

PSYCHLINGO

EXPLORING ENGLISH THROUGH PSYCHOLOGY

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ISSUE NO. 10

Bare Minimum

How social media ruin healthy relationships

Love

An incredible and multifaced feeling

Love – Not Only Romantic?

Types of love in the eyes of Erich Fromm

Love Bombing

What it is and how to recognise it

Love Through History

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Beyond Categories

When love can't fit into rigid categories

Interview

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Why is breaking up so difficult?

Pain, the love hormone, ruminating and social media

Lifestyle Corner

Dive into the fun and culture!

Language exercises

Test yourself!



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Pedagogiki
Specjalnej
im. Marii Grzegorzewskiej
rok założenia 1922



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

As you well know, we dive into psychology every month. And as you know, it is a science that tries to explain human behaviour, urges, and everything around them. It tries to answer what defines us and explores every aspect of our nature that at some point in history was predestined to be exactly that. And what defines us more as human beings than love? This feeling has captured the minds of great writers and philosophers and created poets. And I suppose everybody is caught by it. Because the spectrum of it is so wide that nobody is able to be absolutely loveless. In one of the articles, a few of those "love kinds" are explored through Mr Fromm's lens. But even ancient Greeks knew that it could be felt on multiple levels. Agape, Philia, Eros, Philautia, Storge, Ludus, Pragma, and Mania are eight kinds of love that the ancient ones described, and each is different in some way.

We know we won't explain the magic of love to you. We will give you a crack at its science and a bit of insight into how it can be perceived. But in the end, we don't claim to know more about love than you do. It is such an individual and exceptional thing that only one person can be an expert on the matter – you.

Still, we hope you will enjoy our journey through the sweet scraps of love's history, science, experience, and many more. I hope your Valentine's Day went as well as it could. And, of course, I would like to thank the whole team for their work on this issue.

Enjoy!



Editor-in-Chief

Bare Minimum

How Do Social Media Ruin Healthy Relationships

By Kasia Saj

In today's digital era, many of us spend hours daily on social media. These platforms have evolved beyond entertainment, meaning right now, they are also seen as places for advice and diverse perspectives on both everyday and universal topics. One alarming trend has captured my attention: a growing number of young people are offering advice on what constitutes a "healthy relationship". Among teenagers, it has even become a trend to define what is considered the "bare minimum" in a partnership and when a relationship should end.

At first glance, this trend might seem non-threatening. Social media mostly influence users aged 15 to 25 – a demographic likely navigating their first relationships or breakups. Having accessible guidance on such personal matters could be beneficial. However, this trend has turned into something problematic: a contest to identify even the smallest flaws in a significant other, often using these minor imperfections as justification for ending relationships. To illustrate this issue, let's examine the most popular statements regarding this trend:

"Signs You Should Break Up with Your Partner"

- They don't buy you flowers every week.
- They don't respond to your messages immediately.
- They spend weekends partying and meeting with their friends.
- They have friends of the opposite sex.
- They don't take you on dates daily.
- You are not their top priority.

While these statements may not seem particularly alarming at first, upon closer inspection, they reveal an unrealistic set of expectations. Such advice, particularly when aimed at young people, risks promoting toxic relationships rather than promoting healthy ones. Let's break it down a bit.

Why has this trend gained popularity?

For many, the relationships we observed growing up – whether those of parents or other adults – serve as non-ideal examples. Witnessing unhealthy dynamics has made young people more vocal about wanting affection, trust, and mutual respect in their own relationships.

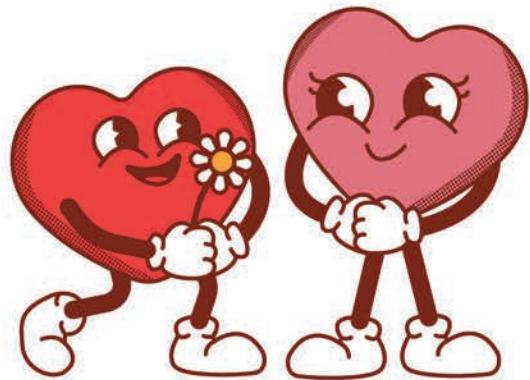


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Glossary

constitute – to be or be considered as something
flaw – a fault, mistake, or weakness, especially one that happens while something is being planned or made, or that causes something not to be perfect

significant other – a person with whom someone has a romantic or sexual relationship that has lasted for some time, and that is likely to last longer

affection – a feeling of liking for a person

aspiration – something that you hope to achieve

mistreat – to treat a person or animal badly, cruelly, or unfairly

These desires are entirely natural. Flowers, dates, and attention are common aspirations, especially during teenage years when individuals experience their first romantic encounters. However, a fear of being mistreated or trapped in an unsatisfying relationship has led to heightened expectations, which may unintentionally create unrealistic standards.

Is it okay to have high expectations?

Absolutely. It's important to remember that everyone has unique needs, values, and goals. At the same time you cannot expect your partner to meet those standards without first talking about them. Open communication is essential to mutual understanding. That said when you start a relationship it is important to talk with your partner about: what makes you feel loved, what is important in life for both of you and how do you plan to engage in relationship that will make your partner feel appreciated and loved.

How can you determine when to end a relationship?

The most crucial step is to avoid taking advice from social media trends, such as TikTok videos, where so-called "experts" give out relationship tips while applying makeup in the same video. Each relationship is unique, and resolving issues starts with direct communication. If something feels wrong or disappointing, have an honest conversation with your partner. Discuss your feelings and listen to their perspective. For truly helpful guidance, seek advice from trusted friends or individuals who have experienced long-term, healthy relationships. These sources are far more valuable than blindly trusting social media trends.

Final thoughts

You are not obligated to end a relationship simply because someone on the Internet says so. Every individual has flaws and personal growth is a lifelong process which means that you cannot expect someone to change overnight. Instead of focusing on achieving perfection, prioritise open communication with your partner. Share your needs, discuss expectations, and explore ways to make each other feel appreciated and loved.

Communication is a key. Even though it's a cliché – talking about our needs, expectations and ways to make each other feel loved and appreciated is the best thing you can do to have a healthy relationship. The other advice – do not put too much pressure on yourself (especially if you are young). As young people you are both trying to figure out yourselves and being in a relationship without heat to be perfect can be one of the best ways to do that.

Love: An Incredible and Multifaceted Feeling

By Karina Bortsich



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

Love is a feeling formed by a combination of psychological, biological and social factors. Although the understanding of love may differ depending on culture, the essence of romantic love is determined by intimacy, passion and commitment. This article discusses the understanding of love in psychological, neurobiological and behavioural contexts.

The Psychological Dimensions of Romantic Love

At its core, romantic love is characterised by a deep desire for intimacy. When love is mutual, it brings satisfaction and ecstasy, while unrequited love often leads to anxiety, emptiness or despair (Hatfield & Walster, 1985). This emotional complexity arises from a combination of genetic predisposition, environmental influences and past experiences, which stimulate the behavioural and hormonal dynamics of romantic relationships. It can also be noted that relationships based solely on attraction and desire often lack the stability necessary for longevity, which emphasises the need for deeper emotional connections and not just physical attraction (Isea, 2024). Studies show that love is especially enhanced by positive responsiveness to the needs of a partner and a sense of stability (Chen, Xia, & Dunne, 2024). These factors play a decisive role in ensuring long-term emotional satisfaction in relationships. Thus, the psychological roots of love include attraction, mutual care, and respect.

Neurobiology: The Brain's Role in Love

From a neurobiological perspective, romantic love activates several interconnected neural systems responsible for reward, motivation, emotional processing, sexual arousal, and social cognition (Bode & Kushnick, 2021). Interestingly, gender differences in neural responses have been observed: men show increased activation in brain regions linked to visual processing, while women exhibit heightened activity in areas related to memory, attention, and emotional experiences (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006).

Love deeply affects the reward system of our brain. Key regions involved include the medial insula, anterior cingulate, hippocampus, striatum, and nucleus accumbens, all rich in dopamine – a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure, motivation, and desire. This neurochemical shift contributes to the feelings of euphoria and emotional attachment characteristic of romantic love (Zeki, 2007).

Love, Immune Function, and Hormonal Responses

The romantic infatuation in women is affected by at least 61 genes associated with romantic features. Interestingly, falling in love is associated with increased stress hormone levels and susceptibility to viral diseases (Murray, Haselton, Fales, & Cole, 2019).

Behavioural Sensitivity and Romantic Love

Behavioural sensitivity also plays a key role in romantic relationships. The Behavioural Activation System (BAS) Scale, which measures reward responsiveness, drive, and fun-seeking, reveals that love sharpens responsiveness, specifically towards a loved one rather than increasing overall sensitivity (Bode & Kavanagh, 2023). This heightened sensitivity toward a partner fosters emotional closeness and helps build the foundation for lasting relationships.

The Role of Genetic and Immune Systems in Mate Selection

Another fascinating aspect of romantic love is its connection to the immune system. The Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC), or HLA in humans, plays a crucial role in mate selection. Studies have shown that humans, like many animals, are drawn to potential partners with dissimilar MHC genes detected through olfactory cues. This preference for genetic diversity helps enhance offspring's immune resistance and has been linked to higher relationship satisfaction and sexual fulfilment (Kromer et al., 2016).

Attachment, Bonding, and the Neuroscience of Love

Romantic love is closely related to the release of oxytocin and vasopressin, neurochemicals that play a key role in emotional attachment. The release of these substances enhances the long-term connections that form the basis of romantic relationships.

Research shows that disruption of these chemicals in animals prevents the formation of social ties, emphasising their fundamental role in forming partner bonds at the neurological level (Zeki, 2007). In humans, these neurochemicals contribute to the development of trust and the establishment of long-term relationships.

Love and Beauty: The Intersection of Romance and Aesthetic Attraction

Love and beauty are often intertwined with erotic desire due to overlapping areas of the brain. Both attractive faces and sexual arousal activate the orbitofrontal cortex, while the insula and anterior cingulate cortex respond to both loved ones and arousing stimuli. Interestingly, viewing the face of a loved one or an attractive person deactivates the amygdala, reducing judgment and suspending apprehension. This deactivation is associated with a heightened sense of acceptance and emotional connection (Zeki, 2007).

This neural pattern explains why we are often less critical and more accepting when viewing a loved one, as the brain temporarily suspends the ability to assess and scrutinise. The orbitofrontal cortex's connection to regions like the amygdala and anterior cingulate further highlights how romantic love can foster a deeper sense of connection and emotional safety.

Conclusion: The Complexity of Romantic Love

Romantic love is not just a fleeting feeling but a deeply rooted, biologically and psychologically complex phenomenon. It is formed by neural activity, hormonal changes, immune reactions and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Thanks to research, it is becoming increasingly apparent that love is one of mankind's most defining experiences, driven by complex biological mechanisms and formed by psychological and emotional factors.



