

The Capitalisation Effect

A Meta-Analysis of Active-Constructive Responding on Relationship and Team Outcomes

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KEY NUMBER · R

.40

95% CI .35–.45

Perceived active-constructive responding is associated with relationship satisfaction at $r = .40$ (95% CI .35–.45) across five published samples and 1,071 people.

The Capitalisation Effect

A Meta-Analysis of Active-Constructive Responding on Relationship and Team Outcomes

When someone shares good news, does how you respond measurably change relationship quality, and does it transfer to teams?

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INDEXING TITLE

Active-constructive responding to shared good news: a meta-analysis of associations with relationship and team outcomes

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01

Abstract

People tell someone about the best thing that happened to them on most days. This systematic review and restricted meta-analysis asked how strongly an active-constructive response to that good news — enthusiasm plus curiosity, not a polite nod — relates to relationship quality, and whether training the response changes team outcomes. Across five independent published samples ($k = 5$, $N = 1,071$), perceived active-constructive responding was associated with relationship satisfaction at $r = .40$ (95% CI .35 to .45; $I^2 \approx 0\%$). That is a medium-to-large association, consistent from dating couples in the United States to married couples in Italy and dating adults in Malaysia. Only the active-constructive style is reliably positive; quiet congratulations and both flavours of rain-on-the-parade track with lower satisfaction. A randomised trial of a 20-minute active-constructive practice plus four weeks of daily reps did not change self-reported relationship satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.09$, $p = .20$). It did raise perceived partner satisfaction and gratitude receipt. No eligible randomised trial has tested active-constructive training against team cohesion. No India-resident primary study was found in PubMed, Google Scholar, CTRI or ClinicalTrials.gov. The association is real. The training effect on one's own satisfaction is unproven. Transfer to Indian workplaces is a hypothesis, not a result. Programmes should treat active-constructive responding as a countable daily rep, measure perceived response rather than self-congratulation, and test it in India before claiming team change.

Keywords. capitalisation; active-constructive responding; relationship satisfaction; teams; systematic review; India

02

Key findings box

KEY FINDINGS

.40

Perceived active-constructive responding is associated with relationship satisfaction at $r = .40$ (95% CI .35–.45) across five published samples and 1,071 people.

60–80%

People share the day's best event on **60–80%** of days; the response, not the event alone, tracks the bond.

•

Of four response styles, **only active-constructive** is reliably linked to higher satisfaction, trust and intimacy. The other three go the other way.

20

The only dedicated training trial found **no significant change** in self-reported relationship satisfaction after 20 minutes of instruction plus four weeks of practice ($\gamma = 0.09$, $p = .20$).

0

Eligible randomised trials of active-constructive training with team-cohesion outcomes: **zero**. India-resident primary studies: **zero**.

03

Definition block

DEFINITION

Active-constructive responding is what you do in the ten seconds after someone tells you something good. You light up. You ask two real questions. You stay with their story before you start yours.

Capitalisation is the wider process: a person shares a positive event, and the listener's reply either banks the joy or spends it. Researchers cross two dimensions — active versus passive, constructive versus destructive — and get four styles. Active-constructive is engaged and enlarging: "That is brilliant. Walk me through how you closed it."

Passive-constructive is kind and small: "Nice." Active-destructive is engaged and shrinking: "Yes, but have you thought about the tax."

Passive-destructive is neither engaged nor kind: a topic change, a glance at the phone. In the laboratory and in daily diaries, only the first style reliably tracks better bonds. The technique is a practice, not a diagnosis. It is a rep you can count.

04

Introduction

A Mumbai manager closes a deal at 6.11 p.m. She drops the news into the family WhatsApp and into the project group. One chat replies with a firework emoji and two questions. The other replies "ok" and a spreadsheet. Same news. Two different evenings. This paper is about that fork.

Stand-up comics know the rule: you do not step on the laugh. If the room is rising, you ride it. You do not explain the joke or change the subject to your parking ticket. Good news is a laugh line, and most of us step on it. A cousin rings to say she cleared her exam; we ask about the posting. A junior says the build finally passed; we mention the next ticket.

A junior analyst in Chennai rings home with her first promotion. Her father puts down the remote, calls her mother to the phone, and asks what the new role involves and who told her. That is active-constructive responding. Her elder brother, who got no fuss for his own promotion, says, "Good. Now see if you can keep it," and lists the late nights nobody ever praised. That is active-destructive responding dressed as good sense. Nothing about her job changed between the two replies. What changed was the evening at home. Capitalisation research is the same scene with better tables.

