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How was your day? Couples' affect when telling and hearing daily events

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Abstract

This study examined day-to-day mood changes associated with disclosure of positive and stressful events as affect regulation within couples. In daily diaries, 48 couples cohabiting in the United States reported whether they told their partner about the most positive and stressful event of their day. Participants reported greater positive affect on days when they told their partner about the most positive event of their day. This effect was less pronounced among avoidant women. Participants also reported greater positive affect on days when their partner shared their most positive event. Sharing about stressors was not associated with greater negative affect. These findings underscore the importance of investigating affect regulation processes such as daily event disclosures from a dyadic perspective.

One obvious benefit of long-term romantic relationships is having someone with whom to share the joys and navigate the hurdles of daily life. Such day-to-day interpersonal experiences fit within a larger class of relationship processes involving affect regulation, in which relationship partners assist one another (both consciously and unconsciously) in modulating affective experiences (e.g., Cassidy, 1994; Thompson, 1994). Although romantic partners obviously influence one another's positive as well as negative affect, most previous work investigating links between affect and relationships has focused almost exclusively on the regulation of negative affect and emotion. For example, numerous studies have investigated how romantic partners assist one another in times of high stress or major life transition, such as preparing for stressful exams, managing serious illness, becoming parents, and so forth (e.g., Abend & Williamson, 2002; Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000; Simpson, Rholes, Campbell, Tran, & Wilson, 2003). In general, this work has found that close relationship partners do, in fact, help to ameliorate one another's distress during such times. This is, of course, consistent with a larger body of findings indicating that individuals with close supportive relationships live happier, healthier lives, potentially as a direct result of such sustained stress-regulating effects (e.g., Ryff, Singer, Wing, & Love, 2001; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996).

Increasingly, researchers investigating the affect-regulating functions of close relationships have begun to examine affective change in response to more commonplace, day-to-day experiences instead of just major life events (e.g., Bolger et al., 2000; Gable, Reis, & Elliot, 2003; Murray, Bellavia, Rose, & Griffin, 2003; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Recently, research has also emphasized positive events and emotions in addition to stressful experiences (e.g., Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Finally, researchers have increasingly adopted a dyadic approach

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to studying such interactions, which takes into account both partners' experiences and interpretations (e.g., Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, & Smith, 2003; Gable et al., 2004; Vaananen, Bunk, Kivimaki, Pentti, & Vahtera, 2005). Collectively, these advances have afforded a deeper understanding of affect regulation as a day-to-day, couple-level phenomenon. The present study extends this approach by investigating one of the most common manifestations of day-to-day affect regulation in couples: disclosure of the most positive and most stressful event of one's day. We investigate associations between such disclosures and daily telling affective change by examining changes associated with disclosing to one's partner and changes associated with one's partner disclosing to you (which we call crossover effects). We expect that both *telling* and *being told* will be associated with daily affect, but we expect that these effects are moderated by attachment style and gender, given previous research on gender and attachment style differences in capacities and strategies for empathy and affect regulation.

Disclosure of negative and positive experiences

Understanding day-to-day processes of affect regulation in couples is important because research has consistently found that both attenuating negative affect and heightening positive affect—on a regular, sustained basis—can promote individuals' physical and mental health and enhance the quality of their relationship (e.g., Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002; Ryff et al., 2001). In the present study, we highlight daily disclosure of the day's most positive and stressful experiences as a specific form of affect regulation. Previous research suggests that both types of disclosures should be consistently related to daily affect, at least for the discloser. For example, studies suggest that simply talking about the day's problems can help to discharge and attenuate negative affect associated with these problems, often through eliciting social support. Both experimental and naturalistic studies have demonstrated that disclosing problems to social partners in the context of support seeking is associated with reduced negative affect and cardiovascular reactivity to stress (e.g., Christenfeld et al., 1997; Fontana, Diegman, Villeneuve, & Lepore, 1999; Lakey et al., 2002; Lepore, Mata-Allen, & Evans, 1993; Neely et al., 2006; Uchino, 2004; Uchino et al., 1996). Disclosure of positive experiences, too, appears to serve affect-regulating functions. Building on Langston's (1994) prior work on *capitalization*, Gable and colleagues (2004) examined the benefits of telling one's romantic partner about day-to-day positive events and experiences. Consistent with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, participants experienced increases in positive affect (relative to the previous day) on days when they told their partners about the most positive event of their day. Additionally, over the course of the 2-week study period, these interactions predicted increases in relationship satisfaction. It also bears noting that although these examples concern the influence of disclosure on affective states, affective states are also likely to influence disclosing behavior. Forgas' (1995, 2000) affect infusion model is instructive in this regard. This model outlines different modes of influence of affective states on cognitive and social judgments and explicitly highlights the fact that mood maintenance and mood repair provide important motivational contexts for judgment and behavior. Such processes likely contribute to partners' propensities to disclose different types of events.

Collectively, such studies expand our understanding of how daily interpersonal interactions between couples serve affect regulation functions. Historically, however, research in this vein has adopted a largely one-sided approach. Specifically, investigations of positive and negative event disclosures have focused primarily on the perspective of the person doing the disclosing. Yet, we know from extensive work on intimacy and interpersonal interaction that such interactions are fundamentally dyadic in nature and can be expected to have bidirectional effects, especially within romantic couples (e.g., Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer, & Pietromonaco, 2004; Reis, 1998; Reis & Shaver, 1988). In other words, being told about your partner's day may be as relevant for day-to-day affect regulation as you telling them about your day. Yet, this perspective has never

been systematically examined. The few studies of negative event disclosure that examined the role of the listener focused on the specific effects of providing support, not of simply being told about a partner's experiences (e.g., Brown et al., 2003; Vaananen et al., 2005). As for positive event disclosure, studies have only examined how the perceived responses of the listener influence the discloser's emotions (e.g., Gable et al., 2004) and have not investigated the emotions of the listener him- or herself.

Crossover effects of disclosure

Given the extensive research demonstrating that romantic partners reciprocally influence one another's feelings and behaviors, it is reasonable to expect that hearing about a romantic partner's positive and negative experiences has implications for one's own affective state (a process we call crossover; Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Hinde, 1997; Huston, 2000; Reis, Capobianco, & Tsai, 2002). Gottman (1993), for example, demonstrated that partners' mutual reciprocation of negative affect during conflict discussions could lead to detrimental cascades of ever-increasing negative affectivity, a phenomenon also observed in parent–adolescent dyads (Kim, Conger, Lorenz, & Elder, 2001). Furthermore, Ickes and colleagues' research on empathic accuracy (i.e., accurate detection of a partner's emotional state) suggests that accurate detection of negative, relationship-threatening emotions actually impedes feelings of closeness (Simpson, Orina, & Ickes, 2003), whereas empathic accuracy for positive, nonthreatening emotions promotes relationship satisfaction and relationship maintenance (Ickes & Simpson, 2004; Simpson, Ickes, & Orina, 2001). Similarly, other researchers have called for greater attention to the ways through which couples can cocreate positivity in their everyday interactions and thereby foster relationship satisfaction and longevity (e.g., Driver & Gottman, 2004; Gottman & Notarius, 2002). Thus, examining daily event disclosure in romantic couples from a bidirectional perspective (i.e., simultaneously examining affective changes associated with disclosing and of being disclosed to) can significantly expand our understanding of affect regulation as a dyadic process. Studies suggesting that mutual experiences of positive affect may counteract and attenuate both partners' negative affect is consistent with the growing body of literature on the beneficial effects of positive emotions (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001), such as their ability to counteract the negative psychological and physiological effects associated with negative affect (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000; Ong & Allaire, 2005; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004) and to promote effective coping more generally (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Feldman Barrett, 2004).

