

LOG ID	BOOK REFERENCE	RCT FILTER	CONFIDENCE TIER
SEC 7.3	CHAPTER 7: STANDARDIZING CONNECTION (Social API)	ON	CONSENSUS

AUDITED CLAIM

README.MD (YOUR PERSONAL USER MANUAL)

SYSTEMS MODEL — AS STATED IN THE BOOK

Clinically, explicitly sharing your communication preferences and **physiological stress responses** actively reduces interpersonal conflict, provided it enables your partner to offer **responsive, matched support** rather than mismatched advice.

VALIDATION QUERY

Does explicitly sharing personal communication preferences and stress responses with a partner reduce interpersonal conflict?

EMPIRICAL FINDING

Clinical psychology and relationship intervention studies demonstrate that explicit communication of stress responses and relational needs reduces couple conflict. The primary mechanism of conflict reduction relies on the partner using that information to provide **responsive, empathetic support** that accurately matches the individual's specific needs.

PRIMARY ANCHORS

- Doss et al., 2020, Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology
- Ditzen et al., 2009, Biological Psychiatry

ABOUT THIS RECORD

Each claim in the book is decompiled from its IT metaphor into a naked, falsifiable scientific claim, then anchored to a **primary peer-reviewed source**. Claim and anchor are queried against the Consensus academic database (200M+ papers) under a fixed protocol — top-tier **Q1/Q2 journals only**, preprints excluded, human studies only. If a hypothesis fails the audit, the build is rejected: the AI generates the syntax; the peer-reviewed grid validates the physics.

CONFIDENCE TIERS

- CONSENSUS** — **this log** — broadly established, highly replicated mechanics.
- EMERGING** — plausible, actively researched; no universal consensus yet.
- EXPERIMENTAL** — contested, extrapolated, or purely theoretical.

RCT FILTER — Controlled Studies is ON for interventions (a forced action must beat a control) and OFF for mechanisms (so foundational neuroscience isn't blocked).

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Yes, explicitly sharing stress responses and communication needs usually reduces conflict, but effects depend on responsiveness.

1. Introduction

Explicitly sharing personal communication preferences and stress responses with a partner generally reduces interpersonal conflict, but the effect is moderate rather than universal. Across randomized trials, couple programs that teach communication, conflict-management, emotional disclosure, or dyadic coping usually reduce negative communication, ineffective arguing, aggression, or conflict frequency (■ Doss et al., 2020; ■ Markman et al., 1993; ■ Cummings et al., 2008). More focused experiments also show that when partners communicate more positively or disclose stress more openly, conflict interactions become less negative or more productive, and physiological stress can fall (Ditzen et al., 2009; Shahar et al., 2018; Ben-Naim et al., 2013).

The mechanism appears to be responsiveness rather than disclosure alone. Open expression tends to work when it helps partners understand each other's needs and respond supportively, but not when it elicits the wrong kind of support, intensifies rumination, or occurs in severe or unsafe relationships (Pauw et al., 2024; Kane et al., 2018; Cao et al., 2021). That pattern fits studies showing that expressive suppression disrupts communication and elevates stress, whereas empathic, constructive, or positively framed interactions improve relationship functioning (Butler et al., 2003; Howick et al., 2018; ■ Troitskaya & Batkhina, 2021).

Does explicitly sharing personal communication preferences and stress responses with a partner reduce interpersonal conflict?

N = 12

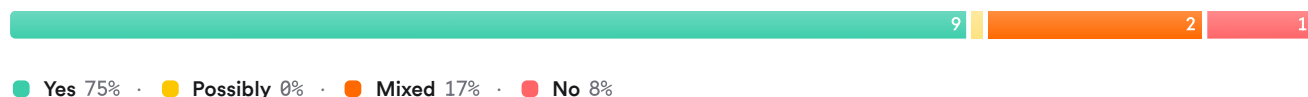


FIGURE 1 Consensus on explicit sharing and couple conflict

2. Methods

This review synthesizes a Deep Search run over more than 170 million research papers indexed in Consensus, spanning Semantic Scholar, PubMed, and other academic sources. The search initially identified 32,667 papers for the focal query, then expanded through targeted searches on emotional disclosure, communication preferences, partner responsiveness, conflict resolution, and stress communication. Citation crawling added related literatures on dyadic coping, emotion regulation, and interpersonal stress buffering.

A machine-learned relevance screen reduced 230 candidate papers to 151 eligible papers, and the top 50 most relevant controlled human studies were included for close synthesis. Priority was given to randomized trials, meta-analyses, and mechanistic couple experiments, while adjacent studies were used to clarify moderators and boundary conditions.