A win arrives. The first thought is often “do not make a fuss” or “this will not last.” The practice is to stay with the win for one extra minute and ask a question you do not already know the answer to. You collect evidence that the event is real. When the colleague at the next desk says she has been promoted, your jaw may tighten for half a second. Notice that flinch as an urge, not an instruction, and lean in anyway: “When did they tell you?” Then choose which colleague you want to be: the one who can stand someone else’s light, or the one who dims the room. Entrepreneurs already know the customer-success version. When a client says the product worked, the amateur says “great” and invoices. The professional says “tell me what changed,” because the story is the next case study.

Machine-learning people have a name for this too. Reward shaping. If the environment pays the model only for avoiding error, the model learns silence. If the environment pays for the rare correct classification, the model learns to try again. A team is a learning system. The daily gradient is not the annual appraisal. It is what happens when someone says, “It worked.”

Shelly Gable, Harry Reis and colleagues named the process capitalisation — from Langston’s earlier observation that people do not only cope with bad events; they also try to cash good ones. In 2004 they showed that sharing a positive event lifts daily mood above the event itself, and that an enthusiastic reply lifts it further. In 2006 they filmed couples talking about good news and bad news. Two months later, how partners had handled the good-news conversation predicted relationship health and break-up more tightly than how they had handled the bad-news conversation. That finding still surprises people who were trained to think that love is mainly the absence of fights.

Peters, Reis and Gable reviewed the field in 2018 and offered an interpersonal model. Capitalisation is not a monologue. It is a loop: the share, the reply, the next share. They also noted what this paper confirms. There was no meta-analysis. There still was not, until this synthesis.

Why does the question matter for working adults in India? Because Indian professional life is dense with good-news moments that die in the corridor. A campus offer. A visa stamp. A parent’s scan that came back clear. A pull request that finally passed. The cultural script is often modesty for the speaker and understatement for the listener. “More ho gaya.” “Chalega.” Understatement can be courtesy. It can also be a passive-constructive habit that the data do not reward. At the same time, many Indian teams are steeply ranked. Sharing a win in a competitive stack can look like status play. Workplace research, discussed later, shows that capitalisation at work is not automatically kind. Competition can turn a shared win into envy. The response still matters. The context matters more than the slogan.

EmotionApp already teaches the daily rep as Match the Firecracker: match the energy, ask two genuine follow-up questions, do not hijack the story. This paper is the evidence weight behind that rep. It asks two things, and it keeps them separate. First, how strongly does perceived active-constructive

responding relate to relationship quality in adults? Second, does training the technique change team outcomes? The honest preview is this. The first question has an answer with a number. The second question does not, yet.

05

Methods

5.1 Protocol and positioning

This review follows PRISMA 2020 reporting for searches, eligibility and flow. It positions itself against Gable and colleagues (2004, 2006) and against the 2018 narrative review by Peters, Reis and Gable. No prior quantitative synthesis of active-constructive responding and relationship or team outcomes was identified. Correlational and experimental evidence were specified in advance to be pooled separately. The pre-specified fallback was applied: if fewer than five eligible trials were found, experimental effects would not be pooled. That threshold was not met. The experimental section is therefore a systematic review with narrative synthesis. The correlational section is a restricted random-effects synthesis of verified published coefficients, not a claim that every paper in the citation tree has been extracted.

5.2 Eligibility

Population. Adults in couples, friendships or teams.

Exposure or intervention. Active-constructive responding to shared good news, observed, perceived or trained. Capitalisation attempts without a measured response style were retained for narrative workplace context only.

Comparator. Other response styles (passive-constructive, active-destructive, passive-destructive) or a control activity.

Primary outcomes. Relationship satisfaction; trust; intimacy; team cohesion.

Designs. For the experimental question: randomised or otherwise controlled trials of training or practice. For the correlational question: cross-sectional, diary and longitudinal studies with an extractable association between active-constructive responding and a primary outcome.

Years. 2004 to 22 September 2026.

Exclusions. Child samples. Papers that used “active constructive” only as a leadership-style label unrelated to shared good news. Theses without a published coefficient, unless needed to flag the India gap. Studies that could not be verified by title, authors, year and DOI or stable URL were marked UNVERIFIED and kept out of any pool.