Glossary

aesthetic – related to beauty or artistic appreciation

amygdala – a part of the brain involved in processing emotions, especially fear and pleasure

cognition – the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and senses

dopamine – a neurotransmitter in the brain associated with pleasure, motivation, and reward

histocompatibility – the ability of tissues to be compatible with another person's immune system, important in mate selection

infatuation – an intense but often short-lived passion or admiration for someone

olfactory – related to the sense of smell

orbitofrontal cortex – a brain region involved in decision-making and evaluating rewards

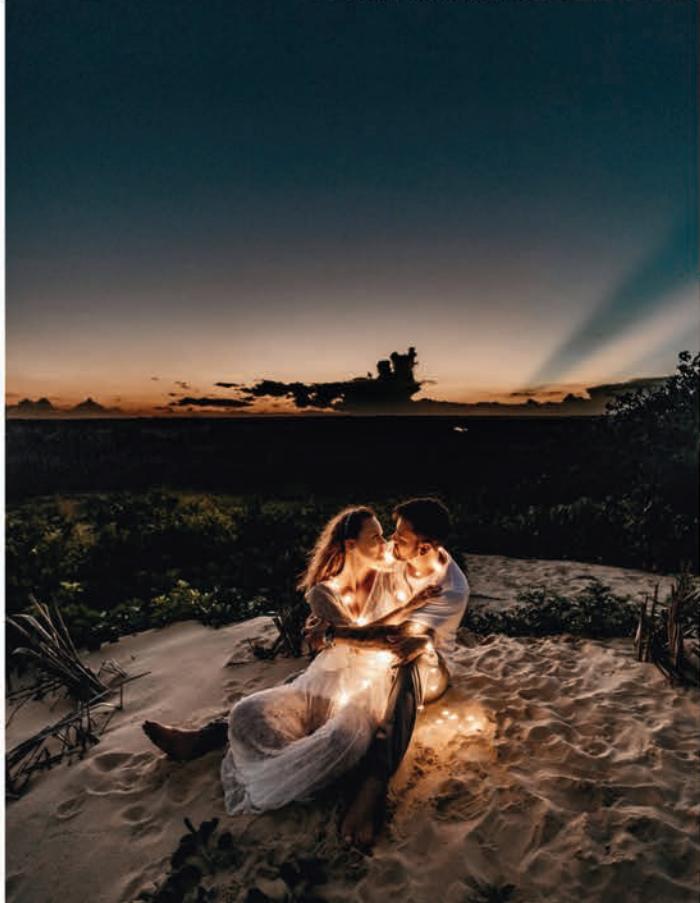
scrutinise – to examine something closely and carefully

susceptibility – the likelihood of being influenced or affected by something

unrequited – not returned or reciprocated, often used in the context of love

vasopressin – a hormone that influences bonding and social behaviour

Photo by Jonathan Borba on Unsplash



Love – Not Only Romantic?

Types of love in the eyes of Erich Fromm

By Julia Jabłońska

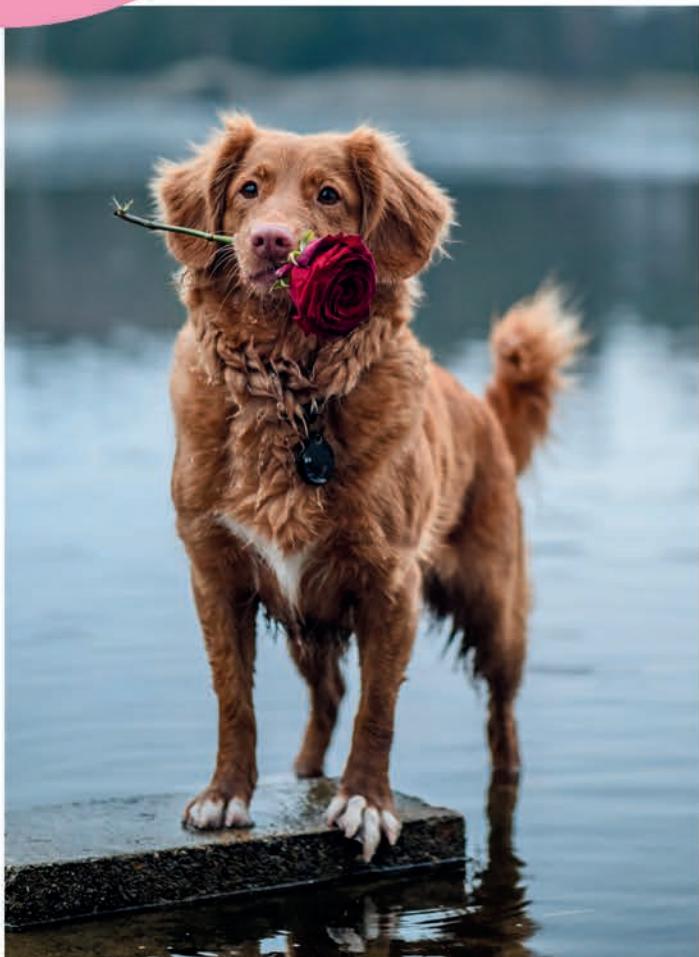


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Going through life, I was constantly frustrated by the concept of modern-day love. Never satisfied with relationships lasting a month or two, never liking when someone suggested "being serious" after briefly getting to know me, or even by its representation in romantic movies. It just wasn't real to me. "Maybe I'm thinking too traditionally" or "Maybe there is something wrong with me," I often thought to myself, but I always knew I was kind of right.

And I was right.

I remember walking down the city centre on probably the hottest day of the year. Lots of people, lots of street vendors, and there he was – a tall, long-haired, brunette bookseller. With his hazel eyes, he looked at me with a soft smile that could buy hundreds of books and even more hearts. No, it wasn't love at first sight, but he had something I wanted – the book. Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*.

But what does it mean – love? In the eyes of the author, mature love is becoming one with somebody yet not losing yourself or your individuality in the process. It is an active declaration of will, not a passive feeling, as we tend to expect. It is something that we constantly choose to do. We decide to love someone, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health – like the vows say. Sounds cheesy, but to be fair, my frustration came from a place of being fed up with lust mistaken for love and people not willing to fight or take time because it is just "too much work". Loving is a choice. It is something that we give out, and by giving we are loving. True love consists of care, respect and recognition. It is an active striving for development and happiness in one another. Indeed, there are different kinds of love. We can love a friend, a parent, or a lover, but we all agree it is not the same. That's why I'll be talking about some examples from the book that inspired me on this topic.

Self-Love

Unjustly mistaken for egoism, I believe self-love is the most important kind of love. Thinking that by loving yourself, you're developing narcissistic tendencies is deceptive. Fromm explains it this way: egoists cannot love others, but they also cannot love themselves. On the other hand, people who only love others cannot truly love. I understand this to mean that by loving yourself, you're developing an internal ability to love – others and everything on Earth. Self-love is essential for better understanding yourself and finding peace and fulfilment in your life. You can give out love only if it comes from deep within you. We have to care for ourselves first to be able to take care of others.

Erotic love

It's probably the first thing that comes to mind when we are picturing romantic love. It is described as the love of two people wanting to merge and become one completely. The biggest difference here is its exclusiveness. Erotic love, by the meaning of Erich Fromm, is monogamous, and sexual union makes this fusion with one another even stronger. However, sexual desire is often mixed up with real love, and the act is taken as the highest form of becoming one. In reality, without love, sex lacks tenderness and is full of possession. Fromm also points out how often erotic love is mistaken for temporary infatuation. Getting to know someone new is

exciting. In the beginning, fascination takes the lead and blinded by lust, we start to believe this is true love. With time, the initial passion fades, we are left alone with feelings of boredom, and we begin to question the relationship. Is it really love? We start to look around for someone new, hoping it will be better this time – but it's not. The author sums it up by saying that love is somewhere between a strong feeling and an act of will.

Motherly love

Fromm dedicated a vast amount of his book to talking about this special kind of love between a parent and child. To him, motherly love is the unconditional affirmation of a child's life and its needs. We understand that a mother's love is dual, where the first aspect focuses on being responsible and caring for the child, which is crucial for keeping it alive, and the second one looks beyond survival. It is teaching a child the love of living. He compares it to milk and honey, where milk is a symbol of caring and surviving, and honey symbolises the sweetness of life, the happiness of being alive. It is in the nature of the relationship that a mother and her child aren't equal to each other, which makes this love the purest and the highest type of love. However, the fact that this love is unconditionally given means that we cannot earn it. When it happens, it is a blessing, and when it is not there, "It is as if all the beauty had gone out of life."

Brotherly love

The author focuses a lot on religion here and throughout the entire book. Although I'm not really a religious person myself, I see his perspective of love for others as one where we are all the same and equal. Connected by this common experience of living, different yet so similar, having the same problems and dilemmas. We often find ourselves in hard positions, and this brotherly love is when one party helps each other out. It is caring and looking out for strangers in need – for instance, helping out flooded towns in Poland. Brotherly love begins when we love the poor and the helpless – those who are not useful to us in any way, yet we still choose to love them.

Photo by Dani Guitarra on Unsplash

The real question here is – is love an art? For Fromm and me, yes, it is an art form. And like any other type of art, we have to practice it to perfect it. Without it, Earth would be a lonely place, which is why we should seek love and understanding in everyday things. We should not worry about not having a romantic partner or maybe not anyone at all, as we can still love ourselves and get more out of it. This book isn't a guide to loving or a massive encyclopedia with the answer to every question about love, but its view is worth giving a thought.