Search Strategy

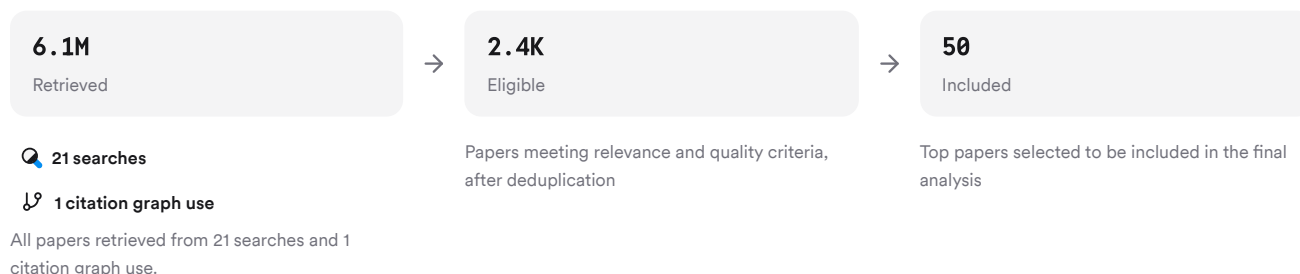


FIGURE 2 Deep search selection and screening flow

The strategy combined direct couple-intervention searches with adjacent literatures on disclosure, empathy, suppression, and interpersonal stress regulation.

3. Results

3.1 Key Papers

The strongest anchors are one large RCT showing that online couple interventions reduce communication conflict, one classic long-term prevention trial showing durable reductions in negative communication and marital violence, and one experimental study showing that positive communication during conflict lowers cortisol (■ Doss et al., 2020; ■ Markman et al., 1993; Ditzen et al., 2009).

Paper	Summary
(■ Markman et al., 1993)	Large RCT found improved relationship functioning and lower conflict versus waitlist (■ Doss et al., 2020)
(Aguilar-Raab et al., 2025)	Five-year follow-up showed less negative communication and lower marital violence (■ Markman et al., 1993)
(■ Doss et al., 2020)	Positive couple communication during conflict reduced cortisol and improved interaction balance (Ditzen et al., 2009)

FIGURE 3 Foundational papers anchoring this literature

3.2 Communication Interventions

Across intervention studies, explicit work on communication and conflict skills usually lowers conflict. In low-income couples, two web-based programs improved all five measured domains of relationship functioning, with median effects around $d = 0.46$, and the problem-focused program produced slightly larger conflict reductions (■ Doss et al., 2020). Earlier PREP follow-up data showed higher positive communication, lower negative communication, and lower marital violence five years later (■ Markman et al., 1993).

More recent trials point the same way but with variation by population and intensity. A self-directed DVD intervention improved dyadic coping and reduced conflict behavior mainly for women, with larger gains among participants starting with poorer skills (■ Bodenmann et al., 2014). Brief psychoeducation in community families increased constructive and reduced destructive marital conflict through one year (■ Cummings et al., 2008). Integrative behavioral couple therapy increased constructive communication and reduced avoidance and demand-withdraw, although the demand-withdraw effect was smaller and should be interpreted cautiously (■ Salimi et al., 2024).

3.3 Stress Disclosure And Regulation

The evidence is weaker but still favorable when the question narrows from general communication training to explicit sharing of stress responses. In a laboratory conflict discussion, oxytocin increased positive relative to negative communication and reduced post-conflict cortisol, showing that more affiliative exchange can dampen stress during conflict (Ditzen et al., 2009). A minimal appreciation task in daily life reduced perceived stress for women overall and lowered cortisol and alpha-amylase when practiced, especially among men (Aguilar-Raab et al., 2025).

Yet disclosure is not uniformly calming. When partners were experimentally prompted to express feelings about an acute stressor, people low in habitual emotional approach coping showed smaller cortisol responses and less negative emotion after expression, but people high in that coping style showed larger cortisol responses and more rumination unless partner support was also present (Kane et al., 2018). Partner presence can also reduce heart rate during stress while increasing subjective anxiety, suggesting that feeling safe enough to admit distress is not the same as feeling less distressed (Maffei et al., 2025).

