees the same virtues and faults in me as I see in myself.
\_\_\_\_\_ 4.... "gets the facts right" about me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 5.... esteems me, shortcomings and all.
\_\_\_\_\_ 6.... knows me well.
\_\_\_\_\_ 7.... values and respects the whole package that is the "real" me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 8.... seems to focus on the "best side" of me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 9.... is aware of what I am thinking and feeling.
\_\_\_\_\_ 10.... understands me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 11.... really listens to me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 12.... expresses liking and encouragement for me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 13.... seems interested in what I am thinking and feeling.
\_\_\_\_\_ 14.... seems interested in doing things with me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 15.... values my abilities and opinions.
\_\_\_\_\_ 16.... is on "the same wavelength" with me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 17.... respects me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 18.... is responsive to my needs.
\_\_\_\_\_ 19.    …cares about me.
\_\_\_\_\_ 20.    …has a genuine interest in my well-being.
\_\_\_\_\_ 21.    … is concerned about how I am feeling.

**My Responsiveness to My Romantic Partner**
Please answer the following questions about how **you feel and behave toward your romantic partner:** (1 = not at all true; 9 = completely true)

**I usually:**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1.... am an excellent judge of my partner's character.
\_\_\_\_\_ 2.... see the "real" him/her (my partner).
\_\_\_\_\_ 3.... see the same virtues and faults in my partner as he/she sees in him/herself.
\_\_\_\_\_ 4.... "gets the facts right" about my partner.

_____ 5.... esteems y partner shortcomings and all.
_____ 6.... know my partner well.
_____ 7.... value and respect the whole package that is the "real" him/her (my partner).
_____ 8.... seem to focus on the "best side" of my partner.
_____ 9.... am aware of what my partner is thinking and feeling.
_____ 10.... understand my partner.
_____ 11.... really listen to my partner.
_____ 12.... express liking and encouragement for my partner.
_____ 13.... seem interested in what my partner is thinking and feeling.
_____ 14.... seem interested in doing things with my partner.
_____ 15.... value my partner's abilities and opinions.
_____ 16.... am on "the same wavelength" with my partner.
_____ 17.... respect my partner.
_____ 18.... am responsive to my partner's needs.
_____ 19.…care about my partner.
_____ 20.…have a genuine interest in my partner's well-being.
_____ 21.… am concerned about how my partner is feeling.

## Shared Reality Questionnaire (In Close Relationships)
_Please rate your agreement with the following statements about you and your partner._

| 1<br>Strongly<br>disagree | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7<br>Strongly<br>agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

1. We frequently think of things at the exact same time.
2. Through our discussions, we often develop a joint perspective.
3. We typically share the same thoughts and feelings about things.
4. Events feel more real when we experience them together.
5. The way we think has become more similar over time.
6. We often anticipate what the other is about to say.
7. We are more certain of the way we perceive things when we are together.
8. We often feel like we have created our own reality.

## HOW I FEEL WHEN MY PARTNER turns to me for support:
Please respond to each statement by indicating how true it is for you, using the following scale

When my partner turns to me for support about something that is upsetting or bothering him/her…:
(1 = not at all true; 4 = somewhat true; 7 = completely true)
1. I feel free to be who I am.
2. I feel like a competent person
3. I feel loved and cared about.
4. I often feel inadequate or incompetent.
5. I have a say in what happens, and I can voice my opinion.
6. I often feel a lot of distance in our relationship.
7. I feel very capable and effective.

8. I feel a lot of closeness and intimacy.
9. I feel controlled and pressured to be certain ways.

**Perceived Partner Self-Esteem**
Think about each statement that follows and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale.

| 1<br>Very<br>strongly<br>disagree | 2 | 3<br><br>Moderately<br>disagree | 4 | 5<br><br><br>Neural | 6 | 7<br><br>Moderately<br>agree | 8 | 9<br>Very<br>strongly<br>agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. My partner feels that he/she is a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. My partner feels that he/she has a number of good qualities.
3. All in all my partner is inclined to feel that he/she is a failure.
4. My partner is able to do things as well as most other people.
5. My partner feels that he/she does not have much to be proud of.
6. My partner takes a positive attitude toward him/herself.
7. On the whole my partner is satisfied with him/herself.
8. My partner wishes he/she could have more respect for him/herself.
9. My partner certainly feels useless at times.
10. At times, my partner thinks he/she is no good at all.