Sources:

E. Fromm (2007) *The Art of Loving*. Rebis



Glossary

be serious – see a future with the person and being exclusive

street vendor – someone who sells food or other goods in the street, sometimes illegally

internal – inside a person's mind

vow – to make a determined decision or promise to do something

cheesy – boldly rude, impudent, or disrespectful in usually a playful or appealing way

lust – a very strong sexual desire

strive – to try very hard to do something or to make something happen, especially for a long time or against difficulties

narcissistic – having too much interest in and admiration for yourself

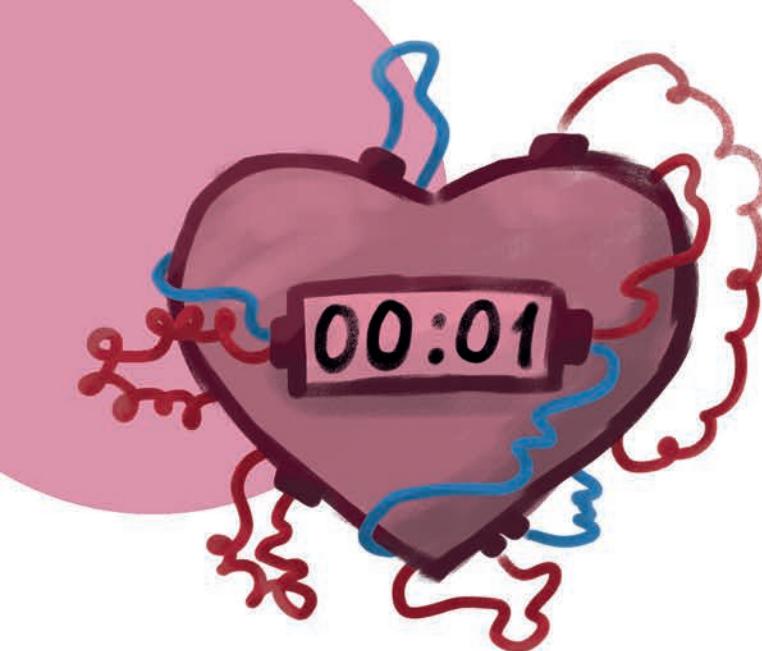
merge – to combine or join together, or to cause things to do this

fusion – an occasion when two or more things join or are combined

tenderness – the quality of being gentle, loving, or kind

unconditionally – in a way that is complete and not limited in any way



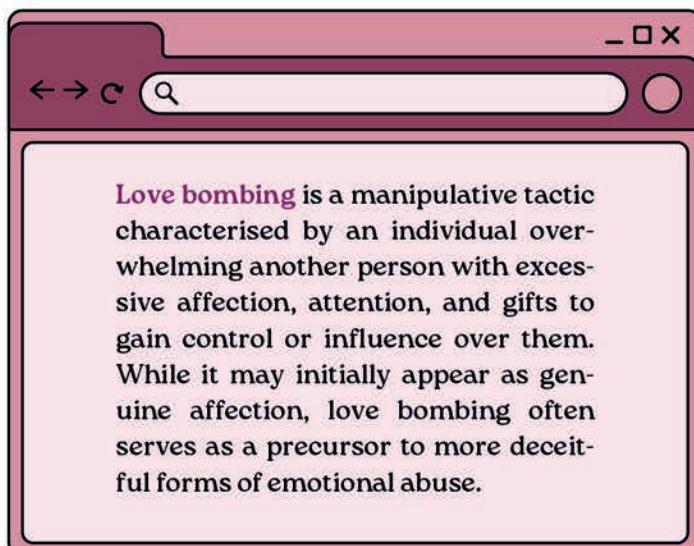


Love Bombing

What Is It And How To Recognise It

By Zuzanna Włodkowska

Where did the term "love bombing" come from? It was first used by ex-members of the Unification Church of the United States during the 1970s. It described the practice of showering recruits with overwhelming affection to foster a sense of belonging and loyalty. Psychologists later adopted the term to describe similar behaviours, particularly in romantic relationships. In these scenarios, love bombing involves excessive attention and affection with the ulterior motive of establishing control over the partner.



Love bombing is a process which typically unfolds in three distinct phases:

1.

Idealisation Phase: The perpetrator inundates the target with flattery, gifts, and declarations of love, creating an intense and swift emotional connection. This excessive affection can make the recipient feel exceptionally valued and important.

2.

Devaluation Phase: Once the target is emotionally invested, the love bomber begins to withdraw affection, becoming critical or manipulative. This shift often leaves the victim confused and desperate to regain the initial warmth and attention.

3.

Discard Phase: The perpetrator may abruptly end the relationship or continue to manipulate the victim, maintaining control through alternating periods of affection and neglect. This cycle can sustain emotional dependency and demolish the victim's self-esteem.

Photo by Jon Tyson on Unsplash

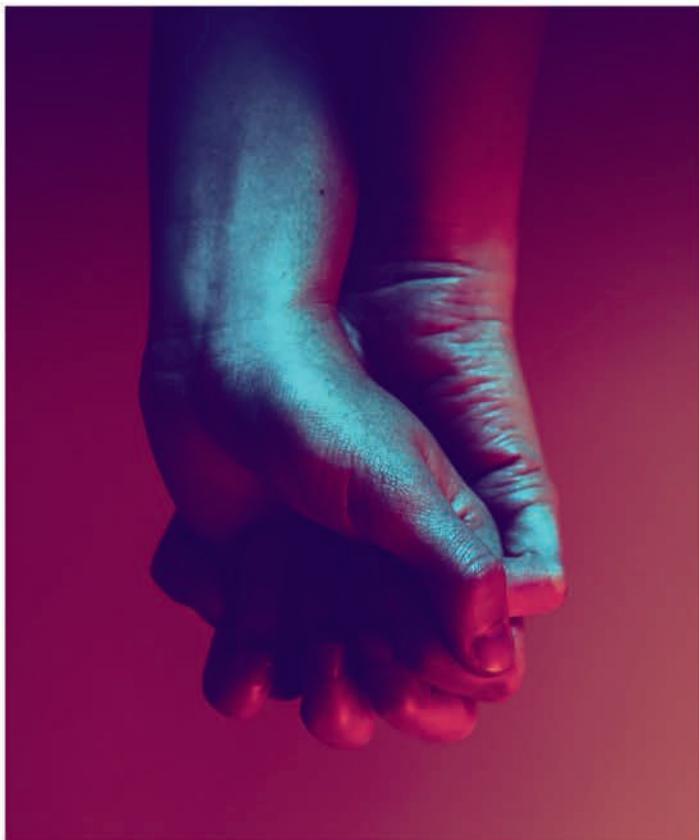


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This tactic is often associated with individuals exhibiting narcissistic tendencies. Research indicates that narcissists may engage in love bombing to boost their self-esteem and fulfil their need for admiration and validation. A study conducted at the University of Arkansas found that individuals with narcissistic traits are more likely to employ love-bombing behaviours in romantic relationships, using excessive attention and affection as tools for manipulation (Strutzenberg, 2016). Distinguishing genuine affection from love bombing is essential. Genuine affection develops gradually and respects personal boundaries, whereas love bombing is characterised by intensity, speed, and the underlying motive of control. Healthy relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, and balanced emotional exchange, without the pressure for rapid commitment or isolation from your support systems.

It is important to protect yourself from it when you recognise it. The important thing in that kind of situation is to uphold your personal boundaries. If someone pays too much attention to you that it becomes uncomfortable, you should establish your limits and don't let them pressure you into bending them/push you to bend them. Remember to take time and don't rush your relationships. It can make you miss important signs of putting pressure on you to commit to something that is unusual for you. The last thing is to stay in touch with your family and friends. Don't let someone isolate you from your support system. Those closest to you can often notice questionable behaviours first, which can help you recognise love bombing in a relationship.

Recognising the signs is important to prevent anyone from manipulating you. Identifying love bombing can be challenging, especially in the early stages of a relationship. There are some key signs to look out for:

- **Excessive compliments and flattery:** The individual overwhelmingly praises you very often.
- **Over-the-top gift-giving:** They provide extravagant gifts early in the relationship, often disproportionate to the level of relationship that you are in.
- **Fast commitment:** They push for quick progression in the relationship, such as moving in together or discussing marriage unusually soon.
- **Demanding your time:** They insist on spending all their time with you, isolating you from friends and family.
- **Emotional manipulation:** They may become upset or passive-aggressive if you set boundaries or seek independence.

To sum up, love bombing is a deceptive practice that can lead to significant emotional harm. By understanding its characteristics and being vigilant for warning signs, individuals can protect themselves from falling victim to manipulation. Healthy relationships are grounded in mutual respect, trust, and a balanced exchange of affection, free from ulterior motives or coercive tactics.

Sources:

Strutzenberg, C. (2016). Love-Bombing: A Narcissistic Approach to Relationship Formation. Human Development and Family Sciences Undergraduate Honors Theses Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/hdfsrsuht/1>

Glossary

ulterior – a secret purpose or reason for doing something

deceitful – dishonest or hiding the truth

inundate – to give someone so many things that they cannot deal with it all

perpetrator – an individual who has committed an act of wrongdoing

abruptly – in a sudden, unexpected, and sometimes unpleasant way

gradually – slowly over a period of time

vigilant – always careful to notice things, especially potential dangers

coercive – using force to persuade people to do things that they are unwilling to do

Love Through History

Dating Could Be Worse

By Magda Witkowska

As one man once sang, "The power of love is a curious thing, makes one man weep, makes another man sing". It is definitely true that finding and putting up with your loved one is not the easiest thing in the world. But I want to assure you – it could be worse. In fact, it was, many times, in many eras, dating was more complex or even non-existent, due to the fact that love was not always welcome in couples' lives. Let me take you on a journey across time and show you how bad your life could have been if you had lived in another century.

Let's go many, many years to the era of prehistory. We do not know much about those days, but from remaining graves, scientists have been able to gather some information about our ancestors' love lives. It is certain that they avoided inbreeding in their communities. They decided to form a way of dating, which required young women to seek their partner in another group so as not to have children with their cousins or brothers. Men just needed to wait for them to arrive. How unfair! There is not much more we can say about dating. Whether men had to fight for girls and give them flowers, we will never know. But from the jewellery found in their graves, scientists conclude there might have been some sort of marriages even back then.

Our ancient friends left us much more to explore their vision of love. We can learn many interesting facts from Greek myths, poems, to doctors' notes. For instance, Greeks accepted homosexual relationships... but only if you were a man... and there was a big age gap between you and your partner. Yes, exactly, it was okay to engage in sexual inter-course between older men and young boys. For them, it was even seen as beneficial, as a step towards manhood. Roman doctors, on the other hand, viewed love as... a sick-ness. They believed it was crucial for determining a person's mental and physical health. One of them, Galen, even wrote:

"I know men and women who have been struck by passionate love and become despondent and sleepless, [...] The disease of people who are constantly thinking about love is hard to cure."



You might ask, "Was there any remedy?" Galen proposed his patients change their lifestyles and engage in activities, such as hunting, travelling, drinking (I do not recommend that), bathing (I do recommend that), and watching gladiator fights.

In the medieval era, love was not perceived as a health problem, but rather as a noble aim, at least for knights. Many of them saw love as the goal of their life, one that they could not ever achieve. Why? Knights were often nobles who did not have any lands, which made them not so desirable partners. In those times, only firstborn sons could inherit their father's fortune, so until they were alive, their younger brothers could only pursue the career of a noble knight. Part of this career was finding a woman to love from a distance, to sigh to, but never marry. Oftentimes, knights even protected the dignity of married women, which made their efforts even less fulfilling. Was there any way to get out of the friendzone? Well, some men used very shameful methods to tarnish the reputation of their love interest, leaving them with no chance of attracting other potential partners. With that, the woman could only choose between the man who hurt her or becoming a nun. How lovely. These problems didn't concern the richest or the poorest, though. The ones that had nothing did not need marriage to fulfil their love, and

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the most powerful treated marriage as a contract that would seal their deals. Many times, the groom and bride didn't even meet before entering the church.

