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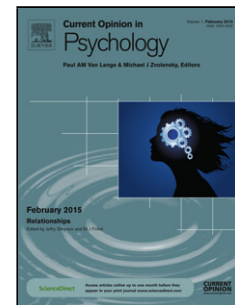
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Attachment, conflict and relationship quality: Laboratory-based and clinical insights

Judith Feeney and Jennifer Fitzgerald

### Abstract

Severe or persistent conflict is disturbing for romantic partners and can jeopardize the couple relationship, hence activating the attachment system. In this paper we integrate recent laboratory-based and clinical research into attachment processes and couple conflict. Three main tenets are addressed. First, attachment security and insecurity have pervasive effects in conflict situations, shaping perceptual, physiological and behavioral responses to conflict. Second, attachment insecurity and associated conflict behaviors tend to erode relationship quality. Third, attachment-related interventions are effective not only in reducing the maladaptive responses that lead to conflict escalation, but also in promoting security and emotional connection within the couple bond. These findings attest to the key role of attachment processes in conflict interactions, while offering a clear, theory-based framework for intervention.

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