Language of publication was not used as an exclusion if an English abstract and a coefficient could be verified.

5.3 Information sources and search strings

Sources searched: PubMed, Google Scholar, publisher platforms for Scopus- and Web-of-Science-indexed journals, CTRI (India), ClinicalTrials.gov, and OSF preprint hits located by Google Scholar. Citation chaining from Gable and colleagues (2004, 2006) and Peters, Reis and Gable (2018) was used to recover studies that keyword search missed. Institutional PsycINFO was not available to this team; the limitation is stated rather than disguised.

PubMed.

(capitalization[tiab] OR capitalisation[tiab] OR "active-constructive responding"[tiab] OR "active constructive responding"[tiab] OR "sharing good news"[tiab] OR "perceived responses to capitalization"[tiab] OR "perceived responses to capitalisation"[tiab]) AND (satisfaction[tiab] OR intimacy[tiab] OR trust[tiab] OR cohesion[tiab] OR workplace[tiab] OR team[tiab] OR relationship[tiab])

PsycINFO / Scopus / Web of Science analogue.

("capitalization" OR "capitalisation" OR "active-constructive responding" OR "active constructive responding" OR "sharing good news" OR "capitalization attempts") AND ("relationship satisfaction" OR intimacy OR trust OR "team cohesion" OR workplace OR team)

Google Scholar.

"active-constructive responding" OR "capitalization attempts" OR "relationship satisfaction"

and separately

("workplace" OR team OR coworker) (capitalization OR "active-constructive")

CTRI and ClinicalTrials.gov.

capitalization OR capitalisation OR "active-constructive" OR "active constructive responding" OR "sharing good news"

Years restricted to 1 January 2004 through 22 September 2026.

5.4 Selection and extraction

Records were screened at title and abstract, then at full text where a PDF or stable abstract with coefficients was available. Extraction fields, specified in advance, were: sample size; design; country; language of delivery; dose in sessions and minutes; delivery channel; guidance (self-guided, coached, observed); outcome measure described in plain language; timepoints; effect size (r, beta, gamma, or g) with a 95% confidence interval where published.

Two internal consistency checks were applied. First, Gable and colleagues (2004) Study 3 reports both zero-order correlations and partial correlations that control for earlier marital satisfaction. The association synthesis uses zero-

order coefficients. Partial correlations are reported in the narrative as a stricter test. Second, workplace papers that measure the act of sharing good news, not the active-constructive style of the reply, were not entered into the r-pool.

5.5 Analysis plan

Correlational question. Restricted random-effects synthesis of published r values linking active-constructive responding (or, where only a composite perceived-response score was published for the primary well-being outcome, that composite) to relationship satisfaction or an equivalent relationship-quality score. One coefficient per independent sample. In dyadic papers, women's and men's coefficients were averaged before pooling so that couples were not double-counted. Fisher z transformation, inverse-variance weights, back-transformation to r . Heterogeneity as I^2 and τ^2 . A 95% prediction interval was calculated where τ^2 could be estimated. No trim-and-fill was performed on a five-sample set; small-study risk is discussed narratively. Leave-one-out is reported.

Experimental question. Pre-specified fallback: fewer than five eligible trials means no pooled g . Each trial is described with design, dose, channel, outcomes and the published coefficient.

Moderators, pre-specified. Correlational versus experimental; couples versus workplace. Culture is discussed as a post-hoc observation, not a formal test.

Risk of bias. RoB 2 domains for the single eligible training trial. An analogue judgement for observational studies: common-method variance, shared-method inflation of perceived responding and satisfaction, WEIRD sampling, and observer-coded versus self-report.

Certainty. GRADE, applied separately to (a) the association with relationship satisfaction, (b) training effects on own relationship satisfaction, and (c) training effects on team cohesion.

5.6 PRISMA 2020 flow

Approximately 1,200 unique records were identified across Google Scholar, PubMed, publisher sites, trial registries and citation chaining. About 180 titles and abstracts were screened in detail. Forty-five full texts or equivalent detailed records were assessed. Twenty-two primary reports were retained for narrative synthesis. Five independent samples entered the correlational r -pool. One report met the definition of an eligible active-constructive training trial with a relationship-quality endpoint. Zero reports met the definition of an eligible active-constructive training trial with a team-cohesion endpoint. Zero India-resident primary studies and zero CTRI or ClinicalTrials.gov registrations of an active-constructive programme were found.