## Social Support
Please rate your partner on the statements below using the following scale.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 = not at all | 3 = quite a bit |
| 2 = a little | 4 = very much |

**Regarding your relationship with your romantic partner…**

1. To what extent can you count on him/her to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?
2. To what extent can you turn to him/her for advice about problems?
3. To what extent can you really count on him/her to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?
4. To what extent can you count on him/her for help with a problem?
5. If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that he/she would be willing to do something with you?
6. To what extent can you count on him/her to help you if a family member very close to you died?
7. To what extent can you count on him/her to give you honest feedback, even if you might now want to hear it?

**Influencing my Partner**
In rating each of the items below, please use the following scale:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very strongly disagree | | Moderately disagree | | Neural | | Moderately agree | | Very strongly agree |

*In my relationship with my partner:*
1. I can get my partner to listen to what I say.
2. My wishes don't carry much weight.
3. I can get my partner to do what I want.
4. Even if I voice them, my views have little sway.
5. I think I have a great deal of power.
6. My ideas and opinions are often ignored.
7. Even when I try, I am not able to get my way.
8. If I want to, I get to make the decisions.

## Partner as Helpful or Harmful to Own Goals

We are interested in how your partner affects your pursuit of your goals (i.e., goals to do well in general as well as specific goals, like getting a good grade on an exam, losing ten pounds, etc.). Please answer the following questions. It is a little tricky to understand, so please read carefully.

Please indicate how much your partner helps or harms your pursuit of each type of goal below. A person is helpful to a goal if s/he makes it more likely that you will succeed. So, for example, a helpful person might be emotionally supportive or help you directly with that goal. A person is harmful to a goal if s/he makes it less likely that you will succeed. Note that being harmful for your goals doesn't mean that this person wants you to fail - simply that he or she makes it less likely that you will succeed.

[will also include "neither helpful nor harmful" at the 0 point]

```
-5      -4   -3   -2   -1    0    1    2   3    4    5
extremely                             extremely
harmful                               helpful
```

1. Academic goals
2. Career goals
3. Financial goals
4. Health/fitness goals
5. Leisure/fun goals
6. Personal improvement/growth goals:
7. Service/helping others goals:
8. Sex/romance goals
9. Social support/social connection goals

**Please answer the following questions about yourself.**

## Self as Helpful or Harmful to Partner's Goals

We are interested in how you influence pursuit of the goals of your partner (i.e., his/her goals to do well in general as well as specific goals, like getting a good grade on an upcoming exam, losing ten pounds, etc.). Please answer the following questions. It is a little tricky to understand, so please read carefully.

Please indicate how much you help or harm your partner's pursuit of each type of goal below. You are helpful to his or her goal if you make it more likely that s/he will succeed. So, for example, you might be emotionally supportive or help directly with his or her goal. You are harmful to a goal if you make it less likely that s/he will succeed. Note that being harmful for goals doesn't mean that you want him or her to fail - simply that you make it less likely that s/he will succeed.

```
-5      -4   -3   -2   -1   0   1   2   3     4     5
extremely                          extremely
harmful                            helpful
```

1. Academic goals
2. Career goals
3. Financial goals
4. Health/fitness goals
5. Leisure/fun goals
6. Personal improvement/growth goals:
7. Service/helping others goals:
8. Sex/romance goals
9. Social support/social connection goals
   Thank you for answering those questions.

Please ring the bell and open the door to let the researcher know you are done. (You do not need to type anything in the box below).
Then, please sit back down at the computer (if you in the small lab room) or on the couch (if you are in the main lab room).

**PRE-INTERACTION MEASURES: SEEKER**

Next, you will be asked to have a videotaped face-to-face discussion with your partner in which you talk to your partner about **the thing in the world that you are most afraid of.** Your partner will listen and respond to you in this discussion.

**THOUGHT LISTING**
Before you proceed with the rest of this questionnaire, we are interested in what is on your mind right now.
Please spend the next two minutes listing any thoughts that come to mind.
(The survey will automatically advance to the next page 2 minutes after you start typing).
[set page to move ahead after 2 minutes[

**THE TOPIC FOR YOUR UPCOMING DISCUSSION WITH YOUR PARTNER**
Thank you, the thought-listing task is now complete.

As you learned earlier, soon, you will be asked to have a videotaped face-to-face discussion with your partner in which you talk to your partner about **the thing in the world that you are most afraid of**.