3.4 Boundary Conditions

Dimension	Helps Conflict	Can Backfire	Citations
Emotion expression	Open, accepted engagement improves productivity	Suppression disrupts communication and raises stress	(Shahar et al., 2018; Butler et al., 2003)

Dimension	Helps Conflict	Can Backfire	Citations
Partner response	Responsive support improves effectiveness	Mismatched support can feel good briefly but hinder recovery	(Pauw et al., 2024)
Population risk	Distressed couples often improve most	Severe IPV requires more than communication alone	(■ Bodenmann et al., 2014; Cao et al., 2021)
Conflict style	Skills reduce aggression, avoidance, and demand-withdraw	Some skill programs show mixed behavior trajectories	(Babcock et al., 2024; ■ Rogge et al., 2013)
Disclosure target	Holding-back couples benefit more from disclosure	Benefits may not extend equally to partners	(Porter et al., 2009)

FIGURE 4 Moderators and limits of intervention effects

Taken together, the strongest pattern is that explicit sharing helps when it increases mutual understanding, empathy, and constructive responding, not simply when more feelings are voiced.

Results Timeline

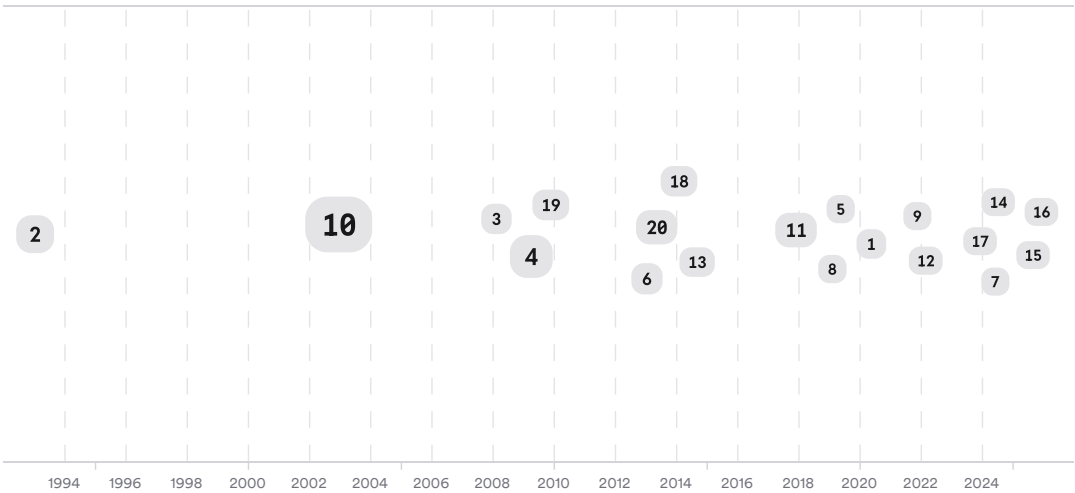


FIGURE 5 Timeline of included studies, larger markers indicate more citations

Top Contributors

Type	Name	Papers
Author	G. Bodenmann	[3958ef56666c5485adab81f3fb002149][85dbe9ffa487552586f09fa5b96b33c2] [2224ca4cfd6f5551974288baece8e230]
Author	B. Ditzen	[3958ef56666c5485adab81f3fb002149][2224ca4cfd6f5551974288baece8e230]
Author	M. Heinrichs	[3958ef56666c5485adab81f3fb002149][2224ca4cfd6f5551974288baece8e230]
Journal	Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology	[1aa6596bbc4159b0a9240119f19ca85d][85dbe9ffa487552586f09fa5b96b33c2] [46c6ad6ff929580bb9d227d0c0dbdf25][3df17a6c87ec579282cfc42d4aea5945]

Type	Name	Papers
Journal	<i>Family Process</i>	[f53d40a9233b518fb7c4ed102a488d74][54575344b9575f5f93f5f41c148a27c2] [5b82ceta1f40539ebe45a9a35b788fdb]
Journal	<i>Emotion</i>	[8046db05f05354d5820f1e5a1503f737][6024c83322935d31ad7830de2571dfc6] [0e7b0cfee70e5cf9adb434234dc11ab1][95eca717d24550a2a52dfb379953a777]

FIGURE 6 Authors and journals most frequent in included papers

4. Discussion

The strongest evidence supports a practical but qualified yes. Large randomized trials and meta-analyses show that couple-focused interventions aimed at communication, empathy, conflict management, or dyadic coping produce small-to-moderate improvements in conflict-related outcomes across distressed, community, medical, and parenting samples (■ Doss et al., 2020; Badr & Krebs, 2013; Rathgeber et al., 2019). Those findings have notable replication across decades and formats, including face-to-face, online, self-directed, app-based, and group interventions (■ Markman et al., 1993; ■ Troitskaya & Batkhina, 2021; Nunes et al., 2020).

