

PSYCHOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF EMOTIONAL CONNECTION IN MARITAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the issue of restoring emotional connection in married couples. Contemporary couple relationships are increasingly eroded by the accelerating pace of life and a lack of attention, combined with the growing fragmentation of interpersonal contacts. The relevance of this topic stems both from the increasing number of emotionally disengaged unions and from the indirect effects of disturbances in this area on partners' mental health and children's development. The aim of this article is to analyze effective approaches to restoring lost emotional intimacy between spouses, taking into account multidisciplinary factors, including psychological, cultural and communicative aspects. An analysis of the scientific literature reveals conceptual differences; these contradictions complicate the development of a universal method of support for families. The author concludes that sustainable results are achieved by integrating emotion-focused interventions with practices for developing emotional intelligence and mindful presence. The author's contribution consists in systematizing contemporary intervention methods, describing their distinctive features, and proposing an adaptive model of restoration based on a step-by-step reconstruction process. The material presented is intended for family psychologists, relationship counselors and researchers studying interpersonal dynamics in marriage.

ABSTRACT

The article addresses the issue of restoring emotional connection in marital relationships. Contemporary couples increasingly experience relational erosion, driven by the accelerated pace of life, a growing deficit of attention, and the fragmentation of interpersonal contact. The relevance of this topic is underscored by the rising number of emotionally disengaged unions and the indirect impact of such disruptions on partners' mental health and the developmental well-being of children. The objective of the article is to analyze effective approaches to rebuilding emotional intimacy between spouses, taking into account multidisciplinary factors, including psychological, cultural, and communicative dimensions. A review of the academic literature reveals significant conceptual divergences; these inconsistencies complicate the formulation of a universal framework for supporting families in distress. The author argues that sustainable outcomes are most often achieved through the integration of emotion-focused interventions with practices aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence and cultivating mindful presence. The author's contribution lies in the systematization of contemporary corrective strategies, the delineation of their specific characteristics, and the proposal of an adaptive model for emotional reconnection based on a phased reconstruction process. The materials presented will be of interest to family psychologists, relationship counselors, and researchers focused on interpersonal dynamics in marriage.

Keywords: psychology, marital couples, emotional connection, emotional intelligence, empathy.

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Introduction

Emotional connection in married couples is a stable, deeply personal form of mutual attachment based on trust, empathy, support and a sense of security,

and is reflected in spouses' ability to express their feelings openly, understand each other's emotional states, and maintain closeness even during stress or conflict.

Emotional intimacy is the "foundation" of a strong and satisfying marriage.

It is characterized by deep, honest relationships in which partners feel safe and are able to share their innermost thoughts and feelings, grounded in trust, empathy and vulnerability. Over time, stress, work and everyday responsibilities may erode this connection, making deliberate efforts necessary to restore it.

A recurring pattern is observed in family psychology practice: loss of intimacy between spouses often becomes not only a consequence but also a primary source of many relationship problems. This usually occurs gradually, almost imperceptibly to the partners, who become aware of the growing distance only once pronounced alienation has developed.

The prevalence of this phenomenon, combined with its multifaceted nature, makes disrupted emotional intimacy an especially pressing issue for contemporary research and practice, requiring the development of comprehensive approaches to its resolution.

Materials and methods

An analysis of scientific publications on this subject makes it possible to identify several dominant areas of research, grouped according to the aspects of the issue they address.

A substantial body of contemporary research is devoted to the role of emotional competence in marital relationships. A.A. Pankratova, O.V. Parshikova and Yu.D. Chertkova [7] examine partners' emotion regulation strategies and their relationship to subjective well-being. In her publication, D.D. Yunusova [9] focuses on the relationship between empathy and marital satisfaction. The author demonstrates that the ability to recognize a partner's emotional states and respond to them appropriately is an important predictor of harmonious relationships.

Similarly, A.A. Yuminova [8] examines marital satisfaction and emotional intelligence in relation to the spouses' gender.

A separate group of studies addresses how attachment styles influence marital relationships. For example, E.S. Demchenko and E.V. Glushak [2] show that secure attachment correlates with more constructive conflict resolution strategies, whereas anxious-ambivalent and avoidant styles are associated with ineffective ways of interacting in conflict situations.