The flow is a rapid but documented review, not a pretence of dual independent screening across eight licensed databases. That limit is a limitation, not a decoration.

06 Results

6.1 Study-characteristics table

The founding studies are American couple samples. Later work adds Italian married couples, a Malaysian dating sample, clinical and health-stressed couples, and a thin workplace literature that is mostly about sharing, not trained responding.

Table 1. Characteristics of core primary studies

Study	Country	N	Design	Population	Exposure	Primary outcomes	Timepoints
Gable, Reis, Impett & Asher 2004, Study 2	USA	59 dating couples	Cross-sectional self-report	Dating adults	Perceived partner response to good news	Satisfaction, trust, intimacy, commitment	Concurrent
Gable et al. 2004, Study 3	USA	89 married couples	Daily diary	Married adults	Perceived partner response	Daily satisfaction, intimacy, conflict	Daily, short window
Gable, Gonzaga & Strachman 2006	USA	79 dating couples	Lab observation + follow-up	Dating adults	Observed and perceived response to good-news and bad-news talks	Relationship well-being, break-up	Concurrent + 2 months
Reis et al. 2010	USA	4 experiments + 1 diary	Lab experiments	Students and community	Enthusiastic versus muted replies, including from strangers	Event value, trust, liking	Immediate
Pagani, Donato & Iafrate 2013	Italy	239 couples	Scale validation + concurrent associations	Married / stable couples ≥ 3 years	Perceived partner response	Couple satisfaction	Concurrent
Kashdan et al. 2013	USA	174 couples	Multi-method + 6-month follow-up	Dating / young couples	Perceived, partner-reported and observed responses	Satisfaction, commitment, break-up	Concurrent + 6 months
Donato, Pagani et al. 2014	Italy	173 married couples	Two-wave, 4 months	Long marriages (mean 18 years)	Perceived partner response	Satisfaction, individual well-being	4 months
Woods et al. 2015	USA	65 dyads (38 trained, 27 control)	Randomised trial	University dyads (partners or friends)	20-min training + 4 weeks of daily practice	Own satisfaction, perceived partner satisfaction, gratitude	4 weeks
Otto, Laurenceau et al. 2015	USA	99 couples coping with breast cancer	Daily diary	Health-stressed couples	Capitalisation attempts and perceived responsiveness	Daily intimacy	7–10 days

Study	Country	N	Design	Population	Exposure	Primary outcomes	Timepoints
Pagani et al. 2020	Italy	90 couples diary; 169 couples two-wave	Diary + longitudinal	Community couples	Perceived active-constructive replies	Couple identity, relationship quality	Daily and lagged
De Netto, Quek & Golden 2021	Malaysia	139 dating adults	Cross-sectional	Dating adults, 18–30	Perceived capitalisation and accommodation styles	Relationship satisfaction	Concurrent
Watkins 2021	USA	Field + experimental	Observational / experimental	Employees and coworkers	Sharing work wins with coworkers	Inspiration vs envy; citizenship vs undermining	Varied
Watkins, Kleshinski, Longmire & He 2023	Multi-country sample	Field	Observational	Employees	Sharing work wins	Pride, knowledge sharing	Varied

Dose was extractable only for the training trial: one 20-minute audio-guided lesson plus an instruction to practise every day for four weeks, delivered face to face / screen to screen in a university setting, in English, with no human coaching after the lesson. Language of delivery for the correlational corpus is English except the Italian programme of Pagani, Donato and colleagues, delivered in Italian. No study in the eligible set was delivered in an Indian language.

6.2 Correlational synthesis: active-constructive responding and relationship satisfaction

The pre-specified quotable output for the correlational question is r .

Five independent published samples had a verifiable coefficient linking active-constructive responding, or the published perceived-response composite used as the paper's primary well-being marker, to relationship satisfaction or equivalent relationship quality.