Please briefly describe **the thing in the world that you are most afraid of** (which could be a person/event/experience, etc…), that you plan to talk to your partner about in the upcoming discussion. This may be something you have talked to your partner about before, or it may not be.

The thing in the world that I am most afraid of (and will talk to my partner about in our upcoming discussion) is: _____

We will refer to the person/thing/event/experience you described above as the **target** in the following questions.

**ABOUT THE TARGET**
Please rate your agreement with the following items about the target—that is, _____
        (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree, unless otherwise stated).

1. I feel really scared when I think about the target.
2. I find the target extremely frightening.
3. How often do you think or worry about the target? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently)
4. How often have you talked to your partner about the target before? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently) [IF ANY RESPONSE OTHER THAN 1 = NEVER,]
5. How deeply have you shared your thoughts and feelings with your partner about the target before? 1 = Not at all deeply; 7 = Very deeply
6. When you have talked to your partner about the target before, how supportively did he/she respond? 1 = Very unsupportively; 7 = Very Supportively
7. How does your partner's fear of the target compare to yours?
(Slider scale): (Left) I am much more scared of it than my partner (Middle) We are equally scared of it (Right) My partner is much more scared of it than me

**ABOUT THE UPCOMING DISCUSSION WITH YOUR PARTNER**
Next, we would like you to imagine that you shared your deepest thoughts and feelings about this topic—the target—fully with your partner. How do you think your partner would respond?
        (1 = Not at all true; 7 = Completely true)

My partner would: understand me, really listen to me; be responsive to my needs; be aware of what I was thinking and feeling; express liking and encouragement for me; seem interested in what I was thinking and feeling; be "on the same wavelength" with me; respect me; care about me; behave supportively; be attentive to me; be judgmental, trivialize my thoughts and feelings; SR forecast: share my thoughts about this fear (he/she would have the same thoughts as I do about it), share my feelings about this fear (he/she would have the same feelings as I do about it)

How fully do you plan to express your thoughts and feelings about this topic with your partner in the discussion you will have today in the lab? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Completely

**PRE-INTERACTION MEASURES: PROVIDER**

Next, you will be asked to have a videotaped face-to-face discussion with your partner in which your partner talks to you about **the thing in the world that he/she is most afraid of.** You will listen and respond to your partner in this discussion.

**THOUGHT LISTING**
Before you proceed with the rest of this questionnaire, we are interested in what is on your mind right now.
Please spend the next two minutes listing any thoughts that come to mind.
(The survey will automatically advance to the next page 2 minutes after you start typing).

**THE TOPIC FOR YOUR UPCOMING DISCUSSION WITH YOUR PARTNER**

Please briefly describe **the thing in the world that your partner is most afraid of** (which could be a person/event/experience, etc…), that you think he/she will talk to you about in the upcoming discussion. This may be something your partner has talked to you about before, or it may not be.
The thing in the world that my partner is most afraid of (and that I think he/she will talk to me about in our upcoming discussion) is:
We will refer to the person/event/experience you described above as the **target** in the following questions.

**ABOUT THE TARGET**
Please rate your agreement with the following items about the target that you think your partner will discuss with you—that is, _____ (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree, unless otherwise stated).
1. My partner feels really scared when he/she thinks about the target.
2. My partner finds the target extremely frightening.
3. How often does your partner think or worry about the target? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently)
4. How often has your partner talked to you about the target before? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently) [IF ANY RESOPNSE OTHER THAN 1 = NEVER,]
5. How deeply has your partner shared his/her thoughts and feelings with you about the target before? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Very deeply
6. When your partner has talked to you about the target before, how supportively did you respond?

Now, we would like to know how you feel about the target—that is, _____.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree, unless otherwise stated).

1. I feel really scared when I think about the target.
2. I find the target extremely frightening.
3. How often do you think or worry about the target? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently)
4. How does your partner's fear of the target compare to yours?

(Slider scale): (Left) I am much more scared of it than my partner – (Middle) We are equally scared of it –(Right) My partner is much more scared of it than me

[For both responder and Discloser:] Thank you for answering those questions.