Crossover effects may operate through a variety of different processes. For example, research on empathy and emotion contagion suggests that individuals have a tendency to perceive, interpret, and even mimic the emotions of those around them. This tendency may promote adaptive social functioning by allowing individuals to understand and share the experiences of others. Consistent with this view, Anderson and Keltner (2004) found that greater affective similarity or convergence, which tended to increase with relationship duration, promoted relationship cohesion. Tesser and colleagues' extended self-evaluation maintenance model (Beach & Tesser, 1995; Tesser, 2000) suggests another mechanism that may contribute to crossover effects. Specifically, they posited that when good things happen to close others, we perceive this as reflecting positively on ourselves. The resultant enhanced self-evaluation increases our own positive affect. Aron and colleagues' model of relationship closeness implies a similar process as including the other in the self (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Mashek, Aron, & Boncimino, 2003). This model purports that in close relationships, we gradually come to incorporate the partner's resources, perspectives, and identities. The perspective aspect of this model is particularly relevant to crossover effects of disclosure, as it suggests that close relationship partners come to view and experience the world from the other person's perspective. Hence, when one person describes something good or bad that happened to them, their partner should share this

perspective on the event and correspondingly share their affective state. Finally, Reis and Shaver's (1988) process model of intimacy (Reis & Patrick, 1996) not only highlights possible mechanisms for crossover effects but also suggests that such effects help to provide the foundation for interpersonal intimacy. Their model suggests that intimacy is established and enhanced by revealing self-relevant information to another person and receiving a response that makes one feel understood and validated. Having the other person take on your own affective state during such an interaction may be a particularly powerful indication of their understanding and validation.

Clearly, the notion of affective crossover during day-to-day interpersonal interaction is consistent with (and arguably, fundamental to) multiple theoretical views on emotion-relevant interpersonal processes within close relationships. For this reason, it is somewhat surprising that this perspective has not received more systematic attention in the context of dyadic research on day-to-day couple interactions. By filling this gap in the literature, the present research provides a necessary foundation for future investigations of the multiple specific mechanisms through which affective crossover may operate.

Moderating effects of gender and attachment style

Importantly, affective crossover is likely to vary across different dyads; even within the same dyad, one partner might be more susceptible to crossover than another. Gender may prove important in this regard. Previous research has found that women report and display greater emotional awareness and sensitivity and a greater tendency to rely on the social environment to assist in interpreting their own emotional states (e.g., Cross & Madson, 1997; Feldman Barrett, Lane, Sechrest, & Schwartz, 2000; Taylor et al., 2000). This should make women particularly prone to the influence of others' emotions and experiences, as well as to emotion contagion (Doherty, Orimoto, Singelis, Hatfield, & Hebb, 1995; Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993, 1994). Consistent with this view, prior research has found that women tend to be more empathic (reviewed in Cross & Madson, 1997), more sensitive and attuned to others' emotions, and better at interpreting them, especially within the context of romantic relationships (Feldman Barrett et al., 2000; Guerrero & Reiter, 1998; Thomas & Fletcher, 2003). Hence, although existing studies do not provide any direct evidence that women are, in fact, more prone to experiencing the emotions of their romantic partners than are men, we believe that the aforementioned gender differences in emotional sensitivity and empathy support this as a plausible hypothesis in the context of day-to-day event disclosures.

Another likely moderator of affective crossover is attachment style. According to attachment theory (e.g., Bowlby, 1969, 1988), individual differences in attachment emerge from early experiences with caregivers and exert important effects on social and emotional functioning throughout the lifecourse. Increasingly, researchers have conceptualized individual differences in attachment security (i.e., levels of anxiety and avoidance) as differences in capacities and strategies for affect regulation (e.g., Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Specifically, authors of prior work have viewed attachment security as a resource enabling individuals to successfully regulate negative and positive affective experiences, while attachment insecurity seems to interfere with such regulation. Attachment anxiety is associated with heightened emotional reactivity, especially with regard to negative affect. For example, individuals high in attachment anxiety tend to report disproportionately high levels of generalized distress (e.g., Maunder, Lancee, Nolan, Hunter, & Tannenbaum, 2006; Mikulincer 1998a, 1998b; Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995) and say they derive few distress alleviation benefits from the support of close others (Mikulincer, Florian, & Weller, 1993). In addition, distress experienced in one area of their lives tends to spill over to other areas (Mikulincer, 1998a).

Anxiously attached individuals' heightened experience of negative emotion is coupled with reports of fewer and less intense positive emotional experiences in general (Feeney, 1995, 1999), as well as in response to laboratory

stressors (Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998) and daily social interactions (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 1997; Tidwell, Reis, & Shaver, 1996). Furthermore, previous research has found that after being exposed to a positive affect induction, anxiously attached individuals' performance on subsequent cognitive tasks did not reflect the same increased flexibility as did the performance of their less anxious counterparts; in fact, they performed as would be expected after a negative affect induction (Mikulincer & Sheffi, 2000). Individuals high in attachment anxiety also show lower recall for recent positive events (Gentzler & Kerns, 2006). This tendency to experience heightened negative and reduced positive affect also extends to their romantic relationships. Additionally, Collins and her colleagues have found a tendency for highly anxious individuals to interpret their partners' negative behaviors in more threatening ways and their positive behaviors in less positive ways (Collins, 1996; Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006). This negative attributional bias also appears to account for anxious persons' lower reports of relationship satisfaction (Collins et al., 2006; Gallo & Smith, 2001; Sumer & Cozzarelli, 2004).

Researchers have conceptualized attachment avoidance as involving minimization and suppression of affective experience (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2003). Supporting this view, persons endorsing high levels of avoidance report low levels of both negative and positive affect, coupled with high levels of emotional control (e.g., Collins, 1996; Feeney, 1995, 1999; Mikulincer, 1998a). In studies of real-life stressful experiences (e.g., military combat training, living in Israel during the Gulf War), avoidant individuals have reported distancing themselves from others during times of distress (e.g., Mikulincer & Florian, 1995; Mikulincer et al., 1993), and Fraley, Fazzari, Bonanno, and Dekel (2006) and others have reported as showing few signs of distress. In experimental and observational studies, avoidantly attached individuals have reported low levels of support-seeking behaviors, especially when they show heightened behavioral signs of distress according to independent raters (e.g., Collins & Feeney, 2000; Fraley & Shaver, 1998; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Furthermore, authors of prior work have found that individuals high in avoidance tend to report low levels of subjective distress even when physiological markers of distress are evident (Diamond, Hicks, & Otter-Henderson, 2006; Maunder et al., 2006).

In addition to their tendency to report somewhat blunted negative affect, persons high in attachment avoidance tend to report low levels of positive affect. For example, avoidant individuals report lower positive affect during daily social interactions than do those low in avoidance (Pietromonaco & Feldman Barrett, 1997; Tidwell et al., 1996). Previous research evidence has suggested that attachment avoidance is associated with a lack of attention to affectively relevant information (e.g., preemptive defensive processing; Fraley & Shaver, 1997). Support for this view comes from laboratory research in which avoidant individuals demonstrated lower reactivity to thoughts of their partner leaving them for someone else (Fraley, Garner, & Shaver, 2000) and lower recall for emotionally relevant themes from a tape-recorded story (Fraley & Shaver, 1997). Moreover, after being exposed to a positive affect induction, avoidant persons performed no differently on subsequent cognitive tasks than they did when primed with neutral stimuli; they responded as though they had not undergone any affect induction at all (Mikulincer & Sheffi, 2000). In a recent diary study, they also had lower recall for recent positive events in their own lives (Gentzler & Kerns, 2006).

Thus, both attachment anxiety and avoidance are consistently associated with deficits in the regulation of both negative and positive affect. Notably, Mikulincer and colleagues (2001) found that these deficits were associated with lower empathy and lower responsiveness to others' emotional needs. We therefore expect that attachment style will moderate the effects associated with telling about positive and stressful events, as well as the crossover effects associated with being told about a partner's negative and positive events. Specifically, we expect that individuals high in attachment anxiety will experience disproportionately lower positive affect on days when they tell their partner about their most

positive event and on days when their partner discloses his or her most positive event. We also expect individuals with higher attachment anxiety to report disproportionately greater negative affect on days when they tell their partner about their most stressful event or when their partner discloses his or her most stressful event. As for individuals high in attachment avoidance, given their tendencies for minimization and suppression, we expect them to show little association between end-of-day negative or positive affect and telling or hearing about positive and stressful events.