But the exact phrase in the question—“explicitly sharing personal communication preferences and stress responses”—is narrower than most trials. Many studies test broader communication-skills packages rather than a pure meta-communication intervention about preferences. The closest mechanistic studies suggest that explicit expression can lower stress and improve discussion quality, but only under some conditions: suppression is consistently harmful, empathic regulation can help, and responsiveness is the key moderator (Butler et al., 2003; Levy-Gigi & Shamay-Tsoory, 2017; Pauw et al., 2024).

The literature also warns against oversimplification. Sharing distress can amplify cortisol or rumination in some individuals, can fail to improve long-term recovery if it elicits only momentarily comforting support, and is insufficient on its own in severe IPV or highly dysregulated relationships (Kane et al., 2018; Pauw et al., 2024; Hesser et al., 2017). Some prevention studies also show that relationship awareness alone can rival more elaborate skills programs on some long-term outcomes, which suggests that the active ingredient is not always the explicit teaching of communication preferences per se (■ Rogge et al., 2013).

Overall, the evidence favors explicit sharing as part of a broader constructive communication process, especially when it promotes empathy, reduces avoidance, and helps partners match support to needs. The evidence is less definitive that simply telling a partner one’s preferences or stress responses, by itself, reliably reduces conflict across all couples and contexts (Pauw et al., 2024; Cao et al., 2021; Lloyd et al., 2023).

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Couple communication and conflict-management interventions reduce interpersonal conflict on average.	 Strong	Multiple RCTs and long-term follow-ups show replicated improvements in negative communication and conflict.	(■ Doss et al., 2020; ■ Markman et al., 1993; ■ Cummings et al., 2008)
Explicit stress or emotion sharing helps when partners respond supportively and accurately.	 Moderate	Experimental and dyadic studies point to partner responsiveness and empathy as key moderators.	(Kane et al., 2018; Levy-Gigi & Shamay-Tsoory, 2017; Pauw et al., 2024)
Suppressing emotions during conflict worsens communication and stress.	 Strong	Multiple experiments show higher physiological arousal and poorer interaction quality under suppression.	(Butler et al., 2003; Ben-Naim et al., 2013)
Simply sharing distress does not reliably improve outcomes for every couple.	 Moderate	Benefits vary by coping style, support match, baseline distress, and whether disclosure is reciprocal.	(Kane et al., 2018; Porter et al., 2009)

Claim	Evidence Strength	Reasoning	Papers
Explicit sharing alone reduces severe IPV or entrenched coercive conflict.	Weak	Evidence is limited and cautions that communication-only approaches are insufficient in severe violence.	(Cao et al., 2021; Hesser et al., 2017; ■ Kalra et al., 2024)

FIGURE 7 Key claims and evidence strength across papers

5. Conclusion

The literature supports a qualified yes: explicitly sharing communication needs and stress responses with a partner usually helps reduce interpersonal conflict, but mainly when that sharing leads to constructive, responsive interaction. Stronger evidence exists for broader couple communication and conflict-management interventions than for narrowly defined “preference-sharing” alone, yet the two likely overlap in practice (■ Doss et al., 2020; ■ Markman et al., 1993; Aguilar-Raab et al., 2025).

Research Gaps

The main gap is precision. The field has good evidence that communication-focused couple interventions help, but far less evidence isolating whether explicit discussion of communication preferences and physiological stress cues is the active ingredient rather than one helpful component among many.

Topic/Outcome	RCT couples	Mechanistic lab work	Long-term follow-up	Severe conflict/IPV
Communication preferences sharing	2	3	1	1
Stress-response disclosure	2	5	1	GAP
Broad communication training	10	4	7	4
Partner responsiveness matching	3	6	1	1
High-risk or diverse populations	4	2	2	3

Open Research Questions

Future work should isolate the active ingredient more directly and test whether explicit meta-communication about needs works differently across stress profiles and conflict severity.

Question	Why
Does explicitly discussing each partner’s preferred support style during conflict reduce later conflict more than standard communication-skills training?	This would separate meta-communication about preferences from broader communication packages that currently dominate the evidence base.
Do couples benefit more from sharing physiological stress cues when partners are also trained to respond in matched ways?	Existing studies suggest responsiveness, not disclosure alone, drives benefit, but this has not been tested cleanly in couple RCTs.

Question	Why
Which couples are harmed, unchanged, or helped by explicit stress disclosure?	Current evidence suggests moderation by coping style, attachment, and violence risk, but subgroup evidence remains thin.

In sum, explicitly sharing personal communication preferences and stress responses with a partner appears to reduce interpersonal conflict for many couples, but only when the sharing is met with responsive, constructive support.

These search results were found and analyzed using Consensus, an AI-powered search engine for research. Try it at <https://consensus.app>. © 2026 Consensus NLP, Inc. Personal, non-commercial use only; redistribution requires copyright holders' consent.

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