The modern era finally made dating interesting. With many strict rules, it was way more complex than today. You think swiping is hard? Try their rules. First, there was a limited number of places where potential partners could meet each other. The family could invite possible suitors to a private tea or dinner. There were also assembly rooms, concerts and pleasure gardens. Taking your date to fast food, sorry. Next, at the first meeting, touching was forbidden. Even a handshake. That act was too intimate back then. Furthermore, the couple could not stay alone even for a second. A chaperon had to be present all the time, usually the woman's mother or female friend. Can you imagine being with your mum on a date? I do not think so. Finally, the families of potential partners decided if they could continue dating. If they agreed, the woman had most control over the relationship. She could refuse to dance with an admirer, reject his gifts or further courtship. At least, that was until marriage when her voice was no longer relevant.

Finally, we came to our times. But not quite. Our era also has interesting facts to uncover. For instance, when psychology was a young science, many believed that love was sickness, but, in contrast to Galen, they focused only on same-sex relationships. It was classified as a mental disorder in DSM II (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders II) in 1968. Doctors even believed they could cure homosexuality by electrocuting individuals interested in the same sex. It did not help (how shocking). But at last, in 1987, it was removed from DSM. That makes the present seem much better than the past.

In conclusion, our times are not that bad now, right? We have access to almost everyone on the entire planet, so we have a bigger choice than our ancestors. We do not have as many strict rules, nor do we need to worry about honour and material goods. We do not think about our survival and bringing offspring. We can meet our potential partner



Photo by Europeana on Unsplash

anywhere, and we can get to know them even before meeting. By reading their bio in a dating app, we can even find out if they have similar interests before ever writing an awkward "hi" to them. Of course, it creates many new difficulties, but I do not believe they are worse than those of previous eras.

Here you have found some interesting (I hope) information about our ancestors, but it is only the tip of the iceberg. We jumped here from era to era, from place to place and only scratched the surface of facts about dating, marriages, and the love life of those who lived on this planet before us. So, if you are interested in the history of heart problems, I recommend you dig deeper. Good luck! And remember, "Love is in the air, everywhere I look around, love is in the air, every sight and every sound."

Glossary

inbreed – breed from closely related people or animals

despondent – feeling discouraged or depressed

groom – a man who is about to get married

chaperone – someone who looks after and supervises another person or a group of people

courtship – a period in a romantic relationship when a couple is dating

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Stereotypes About Queer Romantic Relationships

By Ola Milewska

Everyone has some internal stereotypes. But let's get straight to the definition. As we can read on the Cambridge Dictionary website, a stereotype is "a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong." Very often, we learn stereotypes from other people (Bandura's theory) or, more likely nowadays, from the mainstream. Since it's February and Valentine's Day is coming, we will see lovely couples on dates. Unfortunately, there are a lot of stereotypes about queer (non-heterosexual) couples that are very popular, and, most of all, not true. In this article, we will take a look at some stereotypes and talk about them.

"Queer relationships are not as long and strong as heterosexual ones"

This is, in fact, scientifically not true. There has been some scientific research about this (e.g. Jankowiak, Waszyńska, 2018) showing that sexual orientation is not related to the durability of relationships. It's a really harmful stereotype that implies that non-heterosexual couples are not treated seriously. That, sadly, has some influence on the everyday life of queer people, as their relationships are not perceived as "real".



"In a lesbian relationship one person needs to wear pants"

This stereotype comes from the belief that queer relationships need to mimic heterosexual ones. I personally often come across direct questions about that, which just seems ill-mannered to me. But this stereotype is harmful not only to lesbians but also to heterosexual couples. This implies that a man needs to take the lead in a relationship, but nowadays, we know that a partnership is the best way.

"Bisexual people in heterosexual relationships are no longer attracted to people of the same gender"

This harmful stereotype is very popular among people. A bisexual person is still bisexual, even if they are with a person of the opposite gender. Firstly, we need to differentiate between attraction and being attracted to someone. Attraction never stops, as it's just a natural feeling. When you are in a relationship, you are attracted to that person, but you can still feel attraction towards other people.

Summary

Minorities are always at great risk of harmful stereotypes. We must educate ourselves and be open-minded to create a kinder world. If you don't know something or you are unsure – ask and search for verified information, but mostly – be respectful.

Glossary

mainstream – considered normal, and having or using ideas, beliefs, etc., that are accepted by most people

mimic – to copy the way in which a particular person usually speaks and moves

ill-mannered – rude and unpleasant

queer – having or relating to a gender identity or a sexuality that does not fit society's traditional ideas about gender or sexuality

imply – to communicate an idea or feeling without saying it directly

minorities – any small group in society that is different from the rest because of their race, religion, or political beliefs, or a person who belongs to such a group

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Jankowiak, B., Waszyńska, K. (2018). Jakość i trwałość związków intymnych mężczyzn hetero-, homo- i biseksualnych. *Journal of Sexual and Mental Health*, 16(1).

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Beyond Categories



J. Paul Getty Museum

Glossary

aroused – awakened or stimulated, often referring to curiosity or desire

categorical – clear and absolute, without room for exceptions

courtesan – a female sex worker whose clientele was wealthy men

confide in someone – to share one's feelings and secrets with someone

depict – to represent or describe something in words or images

liberal – open to new ideas, not bound by traditional views

love parade – an electronic dance music festival that became a symbol of freedom and inclusivity, with strong ties to the LGBTQ+ community

puritanism – strict moral or religious beliefs, often disapproving of pleasure

recount – describe how something happened

rigid – fixed, not able to be bent

Some time ago, a book landed in my hands that serves as clear proof that queer love is not a modern invention. Today, queer love is everywhere – on-screen in films and TV shows, in music, and even on the streets in vibrant love parades. It may be louder and more colorful these days, but human nature hasn't changed essentially in this regard nor have our attempts to fit sexuality into clear-cut categories.

The book in question is *300,000 Kisses: Tales of Queer Love from the Ancient World* by painter Luke Edward Hall and poet Seán Hewitt. They have together collected 40 tales that vividly depict the rich and complex expressions of love and sex – both mortal and divine – in the classical era. What surprised me most was how liberal ancient societies were in contrast to the puritanism of today.

One of these 40 tales, *The Tale of the Threesome*, is an adaptation of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Courtesans*. It recounts a conversation between a young man, Clonarium, and the courtesan Leanea, who confides in him about an unexpected experience at a drinking party, where she was hired by a wealthy woman, Megilla, and her wife, Demonassa, to provide entertainment. Aroused by curiosity and rumors that they "do God knows what together," Clonarium pressed Leanea for details. Her account offers an insight into Roman attitudes towards sexuality. On the one hand, she is relaxed about her work as a courtesan; on the other, she feels ashamed when recounting her intimate experience with Megilla. Leanea tries to fit Megilla into a schema, but Megilla resists, declaring, "I was born a woman just the same as the rest of you, but I have the mind and desires of a man." Whether she was a lesbian or transgender is beside the point. What matters is that the concept of queer love has been known to people for millennia (how they treated it, however, is a different story).

On a side note, John Keynes (1883-1946), the English economist, was openly homosexual. Yet at 38, he met Russian ballerina Lydia Lopokova, fell in love with her, and married her at the age of 42. They stayed together until his death. Keynes' story serves as another reminder that love and sexuality have never fit neatly into rigid categories.

Interview With Angelika Kołomańska

By Jan Wolicki

Angelika Kołomańska is a certified and experienced psychologist, CBT psychotherapist, scientist, and a sexuality expert. She is an academic teacher at the SWPS University in Warsaw. She completed her psychology studies in Warsaw and specialised in clinical sexology and cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy (CBT). She holds the CBT certificate PTTPB number 1371. Her professional qualifications in the field of psychology have been recognised for practising the profession in Copenhagen, Denmark.

She is a member of the International Society of Sexual Medicine (having completed her first term with a certificate of recognition). She was awarded several scholarships, including one to The ESSM School of Sexual Medicine, as well as a doctoral scholarship.

She is pursuing her PhD in clinical psychology in Miami (Florida, USA) and participating in numerous sexology training courses and international conferences. She has publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals, such as The Journal of Sexual Medicine. She works clinically and continues to inspire and help people build healthy, loving relationships.

Jan Wolicki: With what problems do couples come to you most often? And what causes them?

Angelika Kołomańska: Couples most often come with a problem from a pool of these:

- lack of intimacy,
- lack of common values,
- lack of commitment,
- trust issues,
- problems in communication,
- infidelity,
- broken promises,
- a decline in the sense of safety in the relationship,
- stress regarding the financial situation.

Of course, there are some others, but these are the most common. As for the causes, they often stem from traumatic or difficult past experiences, significant life changes, a pessimistic thinking style, and negative behaviour patterns (schemas).



Angelika Kołomańska

JW: Who initiates the therapy most often? What characterises such a person?

AK: From my experience in heterosexual marriages, the wife is often the one who initiates the therapy. If her partner isn't involved or committed, he can come to the meetings but doesn't implement any changes at home. But it is important to mention that anybody can come to therapy – anybody who has a need.

JW: When do those problems occur? What kind of difficulties do couples face at different stages of their relationships?

AK: Through their shared life, couples often face difficult situations and challenges like:

- the first year of living together,
- "the seven-year itch",
- life after pregnancy and birth,
- middle age,
- retirement,
- old age.



The key to navigating these challenging stages is honest communication and solving problems together as they arise. From my experience, I can say that couples often come to psychotherapy to get help in matters of intimacy and parenting. In matters of children's behaviour, the challenges keep getting more difficult and harder to solve and occur more often, whether those individual problems involve internalisation, externalisation, or neurodevelopmental disorders. And these affect the lives of couples and marriages more and more.

JW: What do you think about the sexual taboo that has always been present in society? I suppose with time, it fades. What is your opinion on that?

AK: Let's begin with defining the word "taboo". Taboo is a prohibition against getting in contact with certain objects, people, animals, or certain activities, the violation of which was believed to bring punishment from supernatural forces (in the context of folk beliefs). Taboo can also be understood as an untouchable sacred entity or something that is not spoken about or is forbidden. Such prohibitions exist in practically all societies. There are four main types of taboos: religious, societal, judicial and sexual. The last one relates to the shame, fear and false beliefs that exist in society concerning topics related to sexuality. Often, these beliefs are rooted in historical and cultural contexts. Open and honest communication on such issues can help society move towards treating sexuality in a healthy way.