The current study

This research uses a naturalistic design to examine day-to-day variation in negative and positive affect associated with the daily disclosure of stressful and positive events to romantic partners. Importantly, we did not design this research to investigate causal relationships between event disclosures and affective changes. Although previous research on capitalization suggests that event disclosures may influence an individual's affective state (e.g., Gable et al., 2004), it is also likely that certain affective states influence one's propensity to disclose affect-congruent events and experiences. As mentioned previously, this is consistent with research specifying influences of affective states on cognition and behavior (Forgas, 1995, 2000). Our study is correlational in nature and therefore cannot establish whether event disclosures shape affect or vice versa (in all likelihood, both processes probably co-occur). Rather, our goals were to test for basic linkages between event disclosures and both partners' day-to-day affective variability and to test for moderators of these linkages.

To provide a brief overview, we asked couples to keep daily diaries in which, at the end of the day, they listed the best event of the day and the most stressful event of the day and reported whether they told their partner about either event. One complicating factor, of course, is that in romantic relationships, it is common for one partner's most stressful or positive daily events to directly involve the partner (a nice dinner together, an argument, etc.). In these cases, disclosure of the event is not a meaningful construct because there is nothing to disclose.[1] Rather than excluding such events from analysis, we instead view them as important and meaningful bases for comparison, in terms of evaluating the overall magnitude of day-to-day affective changes associated with telling and hearing about daily events. After all, because events involving one's partner are dyadic by definition, they should provide the strongest possible opportunities for empathy and emotion contagion to promote crossover effects.

Thus, each of the 21 days of the study can be categorized into one of the following groups: (a) days on which a respondent's most positive or stressful event involved the partner, (b) days on which his or her event did not involve the partner but he or she disclosed it to the partner, and (c) days on which his or her event did not involve the partner and he or she did not disclose it to the partner. Correspondingly, from the other partner's perspective, there are (a) days on which he or she is directly involved in the partner's most positive or stressful event, (b) days on which he or she is not involved in the partner's event but is told about it, and (c) days on which he or she is not involved in the partner's event and is not told about it.

Based on the literature reviewed earlier, we make the following hypotheses. First, consistent with previous research on capitalization, we expect that telling one's partner about the

1. Of course, there may be situations in which partners disclose to one another the affective significance of an event involving the partner (i.e., "You know what honey? Seeing your face is the best part of my day" or "Why did you have to ruin dinner by picking a fight?"). In such cases, it would be meaningful to differentiate between disclosed and undisclosed events involving the partner. Yet, such cases may be relatively rare. Our overall conclusion that "disclosure" is not a meaningful construct with respect to events involving the partner is supported by the observation that participants themselves did not seem to find it relevant. Rather than consistently marking in their diaries that they did not disclose events involving the partner, most respondents left the disclosure question blank for such events, suggesting they did not find the question applicable. Research on capitalization, however, suggests that partners' positive affect might be further heightened if they explicitly discuss their own enjoyment in spending time together. Our diary questions were simply not detailed enough to reliably detect such interactions. This, however, provides a fascinating direction for future research.

most positive event of one's day will be associated with a significant increase in one's end-of-day positive affect, relative to the previous day (H1). Yet, because of the tendency for insecurely attached individuals to experience reduced positive affect generally, we expect this effect to be less pronounced among individuals with high attachment anxiety or avoidance. In particular, we expect that those high in anxiety will show the least increase in positive affect (H1a). We also expect that being told about one's partner's most positive event will be associated with greater end-of-day positive affect, relative to the previous days' affect (H2a) but that this effect will be less pronounced among men, as well as among individuals with high attachment-related anxiety or avoidance; again, we expect those high in attachment anxiety to experience the smallest increase in positive affect (H2b).

As for stressful experiences, the previous literature does not suggest that disclosing negative events produces generalized increases in distress. Such disclosures are typically made with the specific aim of soliciting support and hence reducing negative affect. On this basis, we do not expect that disclosure of the days' most stressful experience will be associated with increased negative affect. We do expect that, relative to the previous day, being told about a partner's most stressful event will be associated with heightened negative affect (H3a). We further expect stronger crossover among anxiously attached individuals and diminished among avoidant individuals and to be stronger in women than in men (H3b).

As for days on which one's most positive or stressful event of the day directly involved the partner, we expect that because of the salience and emotional relevance of couples' daily interactions, such days will also be associated with heightened affect, relative to days on which one did not disclose the most positive or stressful event (H4a),and will show crossover effects, such that individuals will report heightened affect on days when their partner lists them as the most positive or stressful event of the day (H4b). We also expect to find the same moderating effects of gender and attachment style as hypothesized earlier (H4c).

Method

Participants

Forty-eight married or cohabitating heterosexual couples, all of whom had been together for at least 2 years, participated in the current study. All couples were part of a larger study of day-to-day proximity and physical separation in cohabiting couples. We recruited potential participants through newspaper advertisements and electronic messages distributed to academic departments at local universities in Salt Lake City, Utah, in the Mountain West region of the United States. In addition to the couples whose data we reported here, we also recruited couples anticipating a travel-related physical separation; Diamond, Hicks, and Otter-Henderson (in press) reported these data elsewhere. We recruited the couples in the present study as a comparison group; they underwent no physical separation during the study period. All participating couples received US$100. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 52 years, with a mean age of 27 years for both women and men ($SD = 7.00$). Couples reported a mean relationship length of 5 years ($SD = 4.00$); 73% of the couples were married. Eighty-five percent of the participants were White, which generally reflects the population in the Mountain West region of the United States. Nearly all participants had completed at least some college, and 74% had at least a college degree. The mean household income was US$30,000 ($SD$ = US$30,000, maximum = US$200,000; Mdn = US$25,000). Because no appropriate sampling frame was available, we used a convenience sample of couples residing in the nearby community. At the same time, we were interested in observing affect regulation dynamics in well-functioning couples; we therefore screened couples for relationship quality using Hendrick's (1988) Relationship Satisfaction measure. We planned to exclude couples with an average score of 2 or lower (the scale ranges from 1 to 5), which corresponds to reporting *very little* satisfaction in their relationship; none of the couples reported levels of satisfaction this low. Couples reported an average relationship satisfaction of 4.5 for both men and women ($SD = 0.48$ for both).

Measures

In order to measure positive and negative events, all participants completed a paper-and-pencil diary at the end of each day for 21 days. For the positive event, we asked participants to "briefly describe the most positive experience you had today." They then rated the positivity of the experience on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*) and indicated whether they told their partner about it. Across days and across individuals, the mean rating of positivity was 4.30 ($SD = 1.07$). Independent coders categorized each event according to whether it directly involved the partner (which required that the partner be physically present for and directly engaged in the event; other individuals could be present as well) or fell into one of the three other domains: work or school, family or friends, or other (e.g., health, appearance, financial). Agreement between coders was nearly perfect (98%) given the relatively straightforward coding scheme. Of the positive events, 39% involved the partner, 17% were work or school related, and 24% involved family or friends (but not the partner), and we categorized the final 20% as other. Examples of positive events involving the partner included "Going on a walk together"; "Had nice dinner with spouse"; "Made love"; "Went to a movie together."

For the negative event, participants reported "the most stressful or bothersome experience you had today." They then rated the stressfulness of the experience on a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much so*) and indicated whether they told their partner about it. Across individuals and across days, the mean rating of negativity was 3.05 ($SD = 1.36$). As with positive events, independent coders categorized each negative event according to whether it involved the partner or fell into one of the three other domains described above. Of the negative events, 16% involved the partner, 39% were work or school related, and 13% involved family or friends (but not the partner), and we categorized the final 32% as other. Negative events involving the partner were typically arguments.

The present research focused on distinctions between events directly involving the partner, events that did not involve the partner but were disclosed to the partner, and events that did not involve the partner and were not disclosed to the partner. We conducted ancillary analyses to determine whether more specific subcategorization of events (i.e., work or school events vs. family- or friend-related events) influenced any of the findings, and it did not.

We assessed positive and negative affect with the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), a 20-item scale that yields two 5-item scales, one for positive affect and one for negative affect. Mean Cronbach's alphas across all diary days were .84 for positive affect and .85 for negative affect, indicating relatively high reliability for both scales. Mean positive affect, across days and across individuals, was 2.82 ($SD = 0.52$), and mean negative affect across days and across individuals was 1.53 ($SD = 0.38$). The average within-person standard deviations across the 21-day assessment period were 0.49 for positive affect and 0.38 for negative affect.

