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Regulating relationships: Managing competing motives when connecting with close others



Establishing meaningful social bonds often requires people to balance competing goals of approaching reward and avoiding risk. In my research, I explore the motivational and cognitive underpinnings of the regulatory processes that determine when and how people seek connection with their romantic partners in the face of conflicting motivations. This talk will explore how interpersonal risk, such as that elicited by conflict or an uncaring partner, activates broader goal orientations that guide connection in relationship contexts, and how feelings of chronic trust and the availability of executive resources shape the expression of these

motivations. I will also discuss how chronic motivational preferences shape connection goals when relationship contexts afford opportunities to maintain relational stability or enhance relational growth. Together, these results contribute to understanding of how people manage competing motivations in and out of relationship situations and highlight the importance of examining interpersonal processes in a more general self-regulatory framework.