

Spousal Support and Cardiac Patients' Distress: The Moderating Role of Attachment Orientation

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Based on the Person-Environment Fit Model, the current prospective study explored the effect of the interaction between spouses' ways of providing support and patients' attachment orientations on the patients' levels of psychological distress six months after experiencing a first Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS). One hundred and eleven patients completed the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale during hospitalization, while their spouses completed the Ways of Giving Support Questionnaire one month later. The outcomes measured were the patients' depression and anxiety six months after their ACS. As predicted, whereas active engagement decreased the anxiety of anxiously attached patients, it increased the anxiety of patients low on this orientation. Avoidant patients did not benefit from support regardless of the manner in which it was provided. These results show that the effects of support may depend on the delicate interplay between providers' support and recipients' personalities. The implications of these conclusions for attachment theory and the study of dyadic coping are discussed.