We assessed attachment style with the Experiences in Close Relationships measure (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), a 36-item scale yielding two 7-point scales—attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. Cronbach's alphas were 0.85 for anxiety and 0.84 for avoidance, indicating relatively high reliability. The mean for anxiety was 2.36 ($SD = 0.91$), and the mean for avoidance was 2.17 ($SD = 0.85$). For both women and men, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were positively correlated. Attachment anxiety was positively associated with negative affect in both men and women and negatively associated with positive affect in men. These findings are consistent with extensive prior research on associations between attachment style and affect (reviewed in Diamond & Hicks, 2004). Among women, positive affect and negative affect were not significantly associated with one another. Among men, they were negatively associated but only at the trend level.

Procedure

We screened couples over the phone to confirm that they were currently cohabitating and that they had been together for at least 2 years. Couples also reported their relationship

satisfaction at this time. If both partners were available, we gave them both the questionnaire (verbally, over the phone), and if only one partner was available, we used that partner's level of satisfaction in the screening. Couples then visited our laboratory where they underwent informed consent and completed various trait measures, as well as an assessment of cardiovascular and neuroendocrine reactivity (reported elsewhere). To familiarize them with the daily diary, a research assistant reviewed all items with the participants and answered any specific questions that they had. We instructed couples to complete their diary entries before going to bed. Of course, because we used paper-and-pencil diaries (rather than electronic diaries with an automatic time stamp), we cannot confirm that participants made each and every entry on time (rather than participants skipping one day and then completing the diary information on the next day). We therefore sought to maximize compliance with the diary protocol by carefully explaining to our participants that because we had statistical procedures capable of dealing with skipped days, there was no reason for them to try and fill in any entries that they missed. We specifically indicated that we actually preferred them to leave a day blank than to try and fill in the missing information the next day and that periodic blank days were less detrimental to the study than days that they completed at the wrong time. We also emphasized that their financial compensation was not tied to the number of entries that they made.

Additionally, consistent with Green, Rafaeli, Bolger, Shrout, and Reis's (2006) recommendations for maximizing diary compliance, we sought to establish a strong rapport with our participants and to increase their sense of investment in the study by personalizing their diaries with large stickers showing their first names and also by giving each couple a personalized calendar that displayed their first names, showed all the days of the current month, and highlighted which days they were keeping the diary. Also, we assigned each couple their own research assistant, so that they could direct all their questions to the same person (the research assistant's name and cell phone number were printed on the front cover of their personalized diaries). Their research assistant also periodically checked in with them to see if they had any questions or concerns. Green and colleagues noted that such strategies were highly effective in increasing compliance, and their research found that when using such techniques, data collected using paper-and-pencil methods were basically equivalent to data collected using time-stamped electronic collection procedures. They also indicated that in studies of couples, partners often serve to remind and reinforce one another to complete diaries, which results in greater overall compliance to the protocol. Of course, a potential complication with collecting diary data from couples is that partners might share their entries with each other. To guard against this possibility, we emphasized the importance of confidentiality to our participants, clarifying that although it might seem harmless to discuss the diary material, it was important that they not do so.

Overall, 95% of the affect and event data were complete across all people and all days. Within individuals, the item completion rate was 94%. Only 4 individuals had less than 80% completion across days (the lowest completion rate across days was 67%). As currently recommended (Schafer & Graham, 2002), we used PAN (Schafer, 2001) to impute within-person missing data. Even though the total percentage of missing data in this sample was small, it amounts to over 100 data points, given that we collected 21 days of data from 96 individuals. We therefore chose to impute the missing data given the extensive evidence that modern data imputation procedures greatly increase the reliability of estimates in such circumstances (Schafer & Graham, 2002). We followed standard practice for multiple imputation techniques (see Schafer, 2001), in which the imputation procedure is repeated several times to yield multiple imputed data sets, each of them with slightly different imputed values. The slight variations among the imputed values approximate the type of measurement error that is found in real data. Simulation studies have found that generating five imputed data sets is sufficient to approximate typical measurement error. Each statistical analysis is repeated with each of the five data sets, and the final coefficients are averaged.

This technique has been shown to perform well when data are missing at random and even acceptably under some cases of nonrandom missingness (Schafer, 2001).

Results

Analytical plan

We estimated four separate models: prediction of positive affect from the disclosure of positive events, prediction of positive affect from the partner's disclosure of positive events, prediction of negative affect from the disclosure of negative events, and prediction of negative affect from the partner's disclosure of negative events. We based the decision to model positive and negative affect separately on Reis and colleagues' (2000) previous research demonstrating that associations between positive events and positive affect, and between negative events and negative affect, are significantly stronger than cross-affect associations (i.e., associations between positive events and negative affect or those between negative events and positive affect).[2]

We conducted all analyses using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). This technique is designed for multilevel data structures in which observations at one level of analysis (in this case, ratings of affect on Days 1 through 21) are nested within higher levels of analysis (individuals). We used the multivariate module of HLM, which permits simultaneous estimation of separate equations for the female and male partner of each couple, thereby controlling for within-couple dependency and, more importantly, allowing for statistical comparisons of model coefficients across women and men. For all the models run, we tested whether model coefficients were significantly different between female and male partners. In cases where they were not significantly different, we compute and report a joint contrast with 2 *df* to produce an overall test of the significance of the coefficient of interest across male and female partners (while controlling for within-couple dependencies). To structure such a model, the Level 1 equation contains the dependent variable modeled solely as a function of dummy coded variables representing each member of the couple.

$$\text{Affect}_{\text{day } i,\ \text{couple } j} = \pi_{1j}(\text{male}) + \pi_{2j}(\text{female}) + e_{ijg}.$$

For purposes of clarity, we label them "male" and "female," but note that these dummy codes are not representing gender effects. Rather, because this equation does not contain an intercept, the coefficients for each partner's dummy codes, π_{1j} and π_{2j}, represent the population true scores for each member of couple j on day i. These population true scores serve as the dependent variables for the next level of analysis, so that all subsequent models are developed in parallel, simultaneous fashion for each member of the couple.

At Level 2, we model end-of-day affect as a function of event type, the perceived "goodness" or "badness" of the event, and the previous day's affect (to control for the day-to-day carryover in both positive and negative affect). Thus, our Level 2 model predicts variation in daily affect that is independent of general carryover from the previous day. The structure of each parallel Level 2 model was as follows:

$$\text{Positive affect}_{\text{day } i,\ \text{person } j} = \beta 0_j + \beta 1_j X1_{ij} + \beta 2_j X2_{ij} + \beta 3_j X3_{ij} + \beta 4_j X4_{ij} + e_{ij}.$$

As with a standard regression, β0 refers to the intercept (i.e., participant j's average

2. We did conduct some additional analyses to examine whether telling or hearing about negative events was associated with positive affect and telling or hearing about positive events was associated with negative affect. The results were generally parallel to—but notably weaker than—the analyses predicting positive affect from disclosure of positive events and predicting negative affect from disclosure of negative events (i.e., effects associated with increased negative affect in one model were associated with reduced positive affect in the other and vice versa). Thus, these models neither added to nor substantively changed any of the results. We also explored models including both hearing and telling effects at the same time. These models were somewhat unwieldy, given that they doubled the number of variables in the Level 2 model. The results paralleled the models reported, although some effects were attenuated, which is not surprising given the number of effects being estimated. Hence, for parsimony and ease of interpretation, we retained our strategy of modeling telling and being told separately.

positive affect when all other independent variables have a value of 0). Coefficients β1 through β5 represent maximum likelihood estimates of the population slopes estimating participant *j*'s positive affect on day *i* from the following:

$X1_{ij}$: the previous day's positive affect.
$X2_{ij}$: whether participant *j*'s most positive event of the day involved the partner. This is a dummy variable coded 1 versus 0.
$X3_{ij}$: whether participant *j*'s most positive event was a nonpartner event that was disclosed to the partner. This is a dummy variable coded 1 versus 0. Hence, the comparison group (i.e., base category) for this dummy variable and the preceding one are days on which participant *j*'s most positive event was a nonpartner event that was not disclosed to the partner.
$X4_{ij}$: the positivity of participant *j*'s positive event, group centered (i.e., centered around the mean rating of positivity that this individual gave to his or her positive events across all days; this form of centering allows us to control for whether a particular event was more or less positive than usual for this particular individual).