B.W. Williams [10] also addresses this topic, emphasizing "turning towards each other" as a "catalyst" for marital satisfaction, particularly during conflict. The author argues that the ability to maintain emotional connection even in situations of disagreement is a key factor in long-term relationship stability. His publication offers a set of practical recommendations for transforming

destructive aspects of interaction into constructive communication that helps strengthen emotional connection.

E. Losyi and L. Sinitsaru [5] explore the characteristics of interpersonal relationships and emotional experiences in married couples in relation to the duration of their marriage. A.A. Bulanov [1] also concentrates on this aspect, focusing on psychological problems in young families. The author identifies specific risk factors for disrupted emotional connection in the early stages of family life.

Studies of the relationship between spouses' personality characteristics and the features of their communication and relationships also make a significant contribution to understanding the mechanisms that sustain emotional connection. E.N. Minazhetdinova and E.M. Korzh [6] show that certain personality traits (emotional stability, extraversion and agreeableness) are associated with more effective communication and, consequently, with a higher level of relationship satisfaction.

O.N. Komarova and A.L. Rasskazova [4] examine the nature of emotional relationships in marriage through the lens of spouses' self-actualization, noting that blocking personal growth processes leads to emotional alienation.

An analysis of the effectiveness of different psychological approaches to restoring disrupted emotional connection is presented by I.I. Znamenskaya, M.R. Travkova and K.R. Arutyunova [3]. The authors examine the particular features of this work with couples experiencing a relationship crisis. Their study demonstrates the significance of an integrative approach that combines elements of emotion-focused, systemic and narrative interventions.

A review of scientific sources on this topic reveals several contradictions and insufficiently studied aspects of the problem. First, there are differences of opinion about whether emotional or cognitive components take precedence in the structure of marital relationships. Second, the findings on the significance of previous attachment experiences appear contradictory. Among the insufficiently explored issues are the effects of cultural and socioeconomic factors on the formation and restoration of emotional connection, as well as the role of the digitalization of communication. In addition, the neurobiological mechanisms of emotional intimacy and the possibilities for deliberately modifying them through psychological interventions remain poorly understood.

The methods used in this article are comparison, systematization, content analysis of scientific publications, synthesis and generalization.

Results and discussion

Marital intimacy has several dimensions, namely emotional, cognitive and behavioral components. Contemporary

researchers view it as a dynamic system of mutual attunement that creates a sense of predictability and security within the couple.

The following key elements can be identified within this connection (Fig. 1):