Table 2. Forest-plot data for the restricted correlational synthesis

Sample	Coefficient used	n	r	Approximate 95% CI	Weight
Gable et al. 2004, Study 2, dating, USA	Gender-averaged AC x satisfaction	118	.31	.14, .46	11%
Gable et al. 2004, Study 3, married, USA	Gender-averaged AC x daily satisfaction (zero-order)	178	.41	.27, .52	17%
Gable, Gonzaga & Strachman 2006, dating, USA	Perceived-response composite x relationship well-being	158	.41	.27, .53	15%
Pagani, Donato & Iafrate 2013, couples, Italy	Gender-averaged AC x couple satisfaction	478	.41	.33, .48	45%
De Netto, Quek & Golden 2021, dating, Malaysia	AC capitalisation x satisfaction	139	.44	.29, .56	13%
Pooled, random-effects		1,071	.40	.35, .45	100%

Pooled $r = .40$ (95% CI .35 to .45). Heterogeneity among these five coefficients is negligible ($I^2 \approx 0\%$, τ^2 about 0). A 95% prediction interval, given near-zero between-study variance, sits close to the confidence interval, roughly .32 to .47. Leave-one-out estimates stay inside .38 to .42. Dropping the large Italian sample does not collapse the result. Dropping the Malaysian sample does not collapse the result. The association is not an American dating-couple curiosity.

Converted for readers who think in group-difference units, $r = .40$ is about $g = 0.87$ as an association, not as a training effect. That conversion is a translation aid. It is not a claim that a programme moves people by 0.87 standard deviations.

What the subscale pattern looks like before pooling. In Gable and colleagues (2004) Study 2, active-constructive responding correlated with satisfaction at $r = .29$ for women and $r = .33$ for men, with trust at $r = .33$ for both, and with intimacy at $r = .40$ for women and $r = .54$ for men. Passive-constructive, active-destructive and passive-destructive responses were negatively related to the same outcomes. In Study 3, zero-order active-constructive associations with daily satisfaction were $r = .34$ for women and $r = .47$ for men. When earlier marital satisfaction was partialled out, the coefficients shrank to $r = .23$ and $r = .35$ and remained in the expected direction. That is what a confound-aware reading looks like: the signal gets smaller and does not disappear.

In Gable, Gonzaga and Strachman (2006), typical active-constructive responding related to a composite of relationship well-being at $r = .41$ for women and $r = .41$ for men. Observer codes of the good-news conversation lined up with what partners said they usually received. Two months later,

responses to the good-news talk predicted later well-being and break-up more consistently than responses to the bad-news talk. Four couples had ended. Men who later separated had rated their partner as less responsive in the good-news conversation.

In Pagani, Donato and Iafrate (2013), North Italian couples who had been together at least three years showed active-constructive associations with couple satisfaction of $r = .30$ for women and $r = .52$ for men. Passive-destructive associations ran the other way ($r = -.27$ and $r = -.43$). Donato and colleagues (2014) then followed 173 Italian marriages, mean length 18 years, across four months. Partner active-constructive responding predicted later satisfaction for women and men. This is not a first-year-of-dating effect that dies when the lease is signed.

In De Netto, Quek and Golden (2021), 139 Malaysian adults in dating relationships showed $r = .44$ between active-constructive capitalisation and relationship satisfaction. When capitalisation styles and accommodation styles were entered together, active-constructive capitalisation remained the strongest unique predictor. That is the nearest published Asian estimate. It is not an Indian estimate.

6.3 Other relationship outcomes, kept out of the r-pool

Kashdan and colleagues (2013) studied 174 couples with questionnaires, partner reports and laboratory observation. Social anxiety predicted giving and receiving less supportive replies to good news. Inadequate capitalisation support predicted declining relationship quality and a higher chance of break-up six months later. The published association between perceived responding and satisfaction was in the same band as the pooled r . The paper is kept in the narrative because the coefficient is embedded in a wider social-anxiety model.

Pagani and colleagues (2020) showed a mechanism. On days when a partner's reply was seen as active-constructive, couple identity rose. Across two waves, couple identity carried part of the link from active-constructive responding to relationship quality. Otto, Laurenceau and colleagues (2015) found that, in couples living through breast cancer, perceived responsiveness to capitalisation still tracked daily intimacy. Bosisio and colleagues (2022) found that self-reported and partner-perceived active-constructive replies during a filmed conversation tracked sexual satisfaction in 151 cohabiting couples. The pattern repeats: when the reply enlarges the good event, closeness measures move with it.

Reis and colleagues (2010) ran four experiments and a diary study. Sharing good news raised the perceived value of the event, especially when the listener was enthusiastic. Enthusiastic replies, even from a stranger in a laboratory, increased trust and a more generous stance toward the other person. This is mechanism evidence. It is not a relationship-satisfaction training trial.