At Level 3, in order to test whether the hypothesized associations with daily affect are moderated by attachment style, we modeled $X3_{ij}$ and $X4_{ij}$ as a function of participant *j*'s attachment anxiety and avoidance at Level 3. Thus, using X3 as an example, these Level 3 models took the following form:

$$\beta 3_j X3_{ij} = \gamma 30_j + \gamma 31_j W31_j + \gamma 32_j W32_j.$$

Recall that $X3_{ij}$ is a dummy variable that compares days when participant *j* disclosed his or her most positive event to his or her partner to days when he or she did not (excluding events involving the partner, which are represented by the dummy variable of X2). Hence, γ30 represents the average change in daily affect associated with disclosing positive events across the entire sample; γ31 and γ32 represent the maximum likelihood estimate of the population slope estimating $\beta 3_j X3_{ij}$ (participant *j*'s disclosure effect) from participant *j*'s attachment anxiety (W1) and attachment avoidance (W2). Because attachment anxiety and avoidance are between-person variables, we centered them around the sample mean. The final reported models include only those anxiety or avoidance effects that we found to be significant (exclusion of nonsignificant terms did not change any of the other effects). We tested interactions between attachment anxiety and avoidance; they were nonsignificant. We also tested whether the effects of interest varied by day of week (i.e., weekday or weekend), and they did not.[3]

The model for being told about one's partner's most positive event was parallel in form, with the following changes: $X2_{ij}$ was a dummy variable representing whether participant *j*'s partner's most positive event involved participant *j*, and $X3_{ij}$ was a dummy variable representing whether participant *j*'s partner's most positive event was a nonpartner event that was disclosed to participant *j*. As with the previous model, the comparison group (or base category) for these two dummy variables was days on which participant *j*'s partner's most positive event was a nonpartner event that was not disclosed to the partner. $X4_{ij}$ was the positivity of participant *j*'s most positive event, group centered.[4] Finally, parallel to the previous

3. As for the potential influence of work status and work schedules, all the participants in the study—both men and women—were either involved in paid employment or enrolled in college or graduate school. During the initial screening procedure, we collected information about participants' work schedules, and none of the participants had atypical work schedules (i.e., working during evening shifts rather than daytime hours).
4. We used participant *j*'s rating, and not his or her *partner's* rating of their event, because we wanted this variable to serve as a covariate controlling for participant *j*'s overall mood that day. Preliminary analyses indicated that the ratings individuals gave to their most positive and negative events were strongly associated with their overall end-of-day mood. Hence, by including participant *j*'s event rating in the model testing whether hearing about their partner's event was associated with their mood, we are controlling for the initial goodness of participant *j*'s own day. This provides a more accurate model of the unique variance associated with being told about the partner's event.

Table 1. *Correlations among female and male partner's average daily affect, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Women's attachment anxiety							
2. Women's attachment avoidance	.39**						
3. Women's positive affect	−.43**	−.20					
4. Women's negative affect	.33*	.09	−.19				
5. Men's attachment anxiety	.26	.29*	−.11	.24			
6. Men's attachment avoidance	.26	.08	−.04	.02	.55***		
7. Men's positive affect	−.23	.00	.25	−.26	−.18	.03	
8. Men's negative affect	.24	.06	−.15	.24	.47***	.37**	−.27

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

model, we tested moderating effects of attachment style by predicting $X2_{ij}$ and $X3_{ij}$, at Level 3, from participant j's attachment anxiety and avoidance. In the final reported models, we include only significant anxiety or avoidance effects (exclusion of nonsignificant terms did not change any of the other effects). The models for negative affect were identical, except that they examined stressful events instead of positive events and used negative affect as the outcome instead of positive affect. Also, because preliminary analyses detected no significant interindividual (i.e., Level 3) variance in lagged positive affect, lagged negative affect, positivity ratings for positive events, and stressfulness ratings for stressful events, we fixed the Level 3 variance for these terms in order to more accurately estimate the effects of interest (following Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992).

Correlations among male and female partners' average daily positive and negative affect and their attachment anxiety and avoidance are presented in Table 1.

Rates of disclosure

Overall, women reported that the most positive event of the day was disclosed 44% of the time, undisclosed 28% of the time, and involved the partner 27% of the time. Among men, these percentages were 42%, 29%, and 30%, respectively. Women reported that their most stressful event of the day was disclosed 62% of the time, not disclosed 28% of the time, and involved their partner 9% of the time. Among men, these percentages were 57%, 33%, and 9%, respectively.[5] These averaged percentages did not differ between men versus women, $t_{\text{neg/involve}} = 0.07$, $t_{\text{pos/involve}} = -0.29$, $t_{\text{neg/disclosed}} = 0.78$, $t_{\text{pos/disclosed}} = 0.39$, $t_{\text{neg/undisclosed}} = -0.92$, and $t_{\text{pos/undisclosed}} = -0.06$, $df = 145$, all ps $> .35$. Additionally, paired t tests found that at a couple level, male and female *partners* did not significantly differ in their rates of disclosing each type of event, $t_{\text{neg/involve}} = 0.17$, $t_{\text{pos/involve}} = -0.89$, $t_{\text{neg/disclosed}} = 1.57$, $t_{\text{pos/disclosed}} = 0.68$, $t_{\text{neg/undisclosed}} = -1.74$, and $t_{\text{pos/undisclosed}} = -0.12$, $df = 48$, all ps $> .10$.

There were no gender differences in the ratings of positivity or stressfulness given to positive and stressful events, and so we report joint chi-square tests. Positive events that were disclosed were rated as more positive than undisclosed events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 19.64$, $p < .0001$, and events that involved the partner were rated even more positively than disclosed events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 10.67$, $p < .01$. Stressful

5. When recomputed using the nonimputed data, these rates were nearly identical as with the imputed data. Specifically, women reported that the most positive event of the day was disclosed 44% of the time, undisclosed 28% of the time, and involved the partner 27% of the time. Among men, these percentages were 42%, 28%, and 29%. Women reported that their most stressful event of the day was disclosed 64% of the time, not disclosed 26% of the time, and involved their partner 10% of the time. Among men, these percentages were 59%, 31%, and 10%.

events that were disclosed were rated as more stressful than undisclosed events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 42.64$, $p < .0001$, and events that involved the partner were rated as more stressful than undisclosed events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 30.65$, $p < .0001$, but events involving the partner were not rated as more stressful than events disclosed to the partner, $\chi^2(2) = 3.02$, $p = ns$.

Telling and being told about positive events

The coefficients for the model predicting affect from the disclosure of positive events are presented in Table 2. As noted earlier, except for cases in which there are significant gender differences, we describe and report joint chi-square tests for the coefficients of interest. As predicted in H1a, we found that for both men and women, disclosing the most positive event of one's day was associated with significantly higher end-of-day positive affect, relative to undisclosed nonpartner events, and controlling for the self-reported positivity of the event, joint $\chi^2(2) = 10.40$, $p < .005$. We also found the predicted moderating effect of attachment avoidance (H1b) but only for women: Specifically, disclosure of positive events was associated with smaller increases in positive affect among women with higher avoidance, $t = -2.60$, $p < .01$. Contrary to prediction, we did not detect moderating effects of attachment anxiety.

