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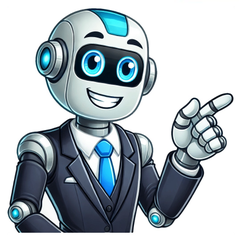

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Your subconscious controls the way you sleep, so sleep-fueled body language can serve as an interesting insight into what might be going on, even if you're not aware of certain things while the sun is up. Here, we've culled information from scientists, psychologists, therapists, and relationship counselors to interpret what 12 different couple sleeping positions might mean.Spooning is the most well-known of couple sleeping positions, but according to a 2015 study conducted by relationship psychologist Corinne Sweet, only 18% of couples actually prefer it. Sweet says spooning is a "traditional position" that indicates protectiveness and comfort in the relationship. In addition to the "I trust you" vibe—one partner literally has the other's back—it's also a fairly sexual position, favored by couples who are comfortable with intimacy.A variation on the traditional Spoon, the Loose Spoon just means there's a bit of space between the couple. Don't mistake those few inches for lack of intimacy, though. On the contrary, it usually means you've been together long enough to trust one another and don't feel the need to constantly be touching. This position is the natural evolution of a couple who started their relationship in a tight Spoon but now recognizes quality sleep (and some space) is important.Though this one may look like a standard Spoon, the Chasing Spoon is usually a little lopsided: One person has moved away from the center of the bed, and the other "chases" to physically reconnect. According to Sleep Positions: The Night Language of the Body, the Chasing Spoon could simply mean that one partner wants more space in the bed. The other, less literal interpretation is that the partner doing the drifting wants to be pursued.Like the Loose Spoon, this position is typical of couples who've been together for some time. Though they start out touching (the Knot), they eventually "unravel" into independence. Sweet says it's a "compromise between intimacy and independence, allowing for the best of both worlds," though only about 8% of couples favor this position.About 23% of couples fall asleep in this position, according to Sweet's study. The Back Kissers fall asleep back-to-back, with contact along the spine. You're connected but independent enough to appreciate your own space in bed. Because your butts still touch, you want to stay sexually connected despite your confidence to face in opposite directions. Chances are you're a new couple who doesn't yet have a reason for distrust or have been together for a while and are relaxed and comfortable with one another.Another position more common with established couples, the Liberty Lovers sleep back-to-back, but with space between them. Sweet's study found 27% of couples fall sleep this way. Despite facing opposite directions and not touching, this position actually indicates you're connected and secure. You can be close without touching, sharing a bed but independent. You're the kind of couple that's OK doing things alone but can't wait to be back together to share stories and recount your day.Not the sexiest name on the list but one that indicates a high level of comradeship. Typically, both partners are on their backs, with one resting his or her head on the other's shoulder. Because of the strong egos here (people who sleep on their backs are thought to possess big personalities), when one partner complies and lets the other play protector, it means you really understand each other. It indicates confidence in the relationship.The ultimate sign of trust and protection, the Nuzzle is common in new and rekindled relationships. When one partner sleeps with his or her head on the other's chest, it creates a nurturing, open position and a sense of companionship as you snuggle.Sleeping on your back indicates confidence and self-assurance and sends the message that you're using your power to protect your partner. If you're the one resting on your partner, you're independently dependent—capable of doing your own thing but appreciative of and in love with your significant other.Ah, young love! If you favor the Tangle, chances are you're in a fairly new relationship and can't bear to be separated for even a second. It's an incredibly intimate position that means you can't get enough of each other. If, however, you're still sleeping like this after the six-month mark, it could mean you're too dependent on each other. Just 2% of couples prefer this position.The Leg Hug is a little unclear, as it can indicate a number of things. If only one person is doing the "hugging," it could signal that they are craving a connection with the other (kind of like the Chasing Spoon). And since your legs are first to react in a fight-or-flight situation, they're often the most honest part of the body.If you're both intertwined, you're equally passionate, and the emotional and sexual connection is strong. Just like your legs, your lives are blended and balanced.A third interpretation of the Leg Hug is that since the contact is so casual, it could imply you're ambivalent about expressing affection or just had a fight but are trying to maintain a connection, despite heated emotions.A couple that sleeps on their stomachs might want to think about having a conversation. Because sleeping facedown protects the front of the body, the Stomach Snoozer position could be indicating signs of anxiety, emotional fear, vulnerability, or lack of control.It's also not an intimate position—none of the body parts associated with sex are in play here—so it could also mean there's a lack of sexual trust in