6.4 Moderator table

Table 3. Pre-specified moderators

Contrast	What the evidence does	What it does not do
Correlational versus experimental	Correlational signal is consistent at r about .40. Experimental training of the skill has one eligible trial and a null on own satisfaction.	Does not license a causal claim of the same size as the association.
Couples versus workplace	Couple data are the body of the evidence. Workplace data are about sharing wins, not trained active-constructive replies, and they include a competition-envy path.	Does not show that a team workshop will raise cohesion.
Dating versus long marriage	Signal present in dating samples and in Italian marriages of 18 years.	Does not test arranged-marriage or multi-generational Indian households.
Self-report versus observer	Observer codes in Gable 2006 and Kashdan 2013 agree in direction with self-report.	Observer-coded training trials do not exist.
West versus Asia	Malaysian dating sample $r = .44$. Italian married samples agree with US samples. One later cultural paper finds that muted replies are read more kindly in mainland China than in North America.	No India-resident coefficient.

6.5 Experimental results: training active-constructive responding

Eligible randomised trials of active-constructive training with a relationship or team endpoint: one.

Woods, Lambert, Brown, Fincham and May (2015) randomly assigned 65 dyads — 38 to training, 27 to a joint-activity control that watched and discussed television — at a US university. Partners and friends were both allowed. The lesson was a 20-minute audio-guided presentation covering why sharing good news matters, how an enthusiastic reply sounds, and examples of events to share. Dyads were then asked to practise daily for four weeks.

Own relationship satisfaction did not differ significantly by condition ($\gamma = 0.09$, $p = .20$). Perceived partner relationship satisfaction did ($\gamma = 0.27$, $p = .01$). Gratitude receipt did ($\gamma = 0.43$, $p < .05$). Gratitude receipt sat on the path from condition to perceived partner satisfaction. People who had been taught to light up thought their partner was more satisfied and felt more thanked. They did not, in four weeks, report being more satisfied themselves.

That null is the result. It is not a rounding error to be buried under a mechanism paragraph. Possible readings, all compatible with the data: the trial was small; baseline satisfaction was already high; four weeks is short; friends and romantic partners were mixed; the measure of own satisfaction is slower to move than the measure of “I think you are glad to be here.” A programme that sells active-constructive responding as a four-week satisfaction upgrade is ahead of this trial.

Lambert and colleagues (2013) showed, across several studies, that sharing good news and receiving an active-constructive reply raises positive affect. Their four-week journal study trained sharing, not the reply skill, and did not target relationship satisfaction as the Woods trial did. Reis and colleagues

(2010) manipulated the reply in the laboratory and changed event value and trust. Conoley and colleagues (2015) asked students to keep a celebratory diary and found a mood lift for the person doing the celebrating. None of these is a second eligible training trial with a relationship-satisfaction or team-cohesion endpoint. They are supporting experimental evidence that the reply can move affect and trust in the moment.

6.6 Workplace and team outcomes

The transfer question was: does training active-constructive responding change team outcomes? The answer from trials is that the question has not been asked in a way this review can score.

What exists is a neighbouring literature on workplace interpersonal capitalisation — the act of telling a coworker about a work win. Watkins (2021) showed that hearing a coworker's good news can inspire citizenship when the coworker is not seen as a rival, and can produce envy and social undermining when the coworker is. Watkins, Kleshinski, Longmire and He (2023) found that sharing work wins can raise pride and, under the right response conditions, knowledge sharing. Later work on motives suggests people share at work both to collaborate and to self-enhance, and that self-monitoring changes which motive shows. Ilies, Keeney and Scott (2011), in a three-week experience-sampling study of 52 employees, found that sharing positive work events at home predicted job satisfaction above the pleasantness of the event itself, and that the partner's response mattered for relationship satisfaction.

This is useful and it is not the same claim. Sharing a win is not the same as being trained to answer someone else's win with energy and two questions. In a competitive Indian delivery team, louder sharing without a trained reply can be a status move. The honest workplace sentence is therefore double. Active-constructive responding is a plausible daily rep for psychological safety. It is also possible to do the sharing half of capitalisation badly. No trial has yet shown that teaching the reply raises team cohesion.

6.7 Heterogeneity, publication bias, risk of bias

Heterogeneity in the five-sample r -pool is low. That is not a miracle. It is a small set of conceptually similar couple studies using close cousins of the same 12-item perceived-response scale. A larger extraction that pulled every diary slope and every partial coefficient would almost certainly raise I^2 . Low I^2 here means "these five published r s agree," not "the entire literature is a single number."

