

119. Hatfield, E. & Sprecher, S. (2009). The passionate love scale. In Fisher, T. D., C. M. Davis, W. L. Yaber, & S. L. Davis (Eds.) *Handbook of sexuality-related measures: A compendium* (3rd Ed.) (pp. 469-472). Thousand Oaks, CA: Taylor & Francis.

The Passionate Love Scale

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Purpose

Many classifications and typologies of love exist in the literature, but the most common distinction is between passionate love and companionate love. Hatfield (Walster) and Walster (1978) described passionate love as:

A state of intense longing for union with another.
Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy; unrequited love (separation) is associated with emptiness, anxiety, or despair (p. 9).

In 1986, Hatfield and Sprecher published the Passionate Love Scale (PLS) for the purpose of promoting more research on this intense type of love. Although a companion scale to measure companionate love was not also developed by this team of researchers, other measures exist in the literature designed to assess this type of love (see, for example, Grote & Frieze's [1994] Friendship-Based Love Scale).

Description

The PLS scale was specifically designed to assess the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of passionate love. The *cognitive components* consist of: Intrusive thinking; preoccupation with the partner; Idealization of the other or of the relationship; Desire to know the other and be known by him/her. *Emotional components* consist of: Attraction to the partner, especially sexual attraction; Positive feelings when things go well; Negative feelings when things go awry; Longing for reciprocity—passionate lovers not only love, but they want to be loved in return; Desire for complete and permanent union; and Physiological (sexual) arousal. Finally, *behavioral components* consist of Actions aimed at

determining the other's feelings; Studying the other person; Service to the other; and Maintaining physical closeness.

The most common form of the PLS is a 15-item scale, but an alternative 15-item version is also available. The two scales can be combined to form a 30-item scale. Although the scale was originally designed using North American young adults in pilot studies, the scale has subsequently been revised to be administered to children; and has been translated into many languages and administered to samples in other countries.

Response Mode and Timing

Participants are presented with statements such as: "I would feel deep despair if _____ left me." and are asked to indicate how true the statement is of them. Possible responses range from 1 = not at all true; to 9 = definitely true. (The _____ in each statement refers to the partner.) The scale takes only a few minutes to complete, although often it is embedded in a larger questionnaire with other measures.

Scoring

The total score of the scale can be represented by either the mean of the scores for the items or by the sum of the ratings. Higher scores indicate greater passionate love. An average score for young adults across the items is approximately 7. Recently, for a popular press article, Hatfield and Sprecher (2004) provided for readers the following rubric to interpret their summed scores across 15 items:

- 106-135 points = Wildly, recklessly, in love.
- 86-105 points = Passionate but less intense.
- 66-85 points = Occasional bursts of passion.
- 45-65 points = Tepid, infrequent, passion.
- 15-44 points = The thrill is gone.

Reliability

Hatfield and Sprecher (1986) reported a coefficient alpha of .91 for the 15-item version and .94 for the 30-item version. Others have also reported high levels of reliability for the scale (e.g., Sprecher & Regan, 1998). The PLS appears to be primarily unidimensional, with one primary factor emerging from a principal components factoring.

Validity

The scale is uncontaminated by a social desirability bias, as indicated by a non-significant correlation between respondents' scores on the PLS and their scores on the 1964 Crowne and Marlowe *Social Desirability Scale* (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). There is some evidence for the construct validity of the PLS. For example, it has been found to be associated positively with conceptually similar scales and measures (Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989; Sprecher & Regan, 1998).

Other Information

Researchers have used the PLS in exploring many different topics, including cross-cultural differences in passionate love (Hatfield & Rapson, 2005; Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007; Landis & O'Shea, 2000), prototype approaches to love (Fehr, 2005), neural bases of passionate love (Aron et al., 2005; Bartels & Zeki, 2004), changes in passionate love over the family life cycle (Tucker & Aron, 1993), correlates of sexual desire (Beck, Bozman, & Qualtrough, 1991), the effects of an emotionally focused couples therapy (James, 2007), degree of bonding with an abusive partner (Graham et al., 1995), and the effects of having married couples engage in novel activities (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000).

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Passionate Love Scale (Version A)

We would like to know how you feel (or once felt) about the person you love, or have loved, most *passionately*. Some common terms for passionate love are romantic love, infatuation, love sickness, or obsessive love.

Please think of the person whom you love most passionately *right now*. If you are not in love, please think of the last person you loved. If

for me. .

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I possess a powerful attraction for _____. .

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

I get extremely depressed when things don't go right
in my relationship with _____.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Total: _____

Results:

- 106-135 points = Wildly, even recklessly, in love.
- 86-105 points = Passionate, but less intense.
- 66-85 points = Occasional bursts of passion.
- 45-65 points = Tepid, infrequent passion.
- 15-44 points = The thrill is gone.

The Passionate Love Scale (Form B)

We would like to know how you feel (or once felt) about the person you love, or have loved, most *passionately*. Some common terms for passionate love are romantic love, infatuation, love sickness, or obsessive love.

Please think of the person whom you love most passionately *right now*. If you are not in love, please think of the last person you loved. If you have never been in love, think of the person you came closest to caring for in that way.

Try to describe the way you felt when your feelings were most intense. Answers range from (1) **Not at all true** to (9) **Definitely true**.

Whom are you thinking of?

- Someone I love *right now*.
- Someone I *once* loved.
- I have never been in love.

	Not True	Definitely True
Since I've been involved with _____, my emotions have been on a roller coaster.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
Sometimes my body trembles with excitement at the sight of _____.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
I take delight in studying the movements and angles of _____'s body.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
No one else could love _____ like I do.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
I will love _____ forever.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
I melt when looking deeply into _____'s eyes.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
_____ is the person who can make me feel happiest.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
I feel tender toward _____.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
If I were separated from _____ for a long time, I would feel intensely lonely.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
I sometimes find it difficult to concentrate on work because thoughts of _____ occupy my mind.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
Knowing that _____ cares about me makes me feel complete.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
If _____ were going through a difficult time, I would put away my own concerns to help him/her out.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
_____ can make me feel effervescent and bubbly.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
In the presence of _____, I yearn to touch and be touched.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
An existence without _____ would be dark		

and dismal.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Total: _____

Results:

- 106-135 points = Wildly, even recklessly, in love.
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