(You do not need to type anything in the box below).

Please ring the bell, open the door, and sit back down at the computer (if you are in the small lab room) or on the couch (if you are in the main lab room).

## DISCLOSING INSTRUCTIONS (RA will read aloud, privately, to discloser)

Discloser: Now we would like you to have a discussion with your partner in which you tell your partner about **the thing in the world that you are most afraid of while your partner listens and responds in whatever way is natural for him/her.** It is up to you how much or how little you would like to tell your partner about this—including what the thing is, how it makes you feel, why it makes you feel that way, past experiences you've had with this, and so on. It's completely up to you what to say about it. I'll ask you to talk with your partner for 7 minutes. Please tell your partner whatever about this topic you are comfortable with. If you reach a point where you have nothing more to say about it before the 7 minutes are up, you may talk about something else. Do you have any questions? [once answered] I will bring you and your partner into the same room now.

### RESPONDING INSTRUCTIONS (RA will read aloud, privately, to responder)
Responder: Now we would like you to have a discussion with your partner in which your partner tells you about **the thing in the world that he/she is most afraid of while you listen and respond in whatever way is natural for you.** Do you have any questions? [once answered]
I will bring you and your partner into the same room now.

## DISCUSSION INSTRUCTION RECAP
**(RA will read aloud when both couple members are in the interaction room together)**
I have started the cameras, and will ask you to have a discussion for the next 7 minutes. As a reminder, [name of discloser] will be talking about the thing in the world she is most afraid of, and [name of responder] will listen and respond in whatever way is natural. If you reach a point where you have nothing else on this topic to discuss, you may talk about other things if you choose. I'll knock on the door when the 7 minutes are up to let you know that you can wrap up. You can take another minute or two if you want, and then open the door to let me know when you're done. Do you have any questions?

## POST-INTERACTION MEASURES: SEEKER

### YOUR THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOR
**Next, we would like to know about the things you did, thought, felt, or said during the discussion with your partner. Please answer the following questions.**

1.Did you talk to your partner about the target) the thing in the world you are most afraid of) that you wrote about before the discussion? Yes/No
2.If YES, how fully did you express your thoughts and feelings about this topic (the thing in the world you are most afraid of) with your partner in the discussion you had today in the lab? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Completely;

If YES, to what extent did you hold back your thoughts and feelings about this topic (the thing in the world you are most afraid of) when talking with your partner in the discussion you had today in the lab? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Completely;
3.If NO, why not? _____

To what extent did you do each of the following during your discussion with your partner? (1 = not at all; 7 = extremely/very frequently)
Express: fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, happiness, love, gratitude; focus on trying to describe your fear; try to work through my reactions to the target, in order to limit the distress it causes me when I think about it/in general; try to prevent myself from getting overwhelmed during the discussion; Think about what this discussion must feel like for your partner; try to take your partner's perspective, try to make the discussion pleasant for your partner, try to make the discussion less stressful for your partner, do things to try to make your partner feel good about him/herself, tell your partner how you wanted him/her to respond to you, give your partner clues about how to best support you, thank him/her for listening or supporting you, apologize, use humor to try to lighten the mood, describe ways you could manage or cope with the fear (or have done so in the past), express optimism about the fear, find a "silver lining" or good thing that has resulted from the fear, express affection for your partner, verbally or nonverbally, accept any advice/support your partner gave you, acknowledge your partner's responses as valid or helpful, criticize or reject things your partner said, try not to dwell on the target, felt like I trusted my partner, wanted to connect with my partner, was willing to be vulnerable with my partner, did not want to burden my partner

**YOUR PARTNER'S THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOR**

**Next, we would like to know about the things that your partner did, thought, felt, or said during the discussion. Please answer the following questions.**

My partner: understood me, really listened to me; was responsive to my needs; was aware of what I was thinking and feeling; expressed liking and encouragement for me; seemed interested in what I was thinking and feeling; was "on the same wavelength" with me; respected me; cared about me; behaved supportively; was attentive to me; was judgmental, trivialized my thoughts and feelings; SR forecast: shared my thoughts about this fear (had the same thoughts as I did about it), shared my feelings about this fear (had the same feelings as I did about it); tried to distract me; tried to change the subject of our conversation; tried to make me feel less distressed; tried to understand my point of view without trying to change how I felt (for each item, 1 = Not at all true; 7 = Completely true)

