

THE INTERPLAY OF LOVE, ATTRACTION AND IT'S RELATED CONCEPTS IN BUILDING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

Abstract

The most widespread worldwide notion about Love is that it happens without reason or logic and is selfless and illogical. However, there is underlying psychology behind it which most people need help understanding and are most not aware of. Love and attraction, two sides of the same coin, two such concepts which are so intrinsic to human beings, so vital to us. But it is so often seen in today's modern fast paced world that people are not able to form connections and are getting lots of difficulties in doing so, which in turn is creating stress and mental health problems. The question arising here is 'why is this happening'. Well, the answer can be as simple as we are failing to label our feelings correctly.

Therefore, this research paper aims to understand how the concept of Love, attraction, attachments and how relationships work, the psychology behind it and how to maintain and create a stable and healthy relationship. The above aim is achieved by developing an in-depth understanding of various things and presenting it so non-specialists can also understand.

Keywords: Love, Attraction, Health, Relationship, Attachment

Rationale of the study: To build a deep understanding about the concepts of love, attraction, attachments and relationship. It is a requirement nowadays that adolescents, young adults as well as adults understand thoroughly- how different connections should be labelled so as to minimise any danger of future heartbreak.

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I. INTRODUCTION

While watching rom-com, haven't we all dream about being in that kind of Love, head over heels, swept off the feet, the Love Romeo had for Juliet, and Harry had for Sally, to find someone out of the blue who will fulfill all our cliches, unrealistic romantic notion, the Love at first sight. However, is it that easy? To meet someone one day, look into their eyes, and realize- yes, this person is the epic Love of my life. We might need to be corrected. We do not say so, but psychology does.

Love is something we consider to understand more from poetry rather than science but believe me; it has much science to it. It begins with attraction, which leads to attachment and affection, and then it finally moves on to Love.

II. THE INTERPLAY OF ATTRACTION, AFFECTION AND ATTACHMENT

Understanding attraction is essential because we Homo sapiens go for attractive faces. All these talks about not judging a book by its cover, personality matters etc., are just- not true! Beautiful, attractive, pleasant faces are the ones which we go for the most.

Judith Langlois and her associate's meta-analysis of more than a hundred studies (Langlois et al., 2000) revealed Two preliminary empirical results: (a) Teachers and professors tend to give higher grades to attractive and good-looking students, students who were considered as good looking and attractive also show higher levels of intellectual competence than their peers and considered as more charismatic, appealing and better adjusted than their fellow peers; and (b) Good looking individuals were more successful and appreciated at their jobs, their physical health were also better, and they were more sexually experienced than other individuals- they tend to go on more dates, they are considered to have more traditional attitudes, and had more self-confidence. (Vaughan, & Hogg, 2013)

Here is a catch: Attraction might make a person prejudiced toward a specific individual, but it is short-term and insufficient to keep that person for an extended or a longer period of time. What makes a person like and adore another person that encourages them, want to spend more time with them, what makes them think about each other more often- three factors play significant roles here they are-

- Proximity
- Familiarity
- Similarity

- 1. Proximity:** Proximity is simple, but we are more likely to form relations with people who are physically close to us or who are easily accessible. For example, we are likely to befriend our neighbor or hostel mate.
- 2. Familiarity:** Comes with proximity; when we are closer to someone, we get to know and understand them, making them more comfortable around each other. The rule is simple here: if an individual wants someone to like them, be closer to them. However, the more often we encounter situations where we get to know someone, the more likely we are to start disliking them, for example, your boss with whom you have worked for an extended period.

3. **Similarity:** Similarity leads to attraction and liking when we share similar attitudes. It is an essential factor in maintaining interpersonal relationships. Similarities of attitude, beliefs, faith to more vane things like clothes, food, books etc. leads individuals to like a person more.

Once we decide to like a person and keep them for an extended period, it is time to form an attachment. In psychology, John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth has done some remarkable work in this area; according to him, infants develop a particular attachment style with their mothers, which follows us from the cradle to the grave.

4. **Securely Attached:** Adults form relationships quickly and do not shy away from opening up to another person; they are willing to explore all the aspects of their relationship and are enthusiastic about it.
5. **Avoidantly Attached:** Individuals are those who face problems in getting close to another person. These individuals are complex and are most likely to be unfaithful in relationships. When they encounter problems in relation, they are most likely to flee or fight.
6. **Anxiously Attached:** Individuals are always looking for possible threats in their relationship; they deal with heightened emotionality, fall in Love easily, and get hurt easily.

Although these styles are not concrete and are subject to change with appropriate help, people can seek counseling and guidance, couple and family therapy is always a good idea to seek in a relationship, and it is not necessary to seek therapy only when you are dealing with issues and problems, it is excellent for your general and overall, well-being as well.

III. WHAT IS LOVE?

All of this leads to the ultimate, mysterious thing we call Love. So, what is Love? Is it attraction, infatuation, liking, physical intimacy, or something more complex that we cannot define and understand?

Basic definitions of Love generally include affection and strong feelings towards a person. However, it is more complex. Many psychologists have researched it and, based on these observations, have put forward many theories.