Publication bias cannot be tested honestly with five points. Egger's test and trim-and-fill would be theatre. The risk is real in a different way. Capitalisation is a friendly finding. Journals like it. Null training trials are rarer than association papers. Woods and colleagues did publish a null on own satisfaction, which is to their credit and to the field's.

Risk of bias, training trial (RoB 2 analogue). Woods and colleagues (2015): some concerns. Randomisation is stated; allocation concealment is not described in detail. Participants could not be blinded to a communication practice. Outcomes are self-report. The sample is a university convenience

sample with mixed relationship types. Follow-up is four weeks. Baseline satisfaction is high, so there is a ceiling. There is no signal of data fabrication. There is a signal of a small, short, optimistic test.

Risk of bias, correlational corpus. Serious for causal inference. Perceived responding and perceived satisfaction are often rated by the same person on the same afternoon. People who already like their partner will remember better replies. Observer-coded work reduces that problem and still finds a signal, which is why the association is not dismissed. Sampling is still heavily Western, student or community couple, and English- or Italian-speaking. India is missing. Teams with formal cohesion measures are missing.

6.8 GRADE table

Table 4. Certainty of evidence

Question	Estimate	Studies	GRADE	Why this grade
Perceived active-constructive responding <-> relationship satisfaction	$r = .40$ (.35, .45)	5 independent published samples	Moderate for the existence of a medium association in couples; Low for the exact magnitude outside Western and selected Asian dating/married samples	Consistent direction, low heterogeneity in the restricted pool, but observational, mostly self-report, limited geography
Active-constructive training → own relationship satisfaction	$\gamma = 0.09$, $p = .20$ (null)	1 small RCT	Very low	Single underpowered trial, some concerns on RoB 2 domains, short follow-up, high baseline
Active-constructive training → team cohesion	No estimate	0 trials	No evidence	Empty cell
Workplace sharing of good news → teammate behaviour	Mixed; competition can reverse the sign	Observational and experimental field studies of sharing, not of trained replies	Low	Indirect for the present question; important as a boundary

07

Discussion

PULL QUOTE

**Eligible team-training trials: zero.
India-resident primary studies: zero.**

7.1 What the number means

$r = .40$ is not a miracle and it is not a rounding error. In the messy world of relationship research, it is a solid medium-to-large association. It means that people who say their partner usually lights up when good news arrives also say, with notable regularity, that the relationship feels better. Trust and intimacy travel with the same signal. The association survives in dating samples, in long Italian marriages, and in a Malaysian dating sample. It shrinks when you control for how satisfied people already were, which is what you want a real correlate to do: get quieter under a stricter test, not vanish.

It does not mean that teaching a 20-minute lesson will raise a couple's satisfaction score in four weeks. The only dedicated trial did not find that. It does not mean that a stand-up meeting in Bengaluru will become more cohesive if the manager says "let us do capitalisation." That trial has not been run.

A useful way to hold the number is to separate a belief from a behaviour. The belief "my people are glad when I win" is close to perceived partner responsiveness. The behaviour is the ten-second reply: the team lead who looks up from her laptop and asks, "How did you crack it?" The $r = .40$ is mostly about the belief, measured as a perceived style. Training tries to install the behaviour and hopes the belief follows. Woods and colleagues moved the perception of the other person's satisfaction and the feeling of being thanked. They did not move the self-rating of the bond. That is a familiar pattern in brief coaching. The first thing that changes is what you notice in the other person. The score you give the relationship is slower, and it is already high in student dyads.

Another useful way is to separate a value from an outcome. The value is "I want to be someone who can stand another person's good day." The outcome is a satisfaction item. You can serve the value on a Thursday afternoon in a stand-up, when a tester says the regression suite finally ran clean and you put your phone down to ask how, even if a four-week trial is null. You should not sell the value as if the trial were positive.

7.2 Limitations

This is a restricted synthesis. Institutional PsycINFO was not searched from a licensed terminal. Dual independent screening of every database hit was not performed. The r-pool has five samples, not fifty. Several important papers contribute mechanisms, diaries and clinical context without a clean r for the forest table. Workplace papers were kept out of that table on purpose because they measure sharing, not reply style.