My partner was effective at making me feel better; I felt appreciative of my partner; My partner felt frustrated with how the conversation went; My partner was able to reduce my anxiety, at least temporarily; My partner was able to meet my needs; My partner made me feel accepted for who I am; My partner was trying to do what was best for me; My partner was trying to do what was best for him/her (for each item, 1 = Not at all true; 7 = Completely true)

**Attributions**
(1 = disagree completely; 7 = agree completely)

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Please answer the following questions about your partner's response to what you told him/her.
 1. My partner's response in this situation reflects his/her level of concern for me.
2. My partner's response in this situation reflects how much he/she cares for me.
3. My partner's response in this situation reflects his/her level of investment in our relationship.
4. My partner's response in this situation reflects how much he/she values me and our relationship.
5. My partner's response in this situation reflects the degree to which he/she understands my needs.

**Target-Specific Shared Reality**
Please rate your agreement with the following statements about **you and your partner** based on your discussion about the thing you are most afraid of (the target).

*Please rate your agreement with the following statements (1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree)*

I think that my partner and I are on the same wavelength with regard to the target.

My partner feels the same way about the target as I do.

My partner agrees with my point of view of the target.

My partner and I see the target in the same way.

My partner agrees with my perception of the target.

**YOUR CURRENT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT THE TARGET**
Please rate your agreement with the following items about _____ right now
  (1  = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).
    1. I feel really scared when I think about the target.
    2. I find the target extremely frightening.
    3. It is legitimately frightening.
    4. There are very good reasons to be scared of it.
    5. Being afraid of it is completely warranted.
    6. I think a lot of people are afraid of it.
    7. I think anyone who doesn't fear this thing probably should.

**YOUR CURRENT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP**
***randomize order***
Please rate your current romantic partner and relationship **right now** on each item.
    1 = not at all; 7 = extremely
    [reduced to 6 items based on scale author recommendations]
Right now,
1.  How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2.  How committed are you to your relationship?
3.  How intimate is your relationship?

4. How much do you trust your partner?
5. How passionate is your relationship?
6. How much do you love your partner?

**Add: "right now.** (You may need to scroll down to see all of the options)." to end of IOS instructions below.

**The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS)**
Instructions: Please circle the picture that best describes your current relationship with your romantic partner.
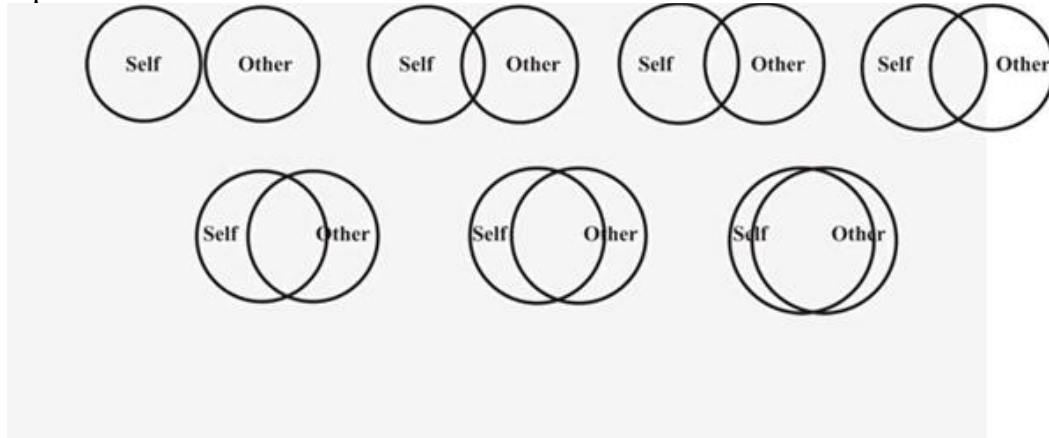


## POST-INTERACTION MEASURES: PROVIDER

**Next, we would like to know about the things you did, thought, felt, or said during the discussion with your partner. Please answer the following questions.**
   1. Did your partner talk about the fear that you predicted he/she would? Yes, same fear as I predicted; Somewhat/A similar or related fear but not exactly what I predicted; No, a completely different fear [IF ANY ANSWER EXCEPT Yes, Same fear as I predicted,] What fear did your partner actually talk to you about? _____