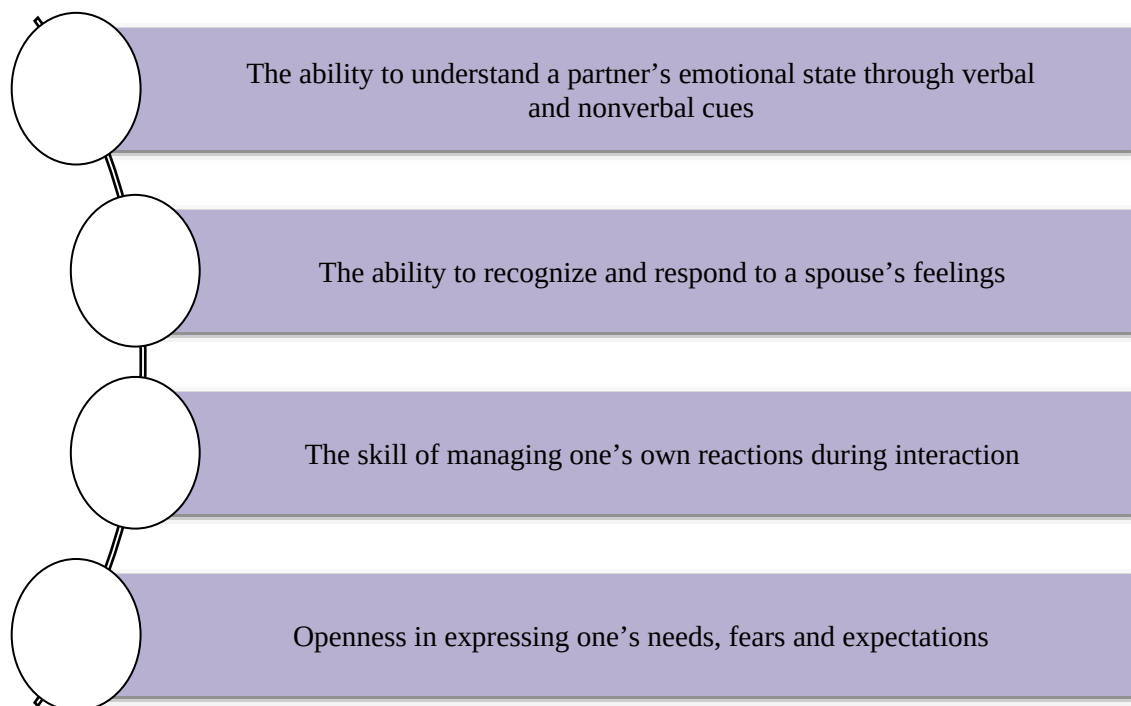


Figure 1. Structural elements of emotional connection in married couples
(compiled by the author based on [1, 3, 8])

The breakdown of any of these components leads to a distinctive state: the relationship remains outwardly intact, but the partners are no longer genuinely involved.

The factors that lead to the erosion of intimacy in couples are diverse and can be grouped as follows:

- Personal factors (attachment styles formed in childhood, difficulty recognizing and expressing one's own feelings, distorted perceptions of a spouse's behavior, and insufficiently developed self-regulation mechanisms);
- Interaction factors (systematic neglect of a partner's emotional needs,

mutual reinforcement of destructive behavior patterns, inability to resolve conflicts constructively, and the entrenchment of ineffective role patterns);

- External factors (persistent strain caused by financial instability, excessive workload that limits time for the relationship, relatives' interference in the spouses' lives, and the influence of family scripts from previous generations) [2, 9].

Recognizing signs of lost intimacy requires attention to different aspects of the relationship (Table 1):

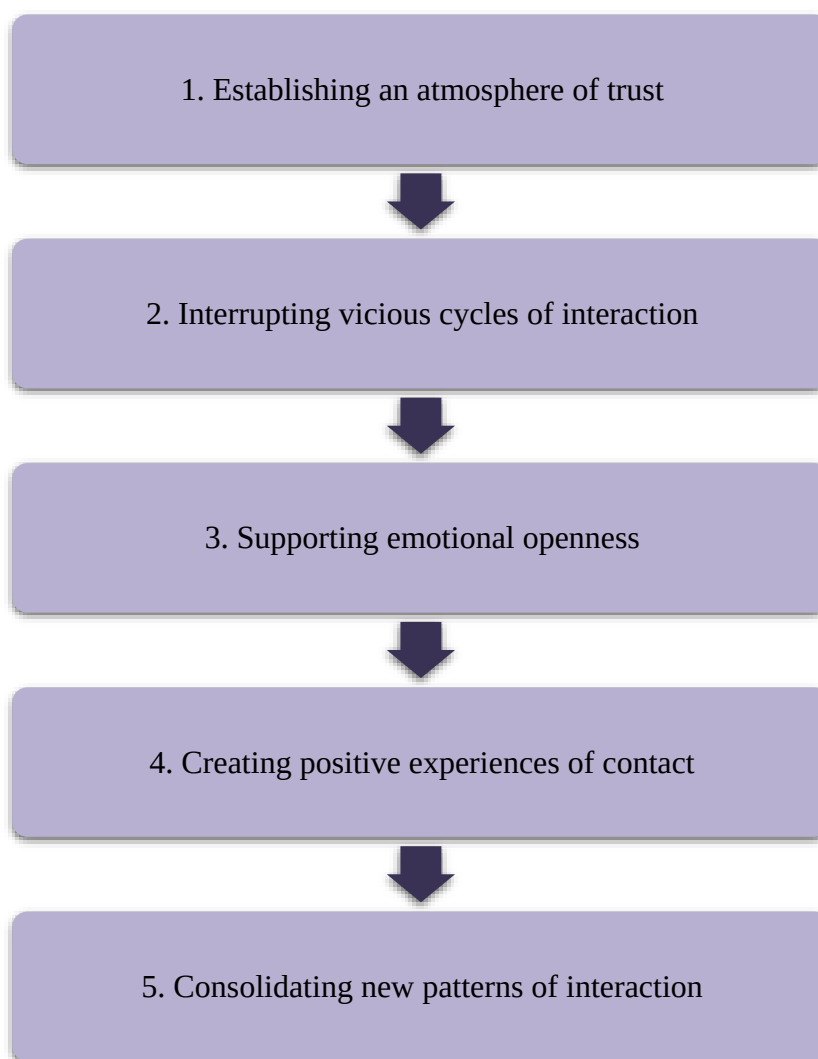
Table 1.

