

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS OF CLOSENESS AND EMOTIONAL SAFETY BETWEEN TWO INDIVIDUALS: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS BASED ON ATTACHMENT THEORY

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Abstract. *This theoretical-scientific article examines the psychological nature of closeness between two individuals, the role of emotional safety in couple relationships, and the internal mechanisms that contribute to relational disruption. The study draws on contemporary attachment theory, emotional responsiveness, couple dynamics, and models of emotional regulation.*

The primary aim is to explain the process of emotional disconnection in couples, identify its underlying causes, and theoretically substantiate factors that maintain emotional closeness. While inspired by Sue Johnson's emotionally focused approach, this article independently explores emotional safety, vulnerability, the influence of past experiences on adult relationships, and the internal structure of conflicts. Findings suggest that stable relationships rely on emotional responsiveness, mutual presence, permission for vulnerability, and integration of past wounds. This work provides a theoretical foundation for researchers in family psychology, couple therapy, and attachment theory.

Keywords. *Attachment theory; emotional safety; couple dynamics; emotional responsiveness; emotional disconnection; vulnerability; relationship psychology*

Introduction.

Closeness between two individuals is not merely an aesthetic element of romantic relationships; it is a fundamental form of social-psychological existence. Contemporary psychology considers closeness as a combination of biological instincts, emotional needs, individual history, and social factors. According to attachment theory, individuals rely on specific people to feel safe—a reliance that continues into adulthood.

In the 21st century, increasing individualism, digital communication, and social isolation contribute to faster development of emotional distance between partners. Therefore, understanding the principles underlying emotional safety and closeness remains scientifically relevant. This article theoretically examines the mechanisms of relational disruption and the factors supporting its restoration.

Literature Review.

Previous research highlights the central role of emotional safety in adult relationships:

- Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978) emphasizes reliance on significant others for safety.
- Emotionally focused therapy (Johnson, 2004) demonstrates that emotional responsiveness strengthens couple bonds.
- Neuropsychological studies (Coan, 2006; Porges, 2011) show that perceived safety regulates stress responses.

Key findings include:

1. Absence of safety signals intensifies the activation–protection cycle in couples.
2. During conflict, the brain’s threat system is activated, reducing constructive communication.
3. Childhood attachment patterns reappear in adult romantic relationships.
4. Expressing vulnerability deepens emotional closeness.

This article synthesizes these findings without reproducing their original content.

Methodology.

This work employs a theoretical-analytical approach, integrating:

- Conceptual analysis of the attachment system
- Psychological interpretation of emotional safety
- Modeling of conflict mechanisms in couples
- Integration of neurological and clinical research findings

While informed by empirical studies, the article itself is not an empirical investigation but a theoretical synthesis.

Main Body.

1. Functional Role of Emotional Safety and Closeness

Closeness functions as a biological and psychological mechanism that enhances resilience to stress. Research indicates that physical or emotional contact with a close person reduces the activation of the threat system. Disruption of emotional safety in relationships leads not only to psychological instability but also to physiological discomfort.

2. Internal Mechanisms of Emotional Disconnection.

Emotional disconnection often begins subtly through micro-signals such as:

- Lack of response
- Cold tone
- Short conversations
- Insufficient attention

These signals trigger a perception of “danger” in both individuals’ safety systems, creating a negative cycle:

Need → Emotion → Protection → Distance

3. Conflict as Misinterpretation of Needs.

Heightened emotions during conflicts often mask core needs. Criticism, anger, or coldness reflect unmet primary needs, such as:

- Desire to be heard
- Need for appreciation

Conflict is thus not the root problem but a misrepresentation of these unmet needs.

4. Influence of Childhood Experiences on Adult Closeness.

Attachment styles (anxious, avoidant, disorganized, secure) influence couple dynamics. Protective strategies learned in childhood persist into adulthood:

- Some individuals become overly clingy
- Others create distance through excessive independence

5. Vulnerability as the Basis of Stable Closeness

Expressing vulnerability is crucial for restoring deep emotional connection. Vulnerability entails:

- Communicating personal needs
- Sharing personal concerns with another, thereby reactivating the safety system

Conclusion.

Stable closeness emerges at the intersection of biological, psychological, and historical factors, with emotional safety forming its foundation. When safety is disrupted, negative cycles develop:

- Needs remain unexpressed
- Emotions are misinterpreted
- Protective reactions intensify
- Distance between partners increases

Restoration of closeness is possible through:

- Expressing vulnerability
- Openly communicating needs
- Integrating past wounds
- Enhancing emotional responsiveness

Adult attachment systems can be reshaped if partners create an environment that acknowledges, respects, and responds to each other's emotional experiences.

Inspired by Sue Johnson's approach, this analysis demonstrates that stable love is not about "matching" but "adapting". It is not innate; it is a learnable, developable, and psychologically maintainable system.

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