the relationship.If your partner spreads out with little regard for where you are in the bed, it could be a negative sign for the relationship. The Space Hog—who, as the name indicates, spreads themselves out in bed, taking up all the space—is behaving selfishly and has little regard for your needs.If one partner dominates the bed, it's likely they dominate the relationship, relegating their partner to a secondary, submissive role. If one partner's head is higher (closer to the headboard) than the other's, that could signal they're more confident than their lower-sleeping partner. Conversely, if your heads are parallel, you are like-minded equals.Remember these are just clues and interpretations, not diagnoses. If you're worried about your relationship or the way you're sharing the bed, just talk to your partner about it. If you're happy with your relationship and fine with whatever position you doze off in, that's all that matters.This ad is displayed using third party content and we do not control its accessibility features. Share on PinterestIllustrations by Irene GoddardHave you ever woken up and wondered how and why your body contorted itself into such a position? Do you turn onto one side in bed without even thinking? Would you rather stay as far away from your partner as possible at night?"Sleep is vital for your health and well-being, and the position you sleep in could be just as important for your quality of sleep, your health, and relationship if you share a bed with your partner," explains Doctor-4-U's Dr. Diana Gall. 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Someone is likely to end up with stiff or numb limbs. That said, its heavy skin-to-skin reliance may release oxytocin, the love hormone. When both people are lying on either side of the bed far away from each other, they're doing the cliffhanger. Bonus points if a foot sticks out over the edge.To most people, this would be a sign that there's a real problem in the relationship.But if not carried out aggressively, it can actually signify that both people are happy in themselves and with their partner.However, a 2014 survey of over 1,000 people did find that the further apart couples slept, the worse their relationship. Lie on your back next to your partner, either holding hands or gently touching their arm or leg. What do you look like? Two paper dolls.This slightly wooden position gives people intimacy and the chance to get a decent night's sleep.Although it may help those who deal with back pain and circulation problems, be aware that one or both of you may end up snoring, turning a peaceful night into an irritating one. And if your back hurts more in this straight posture, put pillows under your knees to elongate the spine, says Dr. Gall.If you both like to sleep in completely different positions but simultaneously want some nighttime contact, try the tetherball. One person curls up in a ball-type posture while the other sleeps on their back, resting a hand on their partner's hip. Simple. Touching in even the smallest of ways can impact a relationship, according to a UK survey. In fact, 94 percent of couples who slept while touching reported feeling happy with their relationship, compared to 68 percent who didn't touch. A second passionate posture is the leg hug. Whether your feet are touching every so often or your legs are fully intertwined, this position is asking for intimacy.If both of you are doing it, that's a good sign. But if only one person is into the leg hug, there may be a slight imbalance in the relationship.The leg hug allows both people to sleep on their back, side, or front, giving them the freedom to find what's most comfortable for them.An odd name, we know — but it can be rather comfy.The position involves both of you lying flat on your back and one person placing their head on the other's shoulder.According to sleep experts, it's a symbol of understanding and confidence with one person willing to act as the protector.Sleeping on the stomach isn't a very healthy position for most. When doing so with a partner, it can symbolize a lack of trust and a degree of vulnerability.Individually, it can hurt too."This is in fact one of the worst positions for causing back pain as it places pressure on your spine," says Neil Robinson, chief sleep officer at bed manufacturer Sealy UK.Pain can result in a number of ways, explains Robinson. Front sleeping "makes it difficult to maintain a neutral spine position and can force your lumbar region (the lower region of your spine) to bend beyond its usual limits."Plus, it "means you're forced to turn your head to either side to breathe, which causes the spine in your neck to twist."If you love sleeping like this, there's a way to help avoid some aches and pains: Robinson advises lying with a pillow under your stomach to better align your spine.A rather intense position, the tangle is apparently rarely seen. When it does occur, it's usually immediately after an intimate situation or at the beginning of a new relationship. It can only be described as this: an extremely close hug, but lying down. In other words, not a lot of breathing room.While the tangle is okay every now and then, long-term incidences may prompt you to rethink how dependent you are on each other. This begins with the aforementioned tangle and eventually unravels so that each person can sleep how they like. It's deemed to be a healthier position than the tangle, as it's equal parts intimate and independent. However, this is only likely to be seen in couples who've been together for a while.Sleeping in the starfish position (aka space hog) — sprawling out across the entire bed — alone can be beneficial; both for sleep quality and for the state of your