As for positive events that involved the partner, we found that these events were associated with greater end-of-day positive affect for men (relative to undisclosed, nonpartner events), $t = 2.12$, $p < .05$, but not women, $t = -0.80$, $p = ns$, and the gender difference was significant, $\chi^2(1) = 4.47$, $p < .05$. Interestingly, an additional analysis in which we coded disclosed, nonpartner events as the base category found that events involving the partner were not associated with higher positive affect than were disclosed, nonpartner events, and among women, events involving the partner were actually associated with lower positive affect than were events disclosed to the partner, $t = -3.77$, $p < .001$. The prediction that attachment style would moderate the positive affect associated with events involving

Table 2. *Associations between end-of-day positive affect and both telling and being told about the day's most positive event*

Model term	Female coefficient	Male coefficient	Joint χ^2
Model for telling about the best event of the day			
Intercept	2.0***	2.05***	
Yesterday's positive affect	0.27***	0.25***	
Rating of positivity of your day's most positive event, centered within person	0.15***	0.06***	
Whether event involved partner[a]	−0.04	0.10*	
Moderating effect of anxiety	−0.08*		
Whether event was disclosed to partner[a]	0.07*	0.07*	10.4**
Moderating effect of avoidance	−0.11**		
Model for being told about the best event of the partner's day			
Intercept	2.0***	2.05***	
Yesterday's positive affect	0.27***	0.25***	
Rating of positivity of your day's most positive event, centered within person	0.14***	0.06***	
Whether partner's event involved you[a]	0.10*	0.08*	7.8*
Whether partner disclosed event to you[a]	0.04	0.07*	6.0*
Moderating effect of avoidance	−0.07*		

[a]Compared to days on which the event was a nonpartnered, undisclosed event.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

the partner (H3c) was partially confirmed. Women (but not men) with high attachment anxiety showed lower positive affect than low-anxious individuals on days when their most positive event involved their partner, relative to undisclosed nonpartner events, $t = -2.21$, $p < .05$. There were no interactions between any of these effects and the rated positivity of the event, and there were no moderating effects of avoidance.

Consistent with prediction (H2a), we found that for both men and women, being told about one's partner's most positive event was associated with significantly higher end-of-day positive affect, relative to undisclosed events, and controlling for the self-reported positivity of one's own most positive event of the day, joint $\chi^2(2) = 6.04$, $p < .05$. We did not find moderating effects of gender or attachment anxiety, but we did find, as predicted in H2b, that attachment avoidance was associated with less crossover, although only among women, $t = 1.91$, one-sided $p < .05$. Consistent with H4b, we also found significant crossover effects on days when participants were directly involved in their partners' most positive event, relative to undisclosed nonpartner events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 7.78$, $p < .05$. Contrary to H4c, these effects were not moderated by gender or attachment style.

The top panel of Figure 1 graphically displays this set of results, showing estimates of end-of-day positive affect (estimated for individuals with average attachment anxiety and avoidance) associated with telling and being told about positive events.

Telling and being told about negative events

The coefficients for the model predicting negative affect from the disclosure of stressful events are presented in Table 3. As expected, we found that disclosing that event to one's partner (controlling for the rated stressfulness of the event) was not generally associated with significantly higher end-of-day negative affect. Although the coefficient for men was significant, $t = 0.07, p < .05$, suggesting greater negative affect when stressful events were disclosed, there was no significant gender difference, and the joint test was nonsignificant, joint $\chi^2(2) = 4.55$, $p = ns$. Consistent with H3b, however, having the most stressful event of the day *involve* your partner was associated with significantly greater end-of-day negative affect, relative to both disclosed stressful events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 22.42$, $p < .001$, and undisclosed stressful events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 29.72$, $p < .001$. As predicted (H3c), this effect was heightened by attachment avoidance but only for women, $t = 2.35$, one-sided $p = .01$. We did not detect moderating effects of attachment anxiety or gender.

The effects of being told about negative events paralleled the effects of disclosure. Contrary to the predicted crossover effect (and to the effects observed for positive events), being told about one's partner's most stressful event was not associated with greater end-of-day negative affect, joint $\chi^2(2) = 2.15$, $p = ns$ (H3a), either in the sample as a whole or among individuals high in attachment anxiety and women (contrary to H2b's hypothesized pattern of moderation). Yet, consistent with H4b, we found that being involved in the most stressful event of the partner's day was associated with significantly greater negative affect, relative to undisclosed nonpartner events, joint $\chi^2(2) = 14.14$, $p < .01$. This effect was not moderated by gender or attachment style contrary to H3c. These patterns are displayed in the bottom panel of Figure 1, which shows estimates of end-of-day negative affect (estimated for individuals with average attachment anxiety and avoidance) associated with telling and being told about stressful events.

Discussion

The current study investigated affect regulation within couples by examining daily variability in positive and negative affect associated with a common and salient relationship event: telling your partner about the best and most stressful aspects of your day. We found that both telling and being told about positive events were significantly associated with end-of-day positive affect, for both men and women. Furthermore, women's attachment avoidance moderated both of these effects. High avoidant women showed smaller increases in positive affect, relative to less avoidant

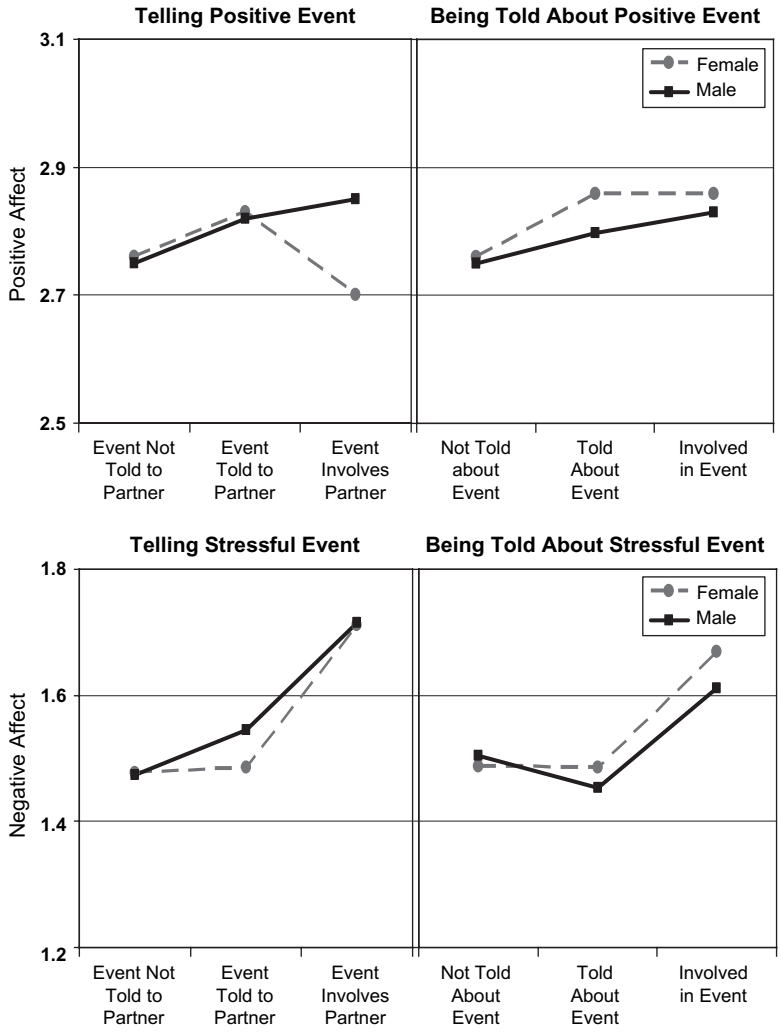

Figure 1. Estimates of end-of-day positive (top) and negative (bottom) affect on days when individuals' most positive (top) or stressful (bottom) event was undisclosed, disclosed, or involved the partner, and estimates for days when individuals' partners' events were undisclosed, disclosed, or involved the partner.

women, on days when they told their partner about the best event of their day and on days when their partners made such disclosures. A notably different pattern of results emerged with respect to stressful events: Neither telling nor being told about stressful events was associated with heightened negative affect.

