

Study 1

Informed Consent

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent is intended to provide sufficient information, such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study. This study has received clearance by the xxx.

Study Title: Psychology of Secrets

Study Personnel Contact: The Principal Investigators of this project are xxxx

Contact in case of concerns: Should you have any ethical concerns about this study then please contact xxxx

Purpose and Task Requirements: The general purpose of this study is to increase our understanding of the links between secret keeping on the one hand and relationship characteristics and well-being on the other. You will be asked a series of questions about a secret that you are keeping from your romantic partner (e.g., whether it concerns something you did or something that happened to you, and why you might be keeping the secret), as well as questions about your relationship, your coping and relationship styles, and your personality. This study will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. **We will not ask you to reveal your secret(s)!**

Eligibility Requirements: Since this study concerns secrets in romantic relationships, to be eligible to participate, the participant must be in a romantic relationship and have at least one secret that you are keeping from your partner.

Potential Risk and Discomfort: Thinking about secrets that you are keeping from your partner may cause you to feel some shame or guilt. If you are uncomfortable answering any questions, you have the right to choose to skip questions or discontinue the survey at any time without penalty.

Compensation: You will receive \$1 Amazon credit for your participation.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study are completely confidential. All data are coded so that your name cannot be associated with any responses that you have provided. Any identifying information associated with your code will be removed from your data once your course credit has been granted. Once the data is anonymous, it might be shared with trusted colleagues. We collect data through the software Qualtrics, which uses servers with multiple layers of security to protect the privacy of the data (e.g., encrypted websites and pass-word protected storage). Please note that Qualtrics is hosted by a server located in the USA. The United States Patriot Act permits U.S. law enforcement officials, for the purpose of an anti-terrorism investigation, to seek a court order that allows access to the personal records of any person without that person's knowledge. In view of this we cannot absolutely guarantee the full confidentiality and anonymity of your data. The anonymous data will be kept by the primary researchers for 5 years after publication as per APA requirements. With your consent to participate in this study you acknowledge this.

Funding Source: This research is funded by xxx

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete any questions or to withdraw with no penalty. If you decide to withdraw from the study you will still receive full compensation for your participation (compensation code is provided after the debriefing page).

Withdrawing from the study prior to completion indicates that you do not wish to have your responses included, and those who do complete the study consent to the use of their responses (in aggregate form) for research and teaching purposes. As responses are anonymous, we cannot remove your data from the study after you submit.

*If you would like to participate in this study, please click the Agree button below.
Otherwise, click the Disagree button.*

Agree

Disagree – exit to debriefing

Thank you for participating in the 'Psychology of Secrets' study! This study will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Please read each question carefully.

Demographic Questions

First, we would like to gather some demographic information. All information you provide will be completely confidential and will not be associated in any way with your identity. Please answer the questions below.

1. What is your gender? _____Female _____Male _____Other
2. What is your Age: _____ (in years)
3. What is your current relationship status?
 - a) Single, not dating (if this is endorsed, participant skips out of the study)
 - b) Single, casually dating (if this is endorsed, participant skips out of the study)
 - c) In a serious dating relationship
 - d) In a serious dating relationship and living together
 - e) In a serious dating relationship, living together, and engaged
 - f) Married
 - g) Common-law
 - h) Other (please specify): _____
4. If you are in a relationship, do you consider it a long-distance relationship?
Yes No
5. If you are in a relationship, please estimate approximately how long (in years/months) you have been involved with your partner: _____ years and _____ months

The Secret

The following questions have to do with the most significant secret that you are keeping from your romantic partner. To protect your privacy, we will not ask you about the details of the secret, but it would be helpful if you could answer the following questions about this most significant secret:

1. Under which category or categories does the secret fall? (You may check as many categories as apply):

- Infidelity
- Addiction (e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling)
- Sexual identity
- Breaking the law
- Secret crush or attraction
- Victim of a crime (e.g., assault, rape)
- Something shameful you did as a child (e.g., theft)
- Something that happened to you as a child (e.g., abused)
- Something that some might view as stigmatizing (e.g., a health or financial problem, an abortion, family problems)
- Job related problems
- Friendships
- Feeling alienated
- Other
- Prefer not to divulge category

2. Does the secret involve something you did or something that was done to you?

I did something Something was done to me Neither

3. Is the secret known to:

No one but yourself 1 other person a few people many people

4. Have you confided your secret to:

No one 1 person a few people many people

5. Why are you keeping this secret? (You may check as many as many reasons as apply):

- I'd be embarrassed if it was revealed
- I'd feel shame if it was revealed
- As long as it stays a secret, I have an advantage (I gain from it)
- To protect myself
- To protect others
- It would ruin my relationship if revealed
- It would ruin my reputation if revealed
- Other

6. How long have you kept this secret from your partner?

1	2	3	4
For as long as I've known her/him	For several years	For months	For less than a month

7. How often do you think about your secret?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Reasonably often	Always

8. How much does your secret bother you?

1	2	3	4	5
I feel okay about it	Bothers me a little bit	Bothers me somewhat	Bothers me quite a bit	Bothers me a great deal

9. How much does your secret affect you?

1	2	3	4	5
Doesn't affect me at all	Affects me a little bit	Affects me somewhat	Affects me quite a bit	Affects me a great deal

Instruction: The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. We are interested in how you generally experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it. Mark your answer using the following rating scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
2. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.
3. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.
4. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
5. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.
6. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
7. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.
8. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
9. Please leave this question blank and skip to next question
10. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
11. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.
12. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
13. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.