body.Starfishers report being the most likely to wake up feeling refreshed, notes Robinson.This posture can also diminish back pain, as it "helps to distribute your weight across the widest surface of your body whilst keeping your spine in a neutral position."Those dealing with heartburn may see improved symptoms too, adds Robinson, as the starfish "prevents stomach acid from slipping into your esophagus during the night."But it can worsen snoring or symptoms of sleep apnea. And if carried out with another person in the bed, it can signify selfishness. Imagine you're being told how to sleep by a military officer, and you're guaranteed to lie flat on your back with your arms positioned straight down next to your body.The soldier position may exacerbate snoring and isn't thought to be particularly comfortable. But 11 percent of Americans do it according to a nationwide survey from the Better Sleep Council.Almost half of Americans sleep like a literal baby, according to the same survey. And many say it's the most comfortable position to spend the night in.While curling up is cozy, doing it too tightly can put strain on your lower back and pressure on your abdomen.To alleviate these effects, try straightening your body out a little. Putting a pillow in between your knees may also help your hips. When it comes to sleeping positions, it's safe to say you should take any deeper meanings with a pinch of salt.Listen to the health benefits and disadvantages, as they tend to be backed up by science — but don't stress about the impending demise of your relationship. You might just prioritize comfort over nighttime closeness, and there's nothing wrong with that.Lauren Sharkey is a journalist and author specializing in women's issues. When she isn't trying to discover a way to banish migraines, she can be found uncovering the answers to your lurking health questions. She's also written a book profiling young female activists across the globe and is currently building a community of such resisters. Catch her on Twitter. The way someone sleeps can say a lot about them as a person. However, what happens when you add a second person to the mattress? As we drift off into deep sleep, our subconscious takes over. The way our bodies respond to our partners can provide insight into our relationships. Whether you enjoy being tangled up with your significant other or prefer to keep your personal space, your preferred sleep position can help gauge the state of your relationship beyond what happens while you're conscious. Here, we cover 15 couples' sleeping positions and what they mean. We also surveyed over 1,000 people to see what positions are preferred most when people share a bed with their partners. Things are about to get personal. A classic position, spooning is when one partner takes a protective, intimate stance behind the other as the second person leans their back or behind against them. It's a skin-on-skin position that provides plenty of emotional and physical comfort. If you like this position, chances are you're either in a brand new relationship or that the two of you can't get enough of each other. Big SpoonAs the big spoon, you are the one forming a protective embrace behind your partner. If you prefer to be the big spoon, you are most likely a very giving partner and want to comfort your significant other. Little SpoonAs the little spoon, you like the feeling of being safe and protected by your partner. In terms of your relationship, you might also need some extra TLC and nurturing. This is a variation of the spooning position. Rather than the two of you spooning tightly in the center, "chase spooning" occurs where one person shifts to one side of the bed and their partner follows, or "chases" them. The partner being chased usually prefers a log or fetal position to sleep, while the "chaser" sleeps in a yearner position. This could mean one of two things. Either the partner being chased likes to play hard to get, or they are retreating and want more space from their "chaser". This might also be a sign that their needs aren't being met. The "chaser" could also be wanting more attention from their partner. Whereas partners in new relationships tend to favor spooning, couples who have dated for a longer amount of time often don't need the novelty of constant body-to-body contact. "Loose spooning" sees both individuals moving to a more spaced out position for better quality sleep. You both have been together long enough to feel a strong level of trust without needing the reassurance of constant touch. If you're the big spoon, this position essentially means that you can be counted on at any time, but you know that you and your little spoon like the extra comfort that comes with giving each other a little space. Those who fall asleep with contact along the spine show a balance of closeness and independence. If your bottoms touch — also called "moon landing," it means you both want to stay sexually connected while still feeling comfortable facing away from each other. If you prefer this position, chances are you very comfortable and relaxed with each other. The two of you might have also fought recently, but your willingness to touch means the relationship is still okay. A slight variation on being fully intertwined, front-to-front has both partners facing each other. with their heads at the same level. They may also be slightly touching, with their arms draped across each other. This intimate position communicates that the two individuals are like-minded and there is a good overall atmosphere in the relationship. This sweet, nurturing posture has one partner resting their head on the other partner's chest, with their legs intertwined as they hold each