**Items used to assess potential mechanisms are highlighted**
**[E] = efficacy beliefs**
**[R] = pro-relational sentiments**
**[N] = need appraisal**
**\* = reverse-scored item**

Please rate your agreement with the following items about the target that your partner actually did discuss with you—that is, _____ (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree, unless otherwise stated). We will refer to this as the "actual target" in the questions below.
1. My partner feels really scared when he/she thinks about the actual target. **[N]**
2. My partner finds the actual target extremely frightening. **[N]**
3. How often does your partner think or worry about the actual target? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently)
4. How often has your partner talked to you about the actual target before? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently)

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[IF ANY RESOPNSE OTHER THAN 1 = NEVER,]
5. How deeply has your partner shared his/her thoughts and feelings with you about the actual target before? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Very deeply
6. When your partner has talked to you about the actual target before, how supportively did you respond?

Now, we would like to know how you feel about the actual target—that is: _____. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree, unless otherwise stated).

1. I feel really scared when we think about the actual target.
2. I find the actual target extremely frightening.
3. How often do you think or worry about the actual target? (1 = Never; 7 = Very Frequently
4. How does your partner's fear of the actual target compare to yours?
(Slider scale): (Left) we am much more scared of it than my partner—(Middle) We are equally scared of it—(Right) My partner is much more scared of it than me

**YOUR PARTNER'S THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOR**
**Next, we would like to know about the things that your partner did, thought, felt, or said during the discussion. Please answer the following questions.**
How fully did your partner share his/her thoughts and feelings about this topic (the thing in the world he/she is most afraid of) when talking with you in the discussion you had today in the lab? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Completely

To what extent did your partner hold back his/her thoughts and feelings about this topic (the thing in the world he/she is most afraid of) when talking with you in the discussion you had today in the lab? 1 = Not at all; 7 = Completely

To what extent did your partner do each of the following during your discussion with your partner? (1 = not at all; 7 = extremely/very frequently)
Express:
1. Fear
2. anxiety
3. sadness
4. anger
5. happiness
6. love
7. gratitude
8. focus on trying to describe his/her fear
9. try to work through his/her reactions to the target, in order to limit the distress it causes him/her when he/she thinks about it/in general
10. try to prevent him/herself from getting overwhelmed during the discussion
11. Think about what this discussion must feel like for you
12. try to take your perspective
13. try to make the discussion pleasant for you **[R]**
14. try to make the discussion less stressful for you **[R]**
15. do things to try to make you feel good about yourself **[R]**
16. tell you how he/she wanted you to respond to him/her

17. give you clues about how to best support him/her
18. thank you for listening or supporting him/her
19. apologize
20. use humor to try to lighten the mood
21. describe ways he/she could manage or cope with the fear (or had done so in the past)
22. express optimism about the fear
23. find a "silver lining" or good thing that has resulted from the fear
24. express affection for you verbally or nonverbally
25. accept any advice/support you gave him/her
26. acknowledge your responses as valid or helpful
27. criticize or reject things you said, try not to dwell on the target.

**YOUR THOUGHTS AND BEHAVIOR**
Next, we would like to know about the things you did, thought, felt, or said during the discussion with your partner. Please answer the following questions.
(1 = Not at all true; 7 = Completely true)
I:
1. understood my partner
2. really listened to my partner
3. was responsive to my partner's needs
4. was aware of what my partner was thinking and feeling
5. expressed liking and encouragement for my partner
6. seemed interested in what my partner was thinking and feeling
7. was "on the same wavelength" with my partner
8. respected my partner
9. cared about my partner
10. behaved supportively
11. was attentive to my partner
12. was judgmental
13. trivialized my partner's thoughts and feelings
14. shared my partner's thoughts about this fear (had the same thoughts as he/she did about it), shared my partner's feelings about this fear (had the same feelings that he/she did about it);
15. tried to distract me
16. tried to change the subject of our conversation
17. tried to make my partner feel less distressed
18. tried to understand my partner's point of view without trying to change how my partner felt