JW: Does this taboo and its effects relate in any way to the lowering of the age of sexual initiation?

AK: In Poland, the average age of sexual initiation is 18,1 years old. According to Polish researchers, religion, taking drugs, smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol, the place in where we live, and talking with parents about birth control or sexual activity influence engagement in sexual activity. The age of sexual initiation is also influenced by factors such as the age at which one first encounters pornography, life quality, the size of the city one lives in, and substance use. It is worth noting that there are more motives for sexual initiation, such as curiosity.

AK: Early sexual activity is connected to hazardous sexual behaviours and sexually transmitted infections (STI). Scientists in America have proved that delaying the beginning of sexual activity is linked to higher-quality relationships in numerous dimensions. It also has been proven that there is a negative connection between sexual timing and the quality of relationships, as well as between early sexual initiation and informal cohabitation.

JW: In the media, everybody has heard a slogan that is repeated again and again. "Communication is the key." How much truth is in that statement (looking from the perspective of an experienced psychotherapist)? And what would be the most important aspect in the relationship that will last?

AK: Yes, solid communication is a very important component of every relationship, but not everybody takes time to understand their partner. Misunderstandings between partners or hiding things from one another can lead to resentment or unhappiness. So it is important to learn how to talk to each other to build a healthy, happy relationship. Of course, healthy does not mean perfect. What makes a relationship strong is how you choose to face and overcome difficulties that life throws at you. Effective communication has a few components: emotional security, verbal and non-verbal communication, and a feeling of closeness. These elements build the foundation for long-term, satisfying relationships.

JW: What is the most important thing in a relationship that has a future ahead?

AK: A shared vision of the future is essential for creating lasting relationships. If you, as partners, agree on fundamental values and long-term goals, it creates a good foundation for a couple. Besides that, one should place importance on open communication and honesty. When one thinks seriously about building a life together, one will want to include their partner in various aspects of their life. Moreover, one should invest in the emotional well-being of their partner.

Photo by Priscilla Du Preez  on Unsplash



Sometimes, small gestures can say quite a bit about our partner's intentions, like making breakfast or offering help with tasks, showing that they think about your well-being in the long run. Nonetheless, every relationship faces challenges, and how you and your partner deal with conflicts is a significant indicator of how strong the relationship is. A partner who believes you will have a future together will approach conflict with a desire to compromise or solve it. If your partner actively searches for solutions, values openness in communication during a conflict and is committed and involved in growing together, it is a good sign and predictor of long-term relationships. For sure, being patient, understanding and ready to walk together through the maze of life's difficulties can make love last forever. It is important to show patience in difficult moments, understand our partner's needs, and support their personal journey. The readiness to get through the storms and celebrate successes together is proof of a relationship's strength. Finally, intimacy plays a crucial role in a devoted relationship.

Love is based on trust, communication, and a shared vision of the future. Every relationship is unique, but the journey to stable and lasting love requires mutual understanding and engagement to create a meaningful future together.

JW: How does neglect affect a relationship, and how can we recognise when our relationship needs help?

AK: Neglect of one's partner can have tremendous effects on a relationship. When you constantly hide your emotions, don't pay attention, or aren't actively participating in the life you ought to create together, it will lead to the erosion of love and the emotional bond.

Some signs that your relationship may need help include:

- frequent and intense arguments,
- lack of effective communication,
- emotional withdrawal,
- trust issues,
- decline in physical intimacy,
- stress,
- considering or having an affair,
- trauma affecting one partner,
- financial conflict,
- parental challenges,
- desire for a healthier relationship.



Photo by Aiony Haust on Unsplash

Whether a relationship facing trouble or crisis can be repaired depends primarily on the partners' motivation.

JW: You have worked with people from many cultures. How would you assess the level of relationship development in Poland, the knowledge about relationships, and the maturity in navigating them on the international stage? How do relationships differ in the cultures you have had the opportunity to observe, and why?

AK: The dynamics of a given culture affect the language and style of communication and how we perceive and express love. Some societies emphasise collectivism and dedication to family life, while others emphasise individualism and autonomy. That difference in the hierarchy of values can affect how couples deal with their duties and challenges.

The Polish idea of a relationship tends to be a bit more conservative compared to Western or Northern Europe. There is a big difference in how, for example, Americans and Polish people display affection. Americans "speak", and in Poland, people "show" by doing "good deeds". Of course, it would be important to define what "good" means because, for everyone, it can mean a different thing.



Navigating the maze of relationships can be difficult, especially when cultural differences are at play. Those differences affect almost every aspect of life, which may lead to conflict or misunderstandings.

Culture undoubtedly affects how people think, feel, and behave in a romantic relationship. Love is universal but also culturally specific.

JW: What would you say may be a guideline or advice for young people who don't have relationship experience and would like to know what they should avoid? I would like to know what to expect in a real relationship.

AK: My advice would be:

- set clear boundaries and respect them,
- be engaged,
- develop your emotional intelligence,
- train your assertiveness,
- maintain psychological coherence,
- prioritise transparency,
- show empathy.

The rule of 3-6-9 months in a relationship is worth mentioning. In the first three months, you get to know each other; during the next three months, you build a deeper connection, and in the last three months, you should have a clear idea about whether the relationship has the potential to be a long-lasting one. It is not universal, of course. And nobody should treat it as an axiom. Nevertheless, it can be helpful. Let's not forget that one has to work on every relationship for it to be successful.

Good luck!



Glossary

cohabitation – living together in the same place, usually in a romantic relationship

hazardous – dangerous or risky

infidelity – being unfaithful in a relationship

neglect – lack of care for someone or something

resentment – a feeling of anger or displeasure

stem from – to come from or be caused by something

transmit (e.g. a disease or infection) – to pass on a disease or infection from one person to another

withdrawal – separating oneself from someone or something

Pain, the Love Hormone, Ruminating and Social Media

Why is breaking up so difficult?

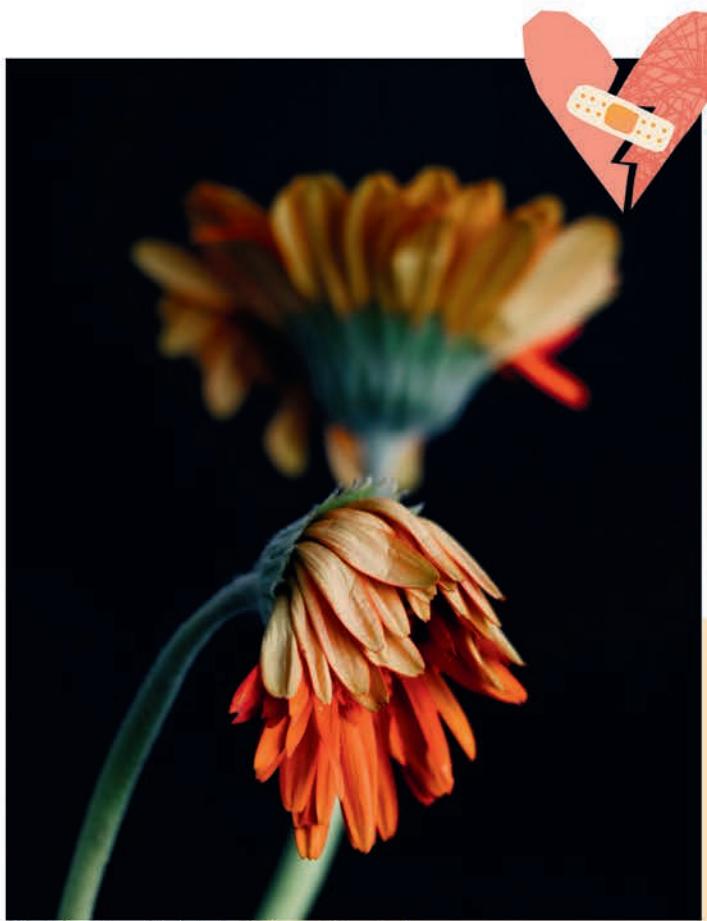
By Karolina Tomczak

The struggle surrounding a breakup is something that nearly everyone has experienced at some point in their lives. From the first shock, disbelief, or the burden of the decision to endless thoughts, overanalysing, and emotional pain, the experience shakes us to the core. Heartbreak can take a toll on your mental and physical health for weeks and months on end. What is the aftermath? Is it emotional pain or physical? Are the lines blurred? And what makes the struggle so persistent and complicated? The topic can be studied from many angles. Starting with stress-induced heart symptoms to the role of social media and the science behind emotional pain. Understanding the science behind it may help us see why breaking up feels so overwhelming and why healing takes time.

Breaking up is called heartbreak for a reason, isn't it? Well, partially. We all know that heartbreak can cause a time of blues when we are sad, alone, or angry. After a breakup, we often experience a flood of negative emotions, and it can take a while to get back on our feet.



The word heartbreak implies that the pain has something to do with our heart, but it is more about the effect on the emotions surrounding it. The stress of separation triggers our body to release stress hormones, which cause your heart to beat faster, pump more blood and be ready to face life's hardships. In the long run, the increase in stress hormones can harm our hearts. Consistent fight or flight mode can lead to cardiac problems such as hypertension, inflammation or rhythm disorders. Doctors also recognise a condition called Broken Heart Syndrome. It is a dysfunction caused by a very emotional or stressful situation. In Broken Heart Syndrome, stress hormones overburden the heart, and the vessels constrict, not allowing fastened blood flow to enter. The condition can look like a heart attack (Wittstein, 2021).



However, that does not mean that breaking up happens at the heart. We know that it is the brain that perceives, feels emotions and directly processes everything we face. In 2008, patients with IBS were scanned with an fMRI while experiencing bowel pain. Images showed their brain activity while in pain. Those results were later compared to the activity of the brain/brain's activity during stressful life events and anxiety. It turns out our brains react similarly to physical pain and emotional hardships. On fMRI, the same regions light up during physical and emotional pain. It means that our brain acts almost identically to social pain as it does to physical pain (Lumley et al., 2011). The substance that primarily causes us to attach is oxytocin. You may have heard that it is called the love hormone. Studies conducted on prairie voles showed that rodents, after being separated from their partner, experienced depressive-like states, increased anxiety and biological indicators of chronic stress. Scientists also discovered significant changes in the rodents' oxytocin systems, which explained their behaviour following the loss of a partner (Bosch, Young, 2017). The drop in the love hormone can intensify typical feelings of loneliness and isolation as the brain is faced with a new lack of emotional intimacy. This "withdrawal" can also be connected to intense emotional pain, as oxytocin is thought to ease the feelings of pain (which was proven in the case of childbirth). Because of the changes in the production of oxytocin, the hormone can no longer work as efficiently.