other close. A couple who prefers this sleep position has a high level of trust and teamwork between them. This snuggling position shows protection and romance and is favored by many new couples or those who have rekindled their romance. Also known as the "shingles" position, this position has both partners sleeping on their backs, with one partner resting his or her head on the other's shoulder. It shows a high level of comradeship, where one partner allows the other to play "protector" and nurture them. This position indicates understanding and confidence in the relationship. If one person has a leg or feet touching their partner, it could mean that the person is craving a sexual or emotional connection. A pair of tangled legs shows that your lives are intertwined and that you exist as a unit. Being fully intertwined with a lover is an incredibly close and romantic position. This position is popular among new couples, and can sometimes be a transitory pose before or after a couple has intimacy. If you and your partner just started dating, this position screams young love between the two of you. Some couples maintain this throughout their relationship, but this can potentially signify that these two individuals are dependent on each other. This position starts with the two partners tangled up together before unraveling to a more comfortable sleep position after several minutes or so. It allows the couple the best of both worlds and shows a balance of intimacy and independence between the two individuals. A couple that sleeps on their stomachs could be struggling with angst and fear in the relationship. If the two are not touching at all, it could further indicate anxiety or lack of sexual trust. If you and your partner are falling asleep in this position, it might be a good time for you two to have a sit-down to talk about your relationship. This position has one partner assuming the "starfish", where he or she is sprawled out and taking up the majority of the mattress space while their partner takes a secondary role. If the starfish partner begins to push their partner off, it is an indicator that they are selfish in the relationship. In addition, if one partner both takes up space and places themselves higher than the other, they tend to see themselves as more dominant and confident. It may be good for the couple to have a frank conversation about the power dynamic in their relationship. Not touching each other isn't a bad thing by any means —in fact, a couple's willingness to sleep apart is a sign of strong independence. Couples who sleep back-to-back but are not touching are usually both connected and self-sufficient. Also known as "liberty lovers", this sleep position shows a strong level of security. However, if the two of you are sleeping on opposite ends, it may instead indicate your desire to be more separate. This could also be a sign you should upgrade to a larger mattress size. If the two of you are facing each other while sleeping but don't touch, this may signify that you need something more in your relationship. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, as you can take some positive steps to bridge the gap. Sharing a bed with your dog or cat is becoming increasingly common these days. For some couples, placing a pet in between them can serve as a way to get some extra space at night as well as reinforce the strong bond between you and your pet. However, it might also mean that the two of you are avoiding something in your relationship. Perhaps you may want to consider talking with your partner or consider getting a separate dog bed. Now that we have covered the different variations of partnered sleep positions, which one do most couples prefer? To find out, we ran a Google survey of 1,000 Americans on how they prefer to sleep with their significant other. According to our survey, 46% of American couples prefer to sleep without touching each other. This suggests that either many couples feel comfortable in their relationship or that they prioritize comfort and sleep quality over touch. "No contact" was favored almost equally between men and women, but less favored by younger couples aged 18 to 24 compared to other age groups. Spooning is the next preferred sleep position among couples. While the spooning dynamic between couples reflected usual conventions, a significant 30% of women prefer to be the "big spoon" and 24% of men prefer to be the "little spoon". Couples who sleep back to back were the next largest group in our survey. This position was favored by older couples —those who are over 25 years of age are at least twice as likely to sleep back to back than those who are less than 25 years of age. Finally, when it comes to sleeping intertwined, we found that men were 13% more likely than women to prefer this position. Since body language is often informed by the subconscious, a couple's sleep position can serve as a reflection of their conscious selves. However, the way you and your partner sleep certainly won't make or break your relationship. Rather, you should use this guide as a way to help you communicate your sleeping preferences to your partner. If you and your significant other are looking for the most comfortable sleep, a queen mattress might just be the ideal couples' mattress. For those who want more space to add more love, a king mattress is ideal for sleeping with a child or a pet. MethodologyThe statistics on preferred couple sleep positions came from a survey facilitated by Google Surveys. The sample consisted of 1,000 Americans and was conducted during May 2019. Post-stratification weighting was employed in order to attain a sample that is representative of the population. Download Full Infographic