Please read each of the following items carefully. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each item according to the rating scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neutral	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I have an important secret that I haven't shared with my partner _____
2. If I shared all my secrets with my partner, they'd like me less _____
3. There are lots of things about me that I keep to myself _____
4. Some of my secrets have really tormented me _____
5. When something bad happens to me, I tend to keep it to myself _____
6. I'm often afraid I'll reveal something I don't want to _____
7. Telling a secret to my partner often backfires and I wish I hadn't told it _____
8. I have a secret that is so private I would lie if my partner asked me about it _____
9. My secrets are too embarrassing to share with my partner _____
10. I have negative thoughts about myself that I never share with my partner _____

Please read each of the following items carefully. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each item according to the rating scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neutral	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. When I feel upset, I usually confide in my friends.
- _____ 2. I prefer not to talk about my problems.
- _____ 3. When something unpleasant happens to me, I often look for someone to talk to.
- _____ 4. I typically don't discuss things that upset me.
- _____ 5. When I feel depressed or sad, I tend to keep those feelings to myself.
- _____ 6. I try to find people to talk with about my problems.
- _____ 7. When I am in a bad mood, I talk about it with my friends.
- _____ 8. Please leave this question blank and skip to next question.
- _____ 9. If I have a bad day, the last thing I want to do is talk about it.
- _____ 10. I rarely look for people to talk with when I am having a problem.
- _____ 11. When I'm distressed I don't tell anyone.
- _____ 12. I usually seek out someone to talk to when I am in a bad mood.
- _____ 13. I am willing to tell others my distressing thoughts.

Please read each of the following items carefully. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each item according to the rating scale below:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neutral	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I am worried that my partner will discover my secret even if I do not tell him or her myself _____
2. I find myself analyzing my partner's comments, fearing that he or she might be figuring out my secret _____
3. I worry that my partner already knows my secret but has not told me _____
4. I think about what will happen if or when my partner figures out my secret _____
5. My secret is safe because I have 'covered my tracks' (i.e., there is no trail of evidence to be discovered) _____
6. Unless I reveal my secret, there is almost no way for my partner to discover it _____
7. When I am with my partner, I avoid discussing topics that are related to my secrets _____

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way **right now**, that is, at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1 Very slightly or not at all	2 a little	3 moderately	4 quite a bit	5 extremely
___ interested	___ guilty			
___ irritable	___ determined			
___ distressed	___ scared			
___ alert	___ attentive			
___ excited	___ hostile			
___ ashamed	___ jittery			
___ upset	___ enthusiastic			
___ inspired	___ active			
___ strong	___ proud			
___ nervous	___ afraid			

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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5. I feel very attached to our relationship-very strongly linked to my partner.
6. I want our relationship to last forever.
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements right at this moment.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.	1	2	3	4	5
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.	1	2	3	4	5
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I would tell someone what I am really like.	1	2	3	4	5
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.	1	2	3	4	5
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.	1	2	3	4	5

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Does not describe me at all Describes me very well

- Sometimes, for a variety of reasons, people do not respond to study questions honestly or accurately. We recognize that this may occur, and it is very helpful to us in understanding our results if we can identify such cases. Please help us by answering the question below about how you responded to the questionnaire. You still receive full credit for participation in this study regardless of your response.

- _____ Yes _____ No

Debriefing

Study Title: Psychology of Secrets

Thank you for completing this study!

What are we trying to learn in this research?

The main purpose of this study is to better understand the effect that secret keeping has on wellbeing, including relationship satisfaction. Prior studies indicate that people who are preoccupied with secrets tend to report more anxiety and more relationship dissatisfaction than those who do not keep secrets, or are less preoccupied by the secrets that they are keeping. In this research, we are exploring the extent to which these effects are related or attributable to personality factors, relationship styles, the motivations behind the secrets, and any fears that one might have about disclosure or discovery.

Why is this important to scientists or to the general public?

This research will increase our understanding of how secrets influence our health and wellbeing. Ultimately, this and subsequent research may help guide psychotherapists who are working with people preoccupied by secrets.

Where can I learn more?

For more information about the effect that secret keeping has on your psychological health, see <https://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/201703/how-secrets-can-destroy-relationship>

Contact Information:

For additional questions or comments, please contact XX

In case of ethical concerns about this study, please contact XXX

This study has received clearance by xxx

Thank you for your participation!

To ensure maximum confidentiality, please exit this browser by clicking 'Next' at the bottom of this page.