Recognizing disruptions in emotional connection (compiled by the author based on [3, 6, 7])

Aspect	Description
1. Communication patterns	Superficial conversations prevail over in-depth dialogue; unconstructive communication patterns (reproaches, devaluation) become entrenched; important personal topics are avoided.
2. Behavioral signs	Fewer enjoyable shared activities, withdrawal from each other in difficult situations, and a lack of attention to the partner's emotional signals.

Aspect	Description
3. Thinking patterns	A tendency to interpret a spouse's actions negatively; a focus on problematic aspects of the relationship, combined with the belief that personal needs are incompatible.
4. Emotional indicators	Persistent loneliness in the partner's presence; conflicting feelings (wanting intimacy while simultaneously avoiding it); psychological exhaustion from unsuccessful attempts to connect.

Work on restoring emotional connection in married couples involves moving through several successive stages. These are listed in Figure 2 and described below.



**Figure 2. Algorithm for restoring lost emotional connection
(compiled by the author based on [4, 8])**

Thus, the initial stage is aimed at creating conditions in which partners feel sufficiently safe to express themselves openly. An impartial stance on the part of the specialist helps prevent either spouse from feeling blamed.

The next step is to identify and interrupt recurring communication patterns that intensify negative feelings and reinforce alienation. It is important to help spouses recognize the underlying feelings often concealed by defensive reactions (for example, irritation may mask a fear of rejection).

The following stage should encourage the expression of feelings that are usually suppressed in troubled relationships. A significant aspect is not only verbalizing one's own feelings, but also developing the ability to accept a partner's emotions without trying to correct or devalue them.

Creating positive experiences of interaction involves deliberately arranging situations that evoke positive emotions and strengthen a sense of reliability in the relationship. The contemporary understanding of this process

is not limited to enjoyable leisure activities: it emphasizes overcoming minor difficulties together, which strengthens the couple's confidence in their own resources.

The final phase of the work focuses on consolidating the newly acquired skills of emotional connection and incorporating them into everyday

life. Emphasis is placed on preventive measures designed to avoid a return to old patterns of behavior in stressful situations.

Contemporary practice in restoring emotional connection between spouses is based on a combination of different methods (Fig. 3):



**Figure 3. Approaches to restoring emotional connection in married couples
(compiled by the author based on [3, 5–8])**

For example, emotion-focused intervention concentrates on restructuring emotional experience and changing ineffective attachment patterns. Its key mechanism involves identifying and transforming the fundamental reactions that shape interaction within the couple. The empirical data cited by B.W. Williams are relevant here: it has been

shown that EFT helps 70–75% of couples in crisis recover and significantly increases marital satisfaction in approximately 90% of clients [10].

Systemic family intervention, in turn, treats the disruption of intimacy as a dysfunction of the entire family system and aims to change its rules, boundaries and patterns of communication.

Cognitive-behavioral intervention is a method that emphasizes identifying and modifying maladaptive patterns of thinking that distort perceptions of a partner's actions and consequently lead to unconstructive responses.

Narrative approaches focus on analyzing problematic relationship stories and developing alternative narratives that highlight the strengths of the spouses' interaction.

It should be noted that combining different methods helps tailor the intervention strategy to the characteristics of each particular couple, taking into account the unique combination of factors that led to the loss of emotional connection.

Conclusions

Restoring emotional connection between spouses is a multifaceted

process that requires attention to different aspects of the relationship. The success of this work depends not only on the specialist's qualifications, but also on the couple's willingness to change established patterns of interaction. This involves a high level of motivation, along with the ability to tolerate the psychological discomfort that inevitably arises when confronting suppressed feelings and unmet needs.

Promising directions for further research in this field appear to include studying the neurobiological mechanisms involved in establishing and maintaining intimacy, as well as analyzing how digital forms of communication affect the nature of marital relationships in contemporary society.

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