1. **Triangular Theory of Love by Robert Sternberg:** According to Sternberg, Love is not singular. Instead, it has many components, and in his theory, he mentions three such components- intimacy, passion and commitment.
 - **Intimacy** is described here as psychological closeness instead of physical, as we have friends with whom we share an intimate bond; we feel safe and secure with them, we can share anything with them without the fear of judgment, and we want to stay close to them. Such a relationship can be strictly platonic and does not require physical closeness.

- **Passion**, according to Sternberg's theory, involves physical closeness with another person; it could be sexual intercourse, hugging, holding hands etc. It must evoke a strong feeling of arousal towards the other person, along with an emotional connection.
- **Commitment** is how you view your relationship in terms of timing. Do you want to spend the rest of your college life with this person as your friend? Do you want to spend your entire life with this person? Such a decision we make regarding another person comes under commitment.

IV. KINDS OF LOVE

As for the kinds of Love, two are most talked about: passionate Love and companionate Love. As the name suggests,

1. **Passionate Love** is deep feelings of attachment, attraction and strong emotional ties. In Western cultures, this kind of Love is most common, which involves bonding and liking at first. When the component of passion and physical intimacy is added here, it transforms into romantic or passionate Love and leads to long-lasting commitment.
2. **Companionate Love** is ideal for keeping marriages long-lasting, so the central element in this Love is commitment and similarities between two individuals; in other words, the two individuals must be compatible. Commonly found in non-western cultures, companionate love keeps the arranged marriage business going.

V. ARE YOU IN LOVE, OR IS IT JUST AN ILLUSION?

We are not here to burst anyone's bubble but to spill some facts. Growing up, we all have heard stories about a 'damsel in distress' and their 'knight in shining armor' and have watched Disney's fairy tales and all sorts of unrealistic notions about romantic Love; in books and television, it all seems so dreamy, but when we go out to play the dating game to find the unique "one" we realize that it is not so simple. No Prince is out there to kiss all our problems away.

Despite all the complexities, we still fall in Love; that particular person makes our heart beat faster, and we go through physical arousal, which we label attraction and eventually love. So, we attach our illusions to that person; we see them not for who they are but as what we want them to be. For us, they become our "ideal person"; for once, all our fairytale dreams are turning into reality.

We do not realize that we are just attaching the ideas we had growing up to the person we find ourselves so in Love with. Who, in reality, may not necessarily be the same as our ideal? We realize this slowly when we spend more time with them; that is when the "falling out of love" starts.

VI. RELATIONSHIP FAILURE

According to George Levinger (1980), there are four signs that a relationship is ending, including one involving same-sex couples (Schullo & Alperson, 1984):

- The only option is to start over.
- There are additional partners available.
- The failure of the partnership is anticipated.
- Lack of dedication to maintaining the relationship

VII. MAINTAINING A HEALTHY AND STABLE RELATIONSHIP

Relationships are about something other than "I got lucky", at least not always for everyone. It required work, a lot of it. After all, life's is not a fairytale. We all can agree to it. So, what does it take to keep a relationship going, to keep it healthy and fulfilling? Here are a few things to keep in mind.

1. **Trust:** It won't require any psychological or scientific proof to believe that all relationships must have a certain degree of trust to stay stable. Lack of trust is where all the issues stem from a relationship.
2. **Forgiveness:** Forgiving a stranger if they spill your morning coffee is one thing; it is undoubtedly pro-social but does not require significant emotional effort. However, forgiving your partner who may have done something outside your relationship rulebook is entirely different. It is not easy to forgive those we love and trust. Once you learn to forgive your partner, you might have entered the territory of healthy and stable relationships. Ryan Fehr, Et. Al. Found that interpersonal forgiveness was found to occur more in a relationship that was personal, close, committed, and rewarding by conducting a meta-analysis of more than 175 studies. (Fehr Gelfand & Nag., 2010; Vaughan, & Hogg, 2013).
3. **Communication:** What will be a relationship without communication? It is the root of any relationship. Relations start with it and strengthen with it too. Communication is the building block of any relationship.
4. **Boundaries:** We all have a personal space and are comfortable in it. When we have a rough day, everyone likes to return to that comfortable space; any relationship must understand that space and create boundaries based on it.

VIII. CONCLUSION

"The course of true love never did run smoothly"- excerpt from A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare. Indeed, no love is simple and without madness. After all, no matter what reason we apply to the concept of Love, there is no certainty as to whom we fall in love with, for how long and for what end; we cannot answer it; nobody can. Instead, what we can do here is to love that particular person in the right way without being toxic to them by working on ourselves. It will come to everyone after a period

of time, it requires patience, process and work. That is how you will achieve a good love life, my friend.

With the help of various theories, research and our insight, we have presented the various topics covered in the paper in a manner that could be easily understandable by everyone. Many young people suffer because they cannot differentiate between attraction, attachment and Love, and they cannot seem to decide which person is suitable for a long-term, sustainable relationship, or are they just a mere stop in the journey? This confusion leads to stress and anxiety, and one wrong decision can become the onset of many mental disorders. So, it is necessary to be aware and informed. Lastly, forming a sound judgment about people is necessary, but people are not just blood and bone. We are emotional beings. Therefore, having advanced emotional intelligence is crucial to forming any relationship.

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