Common-method bias inflates correlational estimates. People who are happy with a partner remember better replies. Observer work and lagged Italian data reduce that worry. They do not remove it.

The training evidence is a single small trial in a US university, mixing friends and partners, with a television-talk control that is not a workplace control. Generalising from that trial to an Indian WhatsApp-first coaching programme would be a marketing decision, not a scientific one.

Culture is not settled. Reis and colleagues have since reported that muted or even critical replies can be read more positively in some East Asian contexts than in North America. India is not East Asia and it is not North America. Interdependence, hierarchy, and the long family mean that an American-style burst of enthusiasm can land as warmth in one office and as unsuitably loud in another. The Malaysian $r = .44$ says the construct can travel in Asia. It does not say how a senior engineer in Pune wants to be answered on a Friday.

7.3 What this means for an Indian workplace programme

A 150-word box, in plain English.

Near midnight, a support engineer in Hyderabad posts in the team channel: the production incident is fixed and has stayed down all day. Three thumbs-up follow. Nobody asks how she fixed it. Indian offices already run on messages like this: the offer letter, the visa, the parent who is fine. The data say that a lively, curious reply tracks a stronger bond in couples, including in a nearby Asian dating sample. They do not yet say that a workshop will lift team cohesion in Noida or Hyderabad. Teach the rep anyway, as a practice. Her lead replies: “Huge. What finally cracked it? Who else was on the call?” Matched energy, two questions, and nothing yet about his own sprint. Count replies like that. Do not count testimonials. Watch for rank. In a competitive stack, sharing a win can look like a status grab; Watkins showed that rivalry can turn a shared win into envy. Coach the reply, not louder self-promotion. Run the first Indian study as a randomised programme with a cohesion measure, a WhatsApp channel, and an Indian-language arm. Until that study exists, call this a plausible daily habit with a medium couple-association behind it, not a proven team intervention.

7.4 Research gaps, with the India gap named

The India gap is not a polite afterthought. It is the loudest empty cell in this review. There is no published coefficient linking active-constructive responding to relationship satisfaction, trust, intimacy or team cohesion in an India-resident sample. There is no CTRI registration. There is no ClinicalTrials.gov registration. EmotionApp's own delivery — WhatsApp-first, 23 Indian languages, India-resident data, DPDP-compliant — is exactly the channel on which such a study should run, and it has not yet produced a peer-reviewed outcome paper on this technique.

Other gaps follow. Friendship data are thinner than couple data. Team cohesion as a named outcome is absent from training trials. Dose is untested: we do not know whether one 20-minute lesson, a week of WhatsApp prompts, or a manager-modelling programme is the right unit. Observer-coded training outcomes do not exist. Long follow-up does not exist. Moderators that Indian programmes will actually meet — language, hierarchy, gender mix, remote versus floor teams, family-joint versus nuclear households — are untested. A second training trial, larger than Woods and colleagues, with a pre-registered primary outcome and a low-satisfaction subsample, is the minimum next experimental step. An Indian workplace cluster-randomised programme with team cohesion as the primary outcome is the minimum next applied step.

08

FAQ

Q1 Does getting excited about someone's good news actually relate to a better relationship?

Yes. Across five published samples and 1,071 people, perceived active-constructive responding is associated with relationship satisfaction at $r = .40$ (95% CI .35 to .45). That is a medium-to-large link, not a small curiosity.

Q2 If I train my team to do this, will cohesion rise?

Unknown. Eligible randomised trials of active-constructive training with team-cohesion outcomes: zero. Couple training has one small trial, and own satisfaction did not move. Do the rep. Do not promise a team score.

Q3 Is a quiet “well done” good enough?

Usually not, in the studies we have. Passive-constructive replies — kind, small, no questions — track with lower satisfaction, closer to the destructive styles than to enthusiasm. Courtesy without curiosity is not the active-constructive style.

Q4 How often does this situation even come up?

Often. People share the day’s best event on about 60 to 80 per cent of days. The chance is daily. The miss is also daily.

Q5 Has anyone tested this with Indian couples or Indian teams?

Not in any study this review could verify. The nearest published Asian estimate is $r = .44$ in 139 Malaysian dating adults. An India-resident trial is the gap, not a footnote.

09

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NOTE

EmotionApp is a non-clinical emotional-fitness coaching platform. This paper describes practices, techniques and coaching. It is not therapy, treatment, diagnosis or medical advice.

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