Photo by Yuvraj Singh on Unsplash

Imagine you are in the best relationship you have ever been in. Everything goes exactly how you want it to, smoothly, without any bumps on the road. Suddenly, out of the blue, your partner wants to break up, stating reasons you could not even imagine to be true. You had a completely different view of your relationship. What now? This example highlights two different aspects. Cognitive dissonance happens when certain beliefs are inconsistent with reality. It triggers a process to somehow align our perspective with the new information. This imaginary partner's perception of the relationship was completely different from your pre-breakup one. It is difficult to make sense of the situation. The emotional aspect of the unexpected separation additionally intensifies the need to overcome the dissonance. Unfortunately, our brain is not very good at reducing dissonance. People may question their ex's judgment or sincerity: "They must be making up reasons to leave", "There weren't any signs". Sometimes, we go down a rabbit hole, trying to find any signs, thinking that we missed something and obsessively analysing the relationship. This process is called rumination – repetitive dwelling, remembering and overanalysing every aspect and emotion. It usually does not result in finding solution or reason. Rumination, unfortunately, keeps the wound open, intensifies the dissonance and prevents moving forward and healing.



The evolution of our dependency on social media has also completely changed the way we heal. To be precise, it has brought new challenges and risks. Today, we can, at any given moment, check what our ex is up to. What music have they listened to recently, or even what does their new partner look like, what do they study, and what are they up to. Are they engaged? Is a baby on the way? How can they have someone new already? This is what may go through your mind while processing a breakup, and the worst thing is – you can always check. Even if you do not want to check, you can be easily exposed to triggers – maybe your mutual friend posted your ex's picture, maybe their relative, whom you still follow. Additionally, your algorithm will quickly pick up your personal tragedy, and soon, you may see more and more posts about breakups, heartbreak and all the negative emotions surrounding them. Of course, at first, it is nice to know that you are not alone and see things you can relate to. However, be mindful. Often, the best way to heal is to simply go no-contact and, do not be mistaken, it also includes social media. Keeping the ex's life visible can make it harder to emotionally detach while potentially leading to "stalking" and ruminating. Already fresh and painful wounds can be nourished by additional jealousy, longing and comparison. We need to shield ourselves from triggers as much as possible to detach. Focusing on ourselves will be extremely hard if we compare our grieving journey to our ex-partner's. Eventually, those feelings will have to stop, that is why people ought to be mindful of what content they consume. It must be hard to get rid of pain and negativity related to heartbreak when all we see are sad videos or posts. Young adults spend almost 3 hours daily on average on social media (Geuens, 2025). We want to be happy again, so why not start with that?

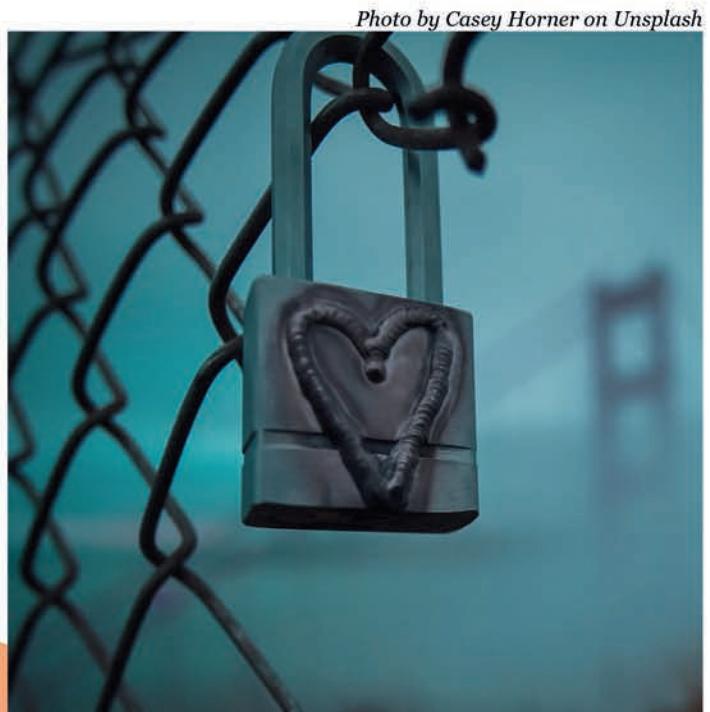


Photo by Casey Horner on Unsplash



Photo by Francesca Zama on Unsplash

Breaking up involves both physical and emotional components that are driven by stress hormones, changes in oxytocin, and mental processes like rumination. At present, we can highlight another interesting element that is participating in the healing process – social media. Social media alone may delay recovery because of the constant exposure to triggers. Understanding the science behind heartbreak can help people navigate their healing journey more effectively. The most important thing is time, it is a cliché for a reason. Over time, our emotions settle, and people are able to look at the situation more rationally. Overanalysing and dwelling will only prolong the process. We can help ourselves by creating a safe place to heal, for example, by reducing social media exposure and focusing on self-care. Science shows that our mind is wired to deal with different hardships that come our way. Even when it may feel hopeless, remember that the body needs time to adjust to the new reality. Allow yourself to feel and process those emotions. Heartbreak is not forever – the mind is built to recover, adapt, and love again.



Glossary

ruminate – to think carefully and for a long period about something

aftermath – the period that follows an unpleasant event or accident, and the effects that it causes

time of blues – to be sad, have low morale

hardship – a difficult or unpleasant condition of life

fight or flight mode – used to describe the reaction that people have to a dangerous situation, that makes them either stay and deal with it or run away

vessels constrict – the narrowing of blood vessels by small muscles in their walls

oxytocin – a hormone associated with trust, sexual arousal and relationship-building

intimacy – the state of having a close, personal relationship or romantic relationship with someone

withdrawal – the state of no longer being involved in something

(cognitive) dissonance – the discomfort a person feels when their behaviour does not align with their values or beliefs or when they hold two contradictory beliefs

sincerity – honesty

detach – to separate or remove something from something else that it is connected to

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Lifestyle Corner

Do Opposites Really Attract?



I am sure many of you have heard the cliché that opposites attract. The thought was so culturally ingrained that we started to believe that it was actually true. Even if our common sense disagrees. Do people look for their opposites?

For a while, people believed that in a relationship we look for someone who complements us and has the traits that we lack ourselves. According to this, an assertive partner would look for someone submissive, an outgoing one for an introverted, and so on. However, the concept of complementarity was introduced in the 1950s' and since then, it has been unable to be proven/it has yet to be proven. More studies have proved that we pick friends and lovers with personalities like ours.

That is why I must disappoint all romance lovers – opposites do not attract, at least not in the majority of instances. As a study mentioned in *The Guardian* shows, the analysed traits are similar to those of partners in 82% to almost 90% of cases. Partners often match according to their political views, religious beliefs and even levels of IQ and education. Couples tend to have similar attitudes towards stimulants and drug intake. Drug users often pair up with other drug users and smokers with smokers.

On the other hand, the study showed a slight tendency in particular situations when opposites did attract. It revealed that only 3% of traits amongst couples were significantly different. For instance, worriers and more anxious individuals frequently chose laid-back partners, and night owls chose morning birds. Biological and psychological features do not really fall into that. Weight, height, medical history and even personality traits can vary in relationships. It proves the point that people need to fundamentally agree on core beliefs, like religion or political orientation. That seems to be the most important thing to see eye to eye in a relationship. It is also natural for people to meet in certain circumstances and circles, so it does not come as a surprise.

Overall, the fundamental similarity in relationships appears to be more about world views and traditions rather than personality traits. People from individual circles tend to look there for their partners or friends. So, saying that opposites attract can be applied only to specific traits. People often look for someone like them, not someone at the complete opposite end of the spectrum. Of course, it does not mean that different people can never be happy together. It just means it is less likely they will end up together.

Karolina Tomczak



Knock, knock.
Who's there?

Egg.
Egg who?

**I'm egg-cited to be
near you!**

What did one volcano say
to the other?
"I lava you."

Whimsical LANGUAGE

★ Idioms

Love is blind

love prevents people from seeing faults in their partners



Wear your heart on your sleeve

to express your affection openly



Fall head over heels in love

to fall deeply in love



Tie the knot

to get married



Carry a torch for someone

you still have feelings for someone even after the relationship has ended



To be swept off one's feet

to be overwhelmed by your feelings for someone



★ Proverbs

All's fair in love and war

there are no rules when it comes to love or fighting



Absence makes the heart grow fonder

being apart can only make love stronger



A heart that loves is always young

love keeps the spirit youthful



Where there is love, there is life

love gives meaning to life



The way to a man's heart is through his stomach

one can win someone's affection by preparing delicious food for them



Love and a cough cannot be hidden

true love is hard to conceal



Culture Club

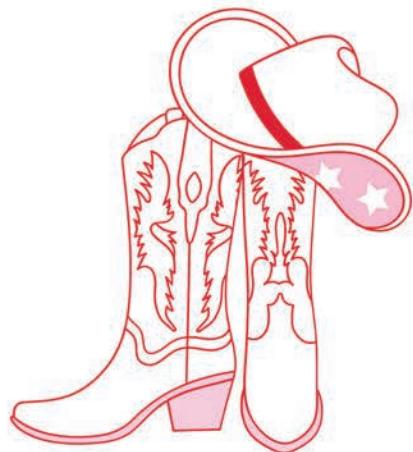
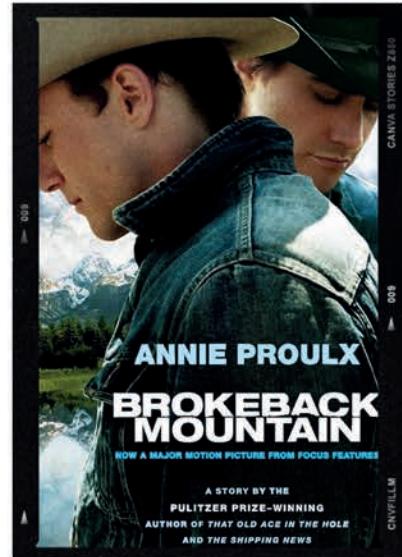
"Brokeback Mountain"

Review by Jan Wolicki

There is an unimaginable number of movies about love, from *Pride and Prejudice* to *Holiday*. And many of them stay with you as a pleasant memory of being naïve – a utopia that has to be dreamt but only dreamt. Nobody meets a tall brunette wearing "old money" who is kind and good to his family, wants to give you everything, and then, two months later, you marry and live happily ever after. It just does not happen. Well, there are a few movies that show more realistic love, like *Marriage Story* and *Malcolm and Marie*, but I would like to encourage you to watch one more, besides all the previously mentioned ones – one that tends to leave you a bit more... sad? Or maybe worried? I am not entirely sure.