I felt like…
1. my partner trusted me**[R]**
2. my partner wanted to connect with me**[R]**
3. my partner was willing to be vulnerable with me**[R]**
4. my partner did not want to burden me**[R]**
5. I was effective at making my partner feel better
6. My partner felt appreciative of me**[R]**
7. I felt frustrated with how the conversation went
8. I was able to reduce my partner's anxiety, at least temporarily

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9. I was able to meet my partner's needs
10. I made my partner feel accepted for who he/she is
11. I did not want to be so supportive that we encouraged my partner to keep expressing negative thoughts or feelings to me.
12. I did not want to affirm my partner's belief that the target is scary or worth being afraid of.
13. I wanted to make my partner feel better. **[R]**
14. I felt like even if we tried to be supportive, my partner would not feel any better. **[E*]**
15. I felt like even if we tried to be supportive, my partner would not recognize or appreciate it.
16. I felt like my partner would not be very supportive toward me if we were telling him/her about similar thoughts/feelings. **[R*]**
17. I felt like my partner deserved a very caring and supportive response. **[R]**
18. I felt like it was a waste of effort to try and support my partner because he/she will continue to have these fears. **[E*]**
19. Trying hard to support my partner makes me feel bad about my support-providing abilities. **[E*]**
20. I felt like my partner did not need much support **[N]**
21. I am tired of spending time talking about my partner's fears **[R*]**
22. I think it is better for my partner if we do not respond too supportively when she talks about this fear
23. I think it is better for me if we do not respond too supportively when she talks about this fear

**Target-Specific Shared Reality**
Please rate your agreement with the following statements about **you and your partner** based on your discussion about the thing your partner is most afraid of (the actual target)—that is, the target that your partner chose to discuss with you.
(1- Strongly Disagree, 7 – Strongly Agree)
1. I think that my partner and we are on the same wavelength with regard to the target.
2. I feel the same way about the target as my partner does.
3. I agree with my partner's point of view of the target
4. My partner and we see the target in the same way.
5. I agree with my partner's perception of the target.

**YOUR CURRENT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT THE TARGET**
Please rate your agreement with the following items about _____ right now
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).
1. I feel really scared when I think about the target.
2. I find the target extremely frightening.
3. It is legitimately frightening.
4. There are very good reasons to be scared of it.
5. Being afraid of it is completely warranted.
6. I think a lot of people are afraid of it.
7. I think anyone who doesn't fear this thing probably should.

**YOUR CURRENT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP**

STATE PRQC **randomize order***

Please rate your current romantic partner and relationship **<u>right now</u>** on each item.
1 = not at all; 7 = extremely
Right now,
[reduced to 6 items based on scale author recommendations]
1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?
2. How committed are you to your relationship?
3. How intimate is your relationship?
4. How much do you trust your partner?
5. How passionate is your relationship?
6. How much do you love your partner?

**The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS)**
**Add: "<u>right now.</u>"** to end of IOS instructions below.

Instructions: Please circle the picture that best describes your current relationship with your romantic partner. (You may need to scroll down to see all of the options).
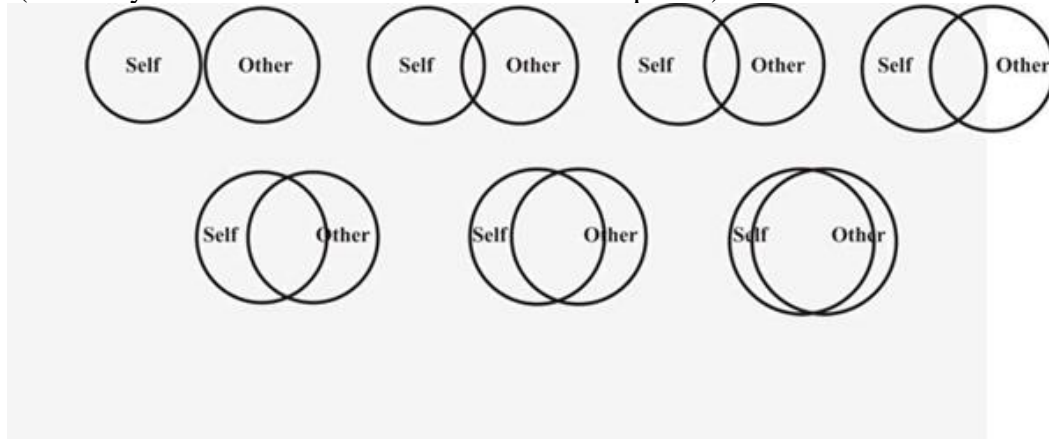


**Seeker and Provider Versions:**

Do you have any comments for us about what it was like to participate in this study?
[text box here]

Thank you for answering those questions. Please ring the bell and open the door let the research assistant know that you are now finished.