We also found that having one's most positive or stressful event of the day involve your partner was related to end-of-day affect. Again, we found a different pattern of results for positive than for negative affect. Men reported equally positive affect on days when their most positive event involved the partner as on days when they disclosed their most positive event to their partner. For women, disclosure was more beneficial. As for stressful events, both men and women reported higher negative affect when their most stressful event of the day involved their partner than when they disclosed a stressful event to the partner. Altogether, our results make a significant contribution to the existing literature on day-to-day affect regulation in couples by showing

Table 3. *Associations between end-of-day negative affect and both telling and being told about the day's most stressful event*

Model term	Female coefficient	Male coefficient	Joint χ^2
Model for telling about the most stressful event of the day			
Intercept	1.16***	1.0***	
Yesterday's negative affect	0.21***	0.28***	
Rating of stressfulness of your day's most stressful event, centered within person	0.12***	0.06***	
Whether event involved partner[a]	0.27***	0.24***	29.8***
Moderating effect of avoidance	0.15*		
Whether event was disclosed to partner[a]	0.01	0.07*	4.5
Model for being told about the most stressful event of the partner's day			
Intercept	0.18**	0.11*	
Yesterday's negative affect	0.12***	0.30***	
Rating of stressfulness of your day's most stressful event, centered within person	0.12***	0.06***	
Whether partner's event involved you[a]	0.15**	0.08[†]	14.3***
Whether partner disclosed event to you[a]	−0.01	−0.05	2.15

[a]Compared to days on which the event was a nonpartnered, undisclosed event.
[†]$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

how routine end-of-day event disclosures are associated with daily affective variability, both for the partner doing the telling and for the partner being told. Our findings also show that these processes operate differently with respect to positive versus negative affect and that they are moderated by attachment style.

Telling and being told about positive events

This study replicates and builds upon previous research on capitalization. Consistent with the findings of Gable and colleagues (2004), we found that individuals in long-term romantic relationships showed increases in positive affect (relative to the previous day) on days when they told their partner about the most positive event of their day. Notably, we are able to put these capitalization effects in context by comparing them to the emotional changes (again, relative to the previous day) associated with having one's most positive event of the day directly involve one's partner (i.e., "going for a walk," "having a nice dinner together," "sitting on the couch together and cuddling"). Given previous research showing the benefits of positive interactions for couples (e.g., Driver & Gottman, 2004; Gottman & Levenson, 1999; Robles, Shaffer, & Malarkey, 2006), it might seem that sharing an experience with one's partner would be more strongly associated with increased positive affect than telling them about an event you experienced without them. Yet, this was not the case. Men reported similar increases in positive affect on days when they disclosed their most positive event as on days when their most positive event involved their partner. For women, however, disclosure of a nonpartner event to the partner was associated with a greater increase in positive affect than having her most positive event involve the partner (as seen in the top panel of Figure 1).

This finding is consistent with previous theory and research suggesting that due to differing socialization pressures, the act of verbally disclosing emotionally relevant information may be more important for women's well-being than for men's (e.g., Dindia & Allen, 1992; Vangelisti & Banski, 1993). Additionally, this may reflect the tendency for women to have larger social networks outside of their romantic relationships that are characterized by greater levels of open communication,

expressed intimacy, and emotional depth (e.g., Pugliesi & Shook, 1998; Turner, 1994). Hence, for women, there may be particularly strong associations between positive affect and positive experiences that are disclosed. For men, disclosure may prove less relevant. Future research should investigate these differences by examining potential gender differences in positive affect not only at the end of different types of days but also as different types of events are experienced and then later discussed and relived.

Our findings also contribute to the capitalization literature by showing that capitalization effects are moderated by attachment style. Because capitalization has been hypothesized to operate through enhancing and increasing access to the memory of disclosed events, it should be less pronounced in individuals high in attachment avoidance (relative to those lower in avoidance). Such individuals are known to minimize attention to emotionally relevant stimuli and therefore show low recall for such stimuli (e.g., Fraley, Niedenthal, & Marks, 2006; Fraley & Shaver, 1997; Fraley et al., 2000), which should blunt the effects of capitalization. This is exactly what we observed, although only for women. Women with higher levels of avoidance showed smaller increases in positive affect than women with lower levels of avoidance on days when they disclosed positive events, but this was not the case for men.

Perhaps the most notable finding of the study, however, concerns the fact that individuals reported increased positive affect not only on days when they disclosed positive events to their partners but also on days when their partners disclosed positive events to them, an effect that we consider to be crossover capitalization. Such findings underscore the importance of conceptualizing the process of capitalization within couples as an intrinsically dyadic phenomenon, in which the positive affect that one partner experiences in the context of disclosing positive events is simultaneously reflected and potentially enhanced by the affective experience of the partner who is being told. The findings of Gable and colleagues (2004) are consistent with this perspective. They found that disclosing positive events was associated with greater increases in positive affect on days when the partner was reported as providing active and positive responses to the disclosure.

Multiple interpersonal mechanisms might contribute to the crossover effects we detected. Among the most straightforward are empathy and emotion contagion, which are particularly powerful processes within romantic dyads (e.g., Goodman & Shippy, 2002; Hatfield et al., 1994). Yet, the extended self-evaluation maintenance model (e.g., Tesser, 2000), the process model of intimacy (e.g., Reis & Shaver, 1988), and Aron and colleagues' (1991) inclusion of other in the self model suggest other plausible mechanisms. We did not design this study to differentiate between these different mechanisms, and in fact, we doubt that one single mechanism is at work. Rather, we expect that in different contexts, different processes may operate. For example, when one's partner shares their pride at receiving a favorable evaluation at work, the processes of reflected self-evaluation Tesser (2000) describes may be at work. When one's partner describes their happiness about a friend's impending marriage, however, Aron and colleagues' emphasis on shared perspective taking as a form of including the other in the self may be more relevant. Future research should investigate how the context and content of affect-relevant disclosures shape the processes underlying crossover capitalization. Such investigations must also remain mindful of the possibility that links between a partner's disclosures and one's own affect are bidirectional: Your partner might be more likely to disclose positive events to you if they observe that you are in a good mood. Such possibilities can be productively investigated by videotaping couples and examining specific sequences of behavior, affective display, and affective response.

Individual differences in crossover capitalization, too, deserve study. We found that women with higher levels of avoidance showed less of an increase in positive affect on days when their partners disclosed positive events to them, relative to women with lower levels of avoidance. Recall that such women also reported less of an increase in positive affect on days when they disclosed their

own positive events to their partners. Hence, avoidance attenuates both capitalization and crossover capitalization in women but not in men. We had originally expected that women would show stronger overall crossover effects than would men, given previous research suggesting greater empathy and emotional sensitivity among women (e.g., Hatfield et al., 1994). Although we did not find this to be the case, the fact that avoidance only played a moderating role for women suggests that deficits in empathy and affective sensitivity may prove more disruptive to women's experience of interpersonal affect regulation than men's experiences. Future research should investigate this further by examining whether the behavioral processes that accompany successful crossover capitalization are different for women versus men and how such behaviors differ as a function of attachment avoidance. It would also be intriguing to examine how crossover processes may potentially break down in distressed couples. Because our sample contained only well-functioning couples, we were not able to investigate how major deficits in relationship satisfaction might be related to disruptions in both capitalization and crossover capitalization (as Gable et al., 2004, suggest), nor the overall implications of such disruptions for day-to-day affect regulation. This, too, is an important direction for future research.

Telling and being told about negative events

The pattern of results for negative affect was notably different than for positive affect. Neither telling one's partner about stressful events nor being told about a partner's most stressful event was associated with heightened end-of-day negative affect. We had expected crossover effects of being told about stressful events based on previous research suggesting that negative affect is particularly susceptible to contagion and escalation (Gottman, 1993; Noller, Beach, & Osgarby, 1997) and because we expected partners' empathy for and identification with their partner's distress to be manifested in their own distress. Yet, perhaps the fact that we detected no crossover effects for disclosure of stressful events is related to the fact that disclosing stressful events was not in itself associated with heightened negative affect. If partners made the disclosures within a context of comfort and support provision, perhaps the overall tone of the interaction was positive rather than negative, consistent with the fact that neither partner reported heightened negative affect. This also helps to explain why we did not find the hypothesized moderating effect of attachment anxiety.

The case is notably different, of course, when one is experiencing distress as a result of one's partner (rather than telling them about previous distress). As shown in the bottom panel of Figure 1, we detected sizable increases in negative affect in both partners on days when either one of them reported that the most stressful event of the day directly involved the partner (such events were typically arguments). The high levels of end-of-day negative affect associated with these days likely reflect the well-documented processes of negative affect escalation that have long been observed in couples (e.g., Noller et al., 1997).