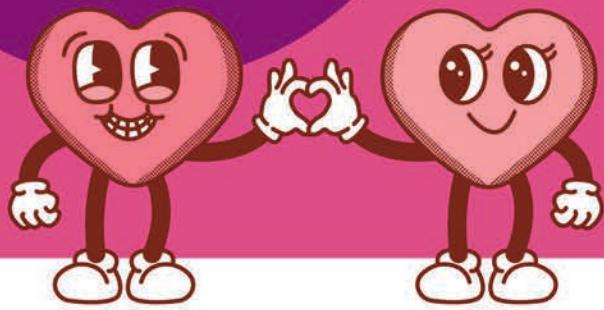
Ang Lee directed a movie in 2005 that today some call a classic: *Brokeback Mountain*. I should start with acting, but I don't have to – Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal will be enough. The story is just absorbing and presents the viewer with a dilemma every step of the way, simultaneously asking almost at every moment: "What is love? Is this love?" It is not the candy-and-rainbows kind. Though it has its moments. It mixes things that exist on entirely opposite sides of, let's say, a "stereotypical" continuum. And it does so perfectly.

Besides posing questions about love, it challenges the stereotypical view of masculinity and does all that while presenting us with beautiful scenery and cinematography and an even more beautiful story. If you are looking for a movie that will make you dream about your Prince Charming and Happily Ever After (and don't get me wrong, it is nothing to be ashamed of – I strongly advise you to watch a few of those every once in a while, too), you won't find it in that movie. Instead, you will find a mix of emotions and dilemmas that leave a long-lasting impression.



Shots from *Brokeback Mountain* directed by Ang Lee

"The Art of Loving"

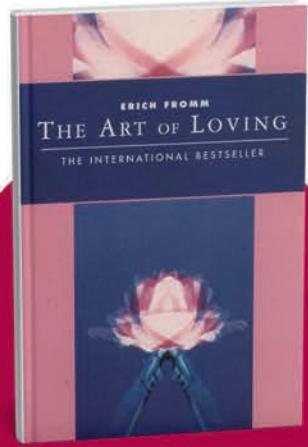


You did get a hint of what Erich Fromm has to say about love in Julia's article. And I won't bother you with any other book at the beginning of your exploration when it comes to literature about love. I recommend, of course, reading classics like *Anna Karenina* or *The Idiot* that depict unconventional forms of love for their time. But if you're not a big reader or just want to explore a bit, I would say that this book is just the one. A bit like *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius is in the matter of life philosophy, it serves as a guide in the matter of love (of course, it is a bit of an overstatement).

It is a guide to getting out of the bubble of uncertainties in defining what this ephemeral "love" is, a bubble that society tends to put us in today's world. Again, it's not like Fromm knew exactly how to live, but he still gives us a well-presented, interesting perspective on the matter. In my opinion, nothing is better than practice, and yet I remember feeling so at peace after reading it in my teens.

So yeah, I strongly encourage you to read it. And the final perk – it's short, very short. So enjoy and find your way in love or walk the one you have chosen.

Review by Jan Wolicki



Date ideas for spending intentional time with your partner or friends

By Martyna Lekan

Game night

You can't go wrong with a good board or card game (but maybe avoid the most competitive ones).

There are plenty of options for couples to get to know each other more deeply or learn something fun! You can even find questions or challenges online for free and enjoy the night in good company. For a more expensive experience, try solving an escape room together!



Go slow hiking

Many people feel put off by the idea of exhausting themselves by hiking up a steep mountain in the full sun, panting the whole way up instead of talking. I think it's very understandable so instead, you can try going for a nature walk. You can even climb up mountain, but go much slower, enjoy the flora, take some time to sit and appreciate the views, touch the plants, have a conversation (and some snacks!).

Explore your town

Go explore the parts of your town you have never visited or paid attention to before.

There may be plenty of restaurants, shops, activity spots, and beautiful views that get easily missed but are worth trying out. You can try going for a colour walk – picking a single colour and following a path by finding objects in that specific colour to see where it gets you.

Take a class together

Or learn something new at home! Pick a skill or a dish both of you have never tried and do your best to enjoy the new experience together.

There are plenty of classes available, some even online. Cooking, baking, pottery, painting, maybe a wine tasting or some traditional activities from your area. Remember, don't feel discouraged if it doesn't work at first!

Language Exercises

Exercise 1.

Guess the idioms and proverbs based on the given images.

Answers on page 34



1.



2.



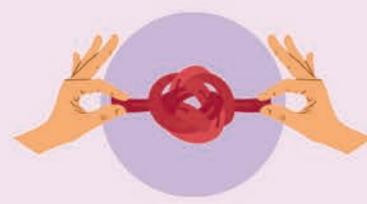
3.



4.



5.



6.

Exercise 2.

Complete the sentences using the words provided below. Make any necessary changes to the words. Note that some words may not be needed.

affection chaperone ruminate sincerity minority flaw

coercive lust perpetrator imply queer vigilant mainstream

1. Those who have experienced a failed relationship may wonder if it was really love or just _____.
2. After the breakup, George _____ on what went wrong and how to move forwards.
3. Some people think that _____ among partners is necessary for a relationship to work.
4. Love bombing can be emotionally damaging because the _____ manipulates their victim by showing excessive attention and affection.
5. Many people in _____ partnerships face negative stereotypes, which can lead them to live double lives.
6. You should be _____ and watch out for red flags when entering a new relationship.

Exercise 3.

Complete the sentences using the words provided below.

affection intimacy significant other lust

tenderness oxytocin courtship unconditionally

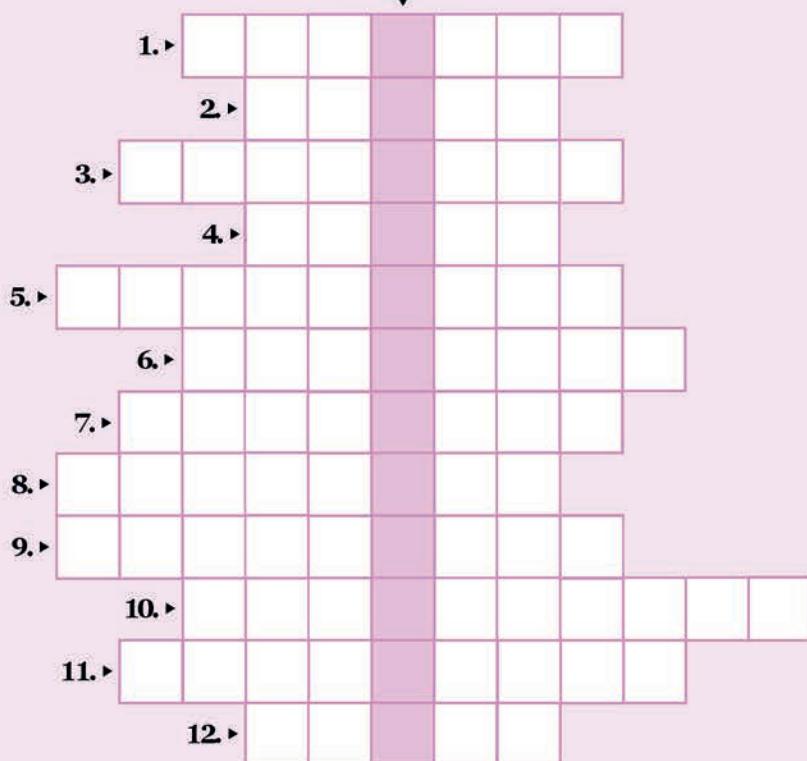
1. Their emotional _____ helped them deal with the problems life threw their way.
2. While physical attraction is important, a meaningful relationship requires more than _____.
3. A long and respectful _____ was the norm before marriage in high society in past centuries.
4. He expresses his _____ for her every day, whether by buying flowers or preparing breakfast.
5. Claire showed great _____ as she gently held his hand and whispered that everything would be all right.
6. When you love someone _____, you accept them for who they are and have no wish to change them to your liking.
7. Because of the role it plays in helping people bond in relationships, many scientists call _____ "the love hormone".
8. Andrew introduced his _____ to his family during his parents' 30th-anniversary celebration.



Exercise 4.

Complete the crossword puzzle using the provided clues. The solution is indicated by the pink squares.

Solution



1. To establish something, such as a belief, so firmly that it is unlikely to change.
2. Relating to a gender identity or sexuality that does not fit society's traditional ideas.
3. Always careful to notice things, especially potential dangers.
4. A fault, mistake, or weakness, especially one that happens while something is being planned or made, or that causes something not to be perfect.
5. A feeling of liking someone.
6. The state of having a close, personal, or romantic relationship with someone.
7. A hormone associated with trust, sexual arousal, and relationship building.
8. Existing inside a person's mind.
9. The period in a romantic relationship when a couple is dating.
10. The state of no longer being involved in something.
11. Dishonest or hiding the truth.
12. To communicate an idea or feeling without stating it directly.

Exercise 5.

Complete each sentence by choosing the most appropriate word from the options provided.

1. Sometimes marriages fall apart due to _____ of one or both spouses.
 - a. resentment
 - b. infidelity
 - c. hardship
2. Many issues in a relationship can _____ unresolved conflicts.
 - a. stem from
 - b. transmit
 - c. merge
3. Ignoring serious problems in a relationship can become _____ for both partners.
 - a. ill-mannered
 - b. hazardous
 - c. deceitful
4. A partner who always puts their own needs first and disregards their partner's feelings might be described as _____.
 - a. perpetrator
 - b. despondent
 - c. narcissistic
5. His wife couldn't stand the long-term _____ and eventually left him.
 - a. mistreat
 - b. neglect
 - c. withdrawal
6. Over time, unresolved conflicts can lead to deep _____ between partners.
 - a. infidelity
 - b. hardship
 - c. resentment
7. His _____ from the relationship was the main reason she broke up with him.
 - a. neglect
 - b. withdrawal
 - c. infidelity
8. Constant financial problems and disagreements can cause significant _____ in a relationship.
 - a. hardship
 - b. striving
 - c. flaw

Glossary

Bare Minimum

constitute – to be or be considered as something

flaw – a fault, mistake, or weakness, especially one that happens while something is being planned or made, or that causes something not to be perfect

significant other – a person with whom someone has a romantic or sexual relationship that has lasted for some time and that is likely to last longer

affection – a feeling of liking for a person

aspiration – something that you hope to achieve

mistreat – to treat a person or animal badly, cruelly, or unfairly

Love: An Incredible and Multifaceted Feeling

aesthetic – related to beauty or artistic appreciation

amygdala – a part of the brain involved in processing emotions, especially fear and pleasure

cognition – the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and senses

dopamine – a neurotransmitter in the brain associated with pleasure, motivation, and reward

histocompatibility – the ability of tissues to be compatible with another person's immune system, important in mate selection

infatuation – an intense but often short-lived passion or admiration for someone

olfactory – related to the sense of smell

orbitofrontal cortex – a brain region involved in decision-making and evaluating rewards

scrutinise – to examine something closely and carefully

susceptibility – the likelihood of being influenced or affected by something

unrequited – not returned or reciprocated, often used in the context of love

vasopressin – a hormone that influences bonding and social behaviour

Love – Not Only Romantic?

