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# “You are hot!” The Strange Link between Body Heat and Love

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## “You are hot!” The Strange Link between Body Heat and Love

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*How your physical warmth has a literal connection to your relationship*

“I know I am not the typical guy,” Marco told me in therapy. “I love snuggles and touches with Julianne, and I don’t need to go further.” Juli said she was open to affection, but wasn’t big into “touching just for the heck of it.” Marco had a painful history of divorce and betrayal, and he liked the reassurance from their connection. “He always wants me to sit with him on the couch and drink cocoa,” Juli laughed, “and watch Disney movies.”



They joked about their particular pattern, but it may have served a deeper purpose. Marco’s desire to share Juli’s heat was a natural way for him to feel secure. Over the last decade researchers have found an intriguing connection between physical temperature and relationship bonding. Science is finding that the link between physical and psychological heat is not just metaphorical. A warm body often leads to warm

feelings.

In one study, volunteers were asked to either hold a hand warmer or frozen gel pack for a few minutes, then play games with strangers. Those with hot hands felt better about their companions and cooperated more often. In another project, participants in a balmy room (set at 79 degrees Fahrenheit) evaluated mug shots with more leniency than participants looking at the same pictures when the room was a chilly 68 degrees. If you are trying to impress a date, it may be better to hit the beach than go ice skating.

Participants in another experiment were on their way to the fourth floor of a university psychology building. In the elevator they found themselves next to a woman struggling to write on a clipboard while holding books and a mug. The woman -- an accomplice -- asked the person to hold the drink. Depending on the day, participants held a steaming or an icy beverage. As they arrived on the fourth floor they gave back the beverage, and were then asked to rate people in stories they read. Sure enough, those who had carried the hot mug consistently rated the characters as more generous and caring. Other research has found that lonely people take more hot baths, and movie lovers watch more romance during cold seasons. When we feel alone, we seek warmth, and when we feel cold, we seek connection.

Marco and Juli learned that when things got frosty between them, they needed cuddles or walks in the sunshine. The next time you feel distant from a loved one, try long hugs, a sauna, or some herbal tea. You might warm up the relationship along with yourself.

## References

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