

Attachment characteristics in primary and competing relationships

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Short Description: The study involved 75 respondents, married and having affairs outside their marriages. A comparison of attachment to a spouse and a lover was conducted. In general, in relationships with the primary partner more secure attachment styles are manifested, while relationships with a competing partner are more tense and contradictory.

Abstract: Infidelity is rather common problems in couple therapy. The perception of adultery and dealing with it related to attachment styles. When one of the partners is attracted to someone or something outside of the marriage or relationship, is formulated as competing attachments in modern research. The empirical study involved 75 respondents (44 women and 31 men), 28-55 years old, married and having affairs outside their marriages. Research methods: MIMARA (Brennan, Shaver); Experiences in Close Relationships (Brennan et al.); Marital satisfaction questionnaire (Alyoshina et al.); Questionnaire of understanding, emotional attraction and credibility (Volkova). A comparison of attachment to a spouse and a lover showed that with equal involvement into relationships with each of them, the distance with a lover is higher. People have more trust in their spouses, with their lovers they are more self-reliable, but also more jealous and clinging to partners. Some attachment characteristics (trust, self-reliance, ambivalence) are more stable and manifest themselves in relationships with both a spouse and a lover. While the other characteristics manifest themselves differently in relationships with each partner. In particular, intimacy avoidance with a spouse is directly related to preoccupation in the relationships with a lover. Frustration and ambivalence in relationships with a spouse are directly related to avoidance of intimacy, and in relationships with a lover - with jealousy. The clinging to a spouse is associated with the person's self-reliance, and with lovers - with the proximity seeking. Those people for whom their spouses are primary attachments, compared to those for whom attachments to their lovers are more important, usually have higher marital satisfaction, less avoidant attachment style with their spouse, and more preoccupied attachment style to their lovers. Thus, trust in a partner and self-reliance in the structure of attachment to a spouse and to a lover appear to be more universal characteristics, and the ratio between avoidance and preoccupation varies in relationships with spouses or lovers. In general, in relationships with the primary partner more secure attachment styles are manifested, while relationships with a competing partner are more tense and contradictory.