be serious – see a future with the person and being exclusive

street vendor – someone who sells food or other goods in the street, sometimes illegally

internal – inside a person's mind

vow – to make a determined decision or promise to do something

cheesy – boldly rude, impudent, or disrespectful in usually a playful or appealing way

lust – a very strong sexual desire

strive – to try very hard to do something or to make something happen, especially for a long time or against difficulties

narcissistic – having too much interest in and admiration for yourself

merge – to combine or join together, or to cause things to do this

fusion – an occasion when two or more things join or are combined

tenderness – the quality of being gentle, loving, or kind

unconditionally – in a way that is complete and not limited in any way

Love Bombing

ulterior – a secret purpose or reason for doing something

deceitful – dishonest or hiding the truth

inundate – to give someone so many things that they cannot deal with it all

perpetrator – an individual who has committed an act of wrongdoing

abruptly – in a sudden, unexpected, and sometimes unpleasant way

gradually – slowly over a period of time

vigilant – always careful to notice things, especially potential dangers

coercive – using force to persuade people to do things that they are unwilling to do

Love Through History

inbreed – breed from closely related people or animals

despondent – feeling discouraged or depressed

groom – a man who is about to get married

chaperone – someone who looks after and supervises another person or a group of people

courtship – a period in a romantic relationship when a couple is dating

Stereotypes About Queer Romantic Relationships

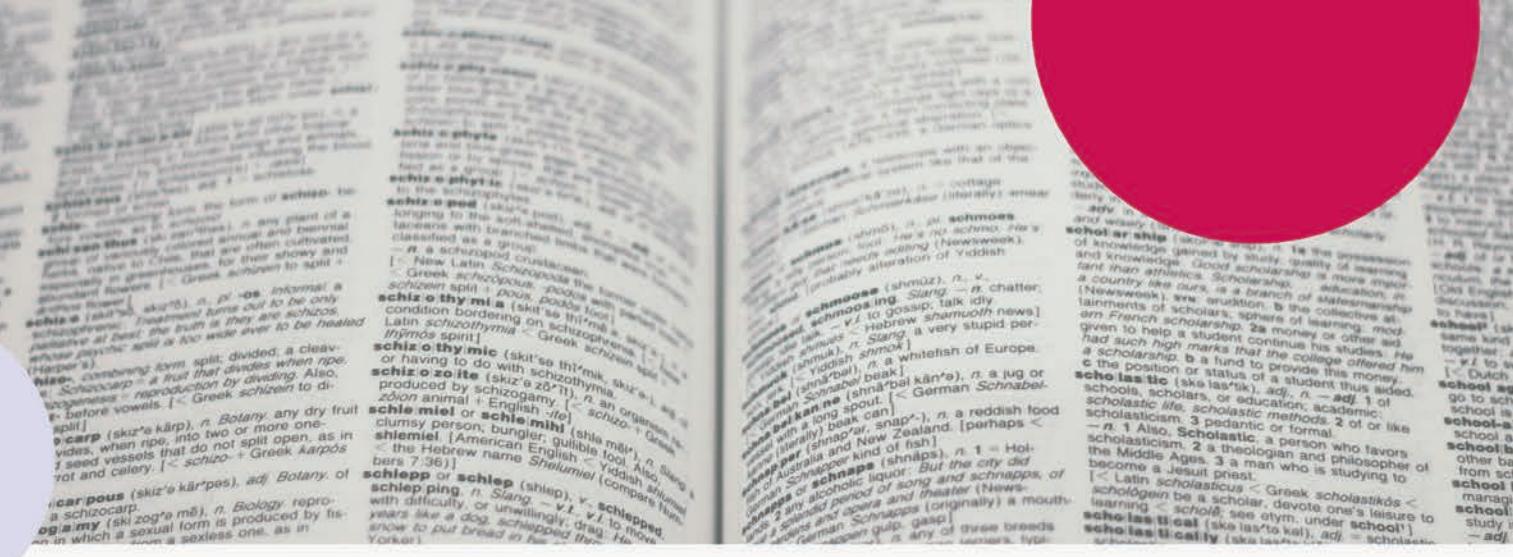
mainstream – considered normal, and having or using ideas, beliefs, etc., that are accepted by most people

mimic – to copy the way in which a particular person usually speaks and moves

ill-mannered – rude and unpleasant

queer – having or relating to a gender identity or a sexuality that does not fit society's traditional ideas about gender or sexuality

imply – to communicate an idea or feeling without saying it directly



minorities – any small group in society that is different from the rest because of their race, religion, or political beliefs, or a person who belongs to such a group

Beyond Categories

aroused – awakened or stimulated, often referring to curiosity or desire

categorical – clear and absolute, without room for exceptions

courtesan – a female sex worker whose clientele was wealthy men

confide in someone – to share one's feelings and secrets with someone

depict – to represent or describe something in words or images

liberal – open to new ideas, not bound by traditional views

love parades – an electronic dance music festival that became a symbol of freedom and inclusivity, with strong ties to the LGBTQ+ community

puritanism – strict moral or religious beliefs, often disapproving of pleasure

recount – describe how something happened

rigid – fixed, not able to be bent

Interview

cohabitation – living together in the same place, usually in a romantic relationship

hazardous – dangerous or risky

infidelity – being unfaithful in a relationship

neglect – lack of care for someone or something

resentment – a feeling of anger or displeasure

stem from – to come from or be caused by something

transmit (e.g. a disease or infection) – to pass on a disease or infection from one person to another

withdrawal – separating oneself from someone or something

Why is breaking up so difficult?

ruminate – to think carefully and for a long period about something

aftermath – the period that follows an unpleasant event or accident, and the effects that it causes

time of blues – to be sad, have low morale

hardship – difficult or unpleasant condition of life

fight or flight mode – used to describe the reaction that people have to a dangerous situation, that makes them either stay and deal with it, or run away

vessels constrict – the narrowing of blood vessels by small muscles in their walls

oxytocin – a hormone associated with trust, sexual arousal, and relationship-building

intimacy – the state of having a close, personal relationship or romantic relationship with someone

withdrawal – the state of no longer being involved in something

(cognitive) dissonance – the discomfort a person feels when their behaviour does not align with their values or beliefs, or when they hold two contradictory beliefs

sincerity – honesty

detach – to separate or remove something from something else that it is connected to

Column: Do opposites really attract?

ingrain – to establish something such as a belief so firmly that it is not likely to change

vary – things of the same type are different from each other

core belief – a strong, consistent belief that shapes how a person sees the world and themselves

Whimsical Language

love is blind – love prevents people from seeing faults in their partners

wear your heart on your sleeve – to express your affection openly

fall head over heels in love – to fall deeply in love

tie the knot – to get married

carry a torch for someone – you still have feelings for someone even after the relationship has ended

to be swept off one's feet – to be overwhelmed by your feelings for someone

All's fair in love and war – there are no rules when it comes to love or fighting

Absence makes the heart grow fonder – being apart can only make love stronger

A heart that loves is always young – love keeps the spirit youthful

Where there is love, there is life – love gives meaning to life

The way to a man's heart is through his stomach – one can win someone's affection by preparing delicious food for them

Love and a cough cannot be hidden – true love is hard to conceal

Last but not least...



TED

Even healthy couples fight – the difference is how

Julie and John Gottman, April 2024



Watch here!



Can conflict actually bring you and your partner closer? It depends on how you fight, say Julie and John Gottman, the world's leading relationship scientists. They share why the way couples fight can predict the future of their relationships – and show how anybody can transform conflict into an opportunity for deeper connection and understanding.

Drag Queen

It has been common to interpret the word **drag** (as in **drag queen**) as meaning **dressed resembling a girl**. While this interpretation is appealing, it is an incorrect backronym (a term created to fit an existing word). There are a few theories about the origin of the word. One of the most popular comes from the theatrical tradition of cross-dressing in the 16th to 19th centuries. Back then, male actors would perform women's roles (since women were not allowed on stage) and wear long dresses that would "drag" on the floor. The term ultimately became associated with male performers dressed in women's clothing and evolved into an important part of LGBT identity.



Love for vs of

Did you know that...



the phrase **love of** is commonly used to express feelings of affection or admiration for objects, things, ideas, etc.

For example:

- "I don't share my boyfriend's love of football."
- "She has a love of Asian food."

On the other hand...

love for is typically used when referring to a person or a specific object of affection, stating a more personal connection.

For example:

- "I have a love for my family."
- "She has a special love for her dogs."

Answers to exercises

Exercise 1.

- 1.love is blind
- 2.head over heels in love
- 3.carry a torch for someone
- 4.wear your heart on your sleeve
- 5.to be swept off one's feet
- 6.tie the knot

Exercise 2.

- 1.lust
- 2.ruminated
- 3.sincerity
- 4.perpetrator
- 5.queer
- 6.vigilant

Exercise 3.

- 1.intimacy
- 2.lust
- 3.courtship
- 4.affection
- 5.tenderness
- 6.unconditionally
- 7.oxytocin
- 8.significant other

Exercise 4.

- 1.ingrain
- 2.queer
- 3.vigilant
- 4.flaw
- 5.affection
- 6.intimacy
- 7.oxytocin
- 8.internal
- 9.courtship
- 10.withdrawal
- 11.deceitful
- 12.imply

Solution: RELATIONSHIP

Exercise 5.

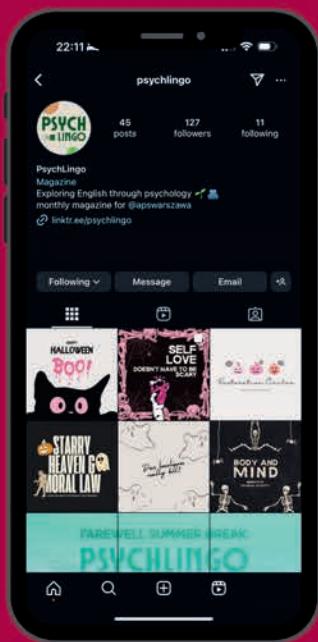
- 1.infidelity
- 2.stem from
- 3.hazardous
- 4.narcissistic
- 5.neglect
- 6.resentment
- 7.withdrawal
- 8.hardship

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