Clearly, the fact that disclosure of positive events is associated with heightened positive affect (for partners on both sides of the disclosure) but disclosure of stressful events is not associated with heightened negative affect (for partners on neither side) suggests that the mechanisms underlying positive and negative affective exchange in couples are different. Although some of the basic interpersonal processes may be the same (intimacy, empathy, affective sensitivity, affective convergence, displays of responsiveness), these processes work toward different outcomes. Another way of viewing these differences is to conceptualize day-to-day disclosures (and day-to-day interactions between couples more generally) as promoting a single, more general outcome: helping both partners to achieve the most positive—and least negative—affective state possible. Along a similar vein, one interesting direction for future research is to directly compare the affective associations with positive event disclosures with the affective consequences of repairing a relationship dispute. We and others (Gable et al., 2004) have demonstrated associations between positive event disclosures and greater positive affect on days when these disclosures occur. It is possible that

interactions in which couples resolve arguments lead to similar increases in positive feelings. As mentioned previously, this is generally one of the goals underlying such discussions. Alternatively, when negative events are addressed and unresolved, heightened negative affect may result either due to sadness at seeing a flaw in the relationship or due to maladaptive communication patterns within the couple (e.g., blaming, criticizing, stonewalling). Understanding in more detail how a variety of different interpersonal interactions operate to influence affect, both on a moment-by-moment and on a longer term basis, is an important area for future research.

Individual differences, too, deserve more study. It is intriguing that women with higher levels of attachment avoidance, in addition to their attenuated capitalization and crossover capitalization (both of which function to reduce positive affect), showed significantly greater negative affect on days when the most stressful event of their day involved their partner. This is consistent with the notion that because of their distancing tendencies, individuals with high attachment avoidance find relationship-related distress to be particularly aversive. Overall, these findings suggest that women with high avoidance experience disruptions in both the positive and the negative poles of day-to-day affect regulation via partner interactions. Future research should investigate why this avoidance effect is more pronounced for women versus men and should investigate their long-term implications for relationship functioning. Given that women often play more of a relationship maintenance role than do men in their romantic relationships, women's attachment avoidance might prove to be particularly detrimental. It is also notable that most of the existing literature on deficits in affect regulation associated with attachment insecurity has found stronger and more consistent effects for attachment anxiety than for avoidance (reviewed in Diamond & Hicks, 2004). Hence, the prominence of women's avoidance effects in the present study is particularly intriguing and suggests that future research should continue to probe these processes in the context of routine, day-to-day interactions between couples.

Limitations

Perhaps the most important limitation of the present study is that because we assessed affect at the end of the day, rather than directly after positive and negative event disclosures, we cannot conclude that the variability in end-of-day affect we observed is directly attributable to event disclosures. While it is reasonable to assume, based on previous research evidence (e.g., Gable et al., 2004), that disclosures shape affect, it is equally plausible that affective states (one's own, as well as those observed in one's partner) shape individuals' propensities to make event disclosure. Being in a good mood, or observing that one's partner is particularly cheerful and responsive, may motivate individuals to share positive experiences with one another (consistent with the perspective of Forgas, 1995, 2000). Future research employing sequential observations to differentiate these potential pathways can make important contributions to our understanding of the day-to-day processes underlying mutual affective experiences in romantic couples.

In some cases, event disclosures might have had more immediate and transient effects on partners' affect that dissipated by the end of the day. This might account for the lack of disclosure effects with regard to stressful events. Perhaps disclosing stressful events provokes transient increases in negative affect that are outweighed, in the larger affective context of the entire day, by the supportive context of the disclosure interaction, as suggested earlier. Similarly, it may be that being in a good mood promotes disclosure of positive events. Thus, an important direction for future research is to examine more immediate effects of positive and stressful event disclosures and to compare affective variability during such interactions with affective variability at the end of the day. One fascinating question, for example, is whether higher functioning couples are better able than lower functioning couples to sustain the positive affect engendered by positive event disclosures.

This question highlights another important limitation of the present study: the homogeneous nature of the sample. We sampled only highly satisfied, relatively long-term couples

because we wanted to understand how day-to-day interpersonal affect regulation works when it is working well. The obvious next step, of course, is to investigate associations between positive and negative event disclosure and relationship functioning in more diverse samples of couples, including distressed couples and also new couples. Previous research on capitalization suggests important links between relationship satisfaction and capitalization processes (Gable et al., 2004), and such links may also exist for crossover capitalization. Specifically, participants in distressed couples may not show the same types of associations between positive event disclosure and positive affect as did the highly satisfied couples in our study. Along the same lines, less satisfied couples might show the increased negative affect that we expected, but did not find, with regard to hearing about partners' stressful experiences. In other words, perhaps the day-to-day interpersonal processes of poorly functioning couples serve to upregulate negative affect and downregulate positive affect, directly contrary to the effects observed in our highly satisfied couples. It is also interesting to consider whether couples with weak associations between positive affect and partners' mutual event disclosures end up breaking up earlier, thereby selecting themselves out of samples such as ours. Future research with a more diverse sample of couples is necessary to investigate this possibility.

Given the increasing use of electronic forms of communication, it would also be intriguing to directly compare whether positive and stressful event disclosures that take place remotely (e.g., over the phone, instant messaging, e-mail) have different associations with affect regulation than face-to-face disclosures. In the present study, we did not ask individuals to indicate the specific context of the event disclosure, and hence, we do not know how often such disclosures took place face-to-face and whether this had any implications for end-of-day affect (although events that involved the partner were always experienced in the partner's presence). Given the increasing prevalence of remote contact between romantic partners through telephone calls, text messaging, and e-mail, and the frequency with which contemporary couples are temporarily physically separated from one another due to work-related travel, it will become more and more important to understand how the dynamics of routine interpersonal affect regulation in couples operate differently at a distance than face to face. Individual differences might also play a unique role in this regard. For example, highly avoidant individuals might not find the inevitable distance of remote interactions to be less satisfactory, whereas secure and anxiously attached individuals might experience more benefit from face-to-face interactions. The distinction between face-to-face and remote interactions might also prove different for disclosures of stressful versus positive events.

Last, we think it is important to consider the cultural context in which we collected the data. Lack of an appropriate sampling frame necessitated the use of a convenience sample; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting the present results; not only can we not generalize these findings to any population but also the extent to which these results will generalize to other samples or populations is unknown. The many parallels we observed between our data and previous capitalization research increase our confidence, however, in the general applicability of these results (e.g., Gable et al., 2004). Nevertheless, it will be important to continue to examine capitalization processes in other samples, as well as in couples living in different cultural contexts. For example, the culture in Salt Lake City is heavily influenced by the Latter Day Saint religion, which places a heavy emphasis on marriage and family relationships. It is possible that relationships occurring within this context are different from those occurring elsewhere. Nevertheless, our prior work conducted within this community (e.g., Diamond et al., in press; Henry, Berg, Smith, & Florsheim, 2007) has not revealed differences in such basic processes of emotion regulation within couples. We therefore do not expect this aspect of the culture to impact the current findings. Still, the extent to which relationships occurring within this context are different from (and similar to) those occurring elsewhere may be an interesting and important avenue for future work. Additionally, all couples in the present study were heterosexual. The

emotional impact of daily event sharing may be different in same-sex couples. Most notably, to the extent that observed gender differences were due to partners acting out gender-appropriate norms, such effects may differ in couples in which both partners are of the same sex.

Conclusion

Research on affect regulation within romantic couples has increasingly emphasized the importance of day-to-day interpersonal behavior, and the present research supports this emphasis. Some of the most routine, common interactions between romantic partners, such as telling one another about a good day, are associated with daily variability in end-of-day affect, for both the person doing the disclosing and the person being disclosed to. The present research suggests that couples may be able to foster feelings of happiness over the course of time not only by talking together about the difficult or stressful parts of the day but also by talking about good things that happen to them. It is likely that over time, these conversations will also lead to increased feelings of closeness and intimacy and perhaps greater enjoyment and satisfaction within the relationship. Our findings also highlight the inherently bidirectional nature of day-to-day affect-regulating interactions in romantic couples and suggest new directions for future research. Specifically, variations in these processes as a function of gender, attachment style, relationship satisfaction, and relationship stability deserve closer study, as do differences between processes of positive affect regulation versus negative affect regulation. Overall, the findings show the importance of conceptualizing routine relationship experiences in romantic couples as intrinsically dyadic and bidirectional, in terms of both their behavioral processes and their affective associations.

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