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## Life's Key Moments Occur Within Relationships, Study Finds

Personal highs, lows less important than events shared with others, researchers say

FRIDAY, Sept. 3 (HealthDay News) -- It isn't personal success or failure that make up the best and worst moments of a person's life, but the events that occur within social relationships, new research has found.

"Most of us spend much of our time and effort focused on individual achievements, such as work, hobbies and schooling," study co-author Shira Gabriel, an associate professor of psychology at the University at Buffalo, said in a university news release.

"However, this research suggests that the events that end up being most important in our lives, the events that bring us the most happiness and also carry the potential for the most pain, are social events -- moments of connecting to others and feeling their connections to us," Gabriel explained.

Gabriel and colleagues reached their conclusion after conducting four studies involving a total of 376 people.

Most previous research has suggested that the most intense emotional experiences occur during independent events that don't involve other people, such as achieving a personal goal.

"We found, however, that it was not independent events or individual achievements like winning awards or completing tasks that affected participants the most, but the moments when close relationships began or ended; when people fell in love or found a new friend; when a loved one died or broke their hearts. In short, it was the moments of connecting to others that touched peoples' lives the most," Gabriel said.

The study findings were released online in advance of publication in an upcoming print issue of the journal *Self and Identity*.

### More information

For more about how life events affect mental health, visit [Womenshealth.gov](http://Womenshealth.gov).

-- Robert Preidt

SOURCE: University at Buffalo, news release, Aug. 27, 2010

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