# An Exploration of Dyadic Relationship Approach-Avoidance Goals and Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction in Couples Coping with Endometriosis

McKay CL, Van Niekerk LM, Matthewson ML.Arch Sex Behav. 2021 Nov 22. doi: 10.1007/s10508-021-02150-1. Online ahead of print.PMID: 34811656

## Abstract

Endometriosis affects women of reproductive age and is associated with higher levels of sexual and relational distress. Despite the relational context of endometriosis, the research pertaining to dyadic relationship goals is lacking. An exploration of the relationship goals of couples coping with endometriosis can facilitate the understanding of potential protective mechanisms that mitigate the relational components of the condition. Guided by the approach-avoidance theoretical framework, the current cross-sectional study aimed to examine the role relationship goals play in sexual and relationship satisfaction in couples coping with endometriosis. Approach goals relate to the pursuit of a positive outcomes, whereas avoidance goals relate to the avoidance of negative outcomes. Women with endometriosis and their partners (N = 61) completed an online survey measuring relationship goals and relationship and sexual satisfaction. The study results indicated that, for women, their own and their partner's higher relationship approach goals were linked to higher sexual satisfaction. For partners of women with endometriosis, their own higher relationship approach goals were associated with their own higher relationship satisfaction. Higher relationship avoidance goals in both women with endometriosis and partners were associated with higher relationship satisfaction. The study's findings highlight relationship goals as relevant to the relational and sexual experience of couples coping with endometriosis. When treating women with endometriosis, the inclusion of partners and consideration of factors beyond the physical illness are important for a holistic management approach.

**Keywords:**Couples; Endometriosis; Relationship goals; Relationship satisfaction; Sexual satisfaction.