Then, please sit back at the computer (if you are in the small lab room) or sit back on the couch (if you are in the

**<u>CODING SCHEME FOR SEEKER (STUDY 4)</u>**

<mark>**Items used to form the positivity composite are highlighted**</mark>
**[PO]** = partner-oriented positivity item
**[SO]** = stressor-oriented positivity item
**[UP]** = unspecified positivity item

**[neg]** = seeker-expressed negativity item

To what extent did the discloser do each of the following?
(1 = *Never/Not at All*; 4 = *Occasionally/Somewhat*; 7 = *Very frequently/Very Much*)
1. Express fear **[neg]**
2. Express anxiety **[neg]**
3. Express sadness **[neg]**
4. Express anger
5. Express happiness **[UP]**
6. Express love **[PO]**
7. Express gratitude (*e.g., Thank his/her partner for listening to or supporting him/her*) **[PO]**
8. Express his/her thoughts and feelings about the fear topic fully
9. Appear to hold back his/her thoughts and feelings about the fear topic
10. Tell his/her partner how he/she wanted the partner to respond to him/her
11. Give his/her partner clues about how to best support him/her
12. Apologize
13. Use humor to try to lighten the mood **[UP]**
14. Describe ways he/she could manage or cope with the fear (or had done so in the past)
15. Express optimism about the fear **[SO]**
16. Find a "silver lining" or good thing that has resulted from the fear **[SO]**
17. Express affection for his/her partner verbally or nonverbally **[PO]**
18. Accept any advice/support his/her partner gave him/her
19. Acknowledge his/her partner's responses as valid or helpful **[PO]**
20. Criticize or reject things his/her partner said
21. Express a desire to overcome the fear

Please rate the extent to which these statements describe your perception of the discloser during the interaction. (1 = *Not at all*; 4 = *Somewhat*; 7 = *Very much*)
1. I like the discloser.

## CODING SCHEME FOR PROVIDER (STUDY 4)

**Items used to assess provider responsiveness are highlighted**
**[*] = reverse-scored item**

To what extent did the responder do each of the following?
(1 = *Never/Not at All*; 4 = *Occasionally/Somewhat*; 7 = *Very frequently/Very Much*)
1. Be understanding of his/her partner
2. Really listen to his/her partner
3. Be responsive to his/her partner's needs
4. Express liking and encouragement for his/her partner
5. Seem interested in what his/her partner was thinking and feeling
6. Behave supportively
7. Be attentive to his/her partner
8. Be judgmental **[*]**

9. Trivialize his/her partner's thoughts and feelings **[*]**
10. Try distract his/her partner
11. Try to change the subject of the conversation
12. Try to make the partner feel less distressed
13. Try to understand his/her partner's point of view without trying to change how his/her partner felt
14. Be effective at making his/her partner feel better
15. Appear to put a lot of effort into supporting the partner
16. Seem like a competent support provider
17. Share the discloser's thoughts and feelings about the feared object/event/concept (had the same thoughts and feelings as he/she did about it).
18. Perceive the feared object in the same way as the discloser.
19. Vocalize thought similarity (*e.g., "I was thinking the same thing", "I was just going to say that"*)
20. Vocalize agreements/ shared feelings (*e.g., "I totally agree"; "So true"; "That's how we feel too"*)
21. Finish the discloser's sentences (Note: without negation from the discloser, e.g. discloser clarifying that they were going to say something different)
22. Share the discloser's emotional expressions (Note: should be looking at each other; e.g., when discloser looks anxiously at responder, responder exchanges the anxious expression)
23. Reference inside jokes or past shared experiences (*e.g., "Remember that time we…;"* Note: should be past experiences that they seem to have shared thoughts/feelings about)

Please rate the extent to which these statements describe your perception of the responder during the interaction. (1 = *Not at all*; 4 = *Somewhat*; 7 = *Very much*)
1. I like the responder.

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