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Chapter Title	Love
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L

2 Love

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11 Synonyms

12 Affection; Attachment; Companionate love;
13 Fondness; Infatuation; Lust; Passionate love;
14 Romantic desire

15 Definition

16 A psychological and physiological state that
17 entails the desire to be with another person

18 Description

19 Introduction

20 Love is a universal human experience. It is
21 viewed as a basic human emotion that may man-
22 ifest itself in a variety of forms and lead to
23 a variety of cognitive-affective responses
24 and behaviors (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). It
25 can be experienced for many close others

(romantic partner, spouse, parents, children, 26
friends, etc.) and even for humanity and 27
nonliving entities. Love has been defined by 28
scientists in various ways, including as an 29
emotion and a physiological state (Hatfield & 30
Rapson, 1993). 31

Because of love's importance, people, too, 32
have their own theories about love. When asked 33
their beliefs about features central to love, people 34
have consensus that some features (e.g., compas- 35
sion, intimacy) are more central to love than 36
others (e.g., feelings of euphoria; (Fehr, 1988)). 37

What Is Love?

38
39 Although love can be experienced for many types
40 of close others, most of the scientific research on
41 love has focused on the type of love experienced
42 for romantic partners. Theorists have identified
43 a variety of types of love. One of the first typol-
44 ogies of love developed in the scientific literature
45 was the distinction between *passionate love* and
46 *companionate love* (Sprecher & Regan, 1998).
47 Passionate love is defined as a type of love that
48 is characterized by an intense, physiologically
49 arousing desire to be with another person
50 (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). It has been
51 most frequently measured with the Passionate
52 Love Scale (e.g., "I possess a powerful attraction
53 for _____," "I sense my body responding
54 when _____ touches me."). Companionate love,
55 or friendship love, is a less intense emotional
56 experience that entails affection for those who
57 are close in one's life (Sprecher & Regan, 1998).
58 Companionate love is typically measured

59 using various items from Rubin's Love Scale
60 (e.g., "I care about _____," "I would greatly
61 enjoy being confided in by _____").

62 Another love taxonomy was proposed by
63 social psychologist Robert Sternberg. In his
64 *triangular theory of love*, Sternberg proposed
65 that love is composed of three components:
66 passion, commitment, and intimacy (Sternberg,
67 1986). Specific combinations of these
68 building blocks can form distinct love types. For
69 example, a love that lacks passion and intimacy,
70 but has commitment, is labeled "empty love."
71 Love that has all three components is labeled
72 "consummate love."

73 Another common classification of love was
74 developed by social psychologist John Lee and
75 later expanded by Clyde and Susan Hendrick. In
76 this taxonomy, a person, based on his or her
77 responses to the Love Attitudes Scale, is
78 classified as possessing one of six distinct love
79 styles: *eros* (passionate love; e.g., "My lover and
80 I have the right physical 'chemistry' between us"),
81 *ludus* (game-playing love; e.g., "I enjoy playing
82 the 'game of love' with a number of different
83 partners"), *storge* (friendship love; e.g., "The
84 best kind of love grows out of long friendship"),
85 *pragma* (logical love; e.g., "An important factor in
86 choosing a partner is whether or not he/she will be
87 a good parent"), *mania* (obsessive love; e.g., "I
88 cannot relax if I suspect that my lover is with
89 someone else"), and *agape* (selfless love; "I am
90 usually willing to sacrifice my own wishes to let
91 my lover achieve his/hers;" (Hendrick &
92 Hendrick, 1986)). Recently, Ellen Berscheid (a
93 well-known love researcher) suggested a newer
94 classification that grouped love into four general
95 distinct types: *romantic* love (passionate love),
96 *companionate* love (friendship love), *compassion-*
97 *ate* love (selfless, altruistic love), and *attachment*
98 love (strong affectionate bond to another person;
99 (Berscheid, 2010)).

100 **Falling in Love**

101 Two of the most significant predictors of falling
102 in love are the desirability of the target (e.g.,
103 physical attractiveness) and reciprocal liking
104 (i.e., the target of affection reciprocating
105 affection back to the lover; (Aron, Dutton,

Aron, & Iverson, 1989)). The rate at which 106
people fall in love is subject to individual 107
differences. People fall in love at various speeds, 108
including quickly (i.e., "love at first sight") or 109
gradually (slowly). In one study that assessed 110
the speed at which people fell in love, for 111
example, about 40 % of people reported falling 112
in love quickly whereas 34 % reported falling in 113
love slowly (Riela, Rodriguez, Aron, Xu, & 114
Acevedo, 2010). The speed at which someone 115
falls in love may be related to the target's phys- 116
ical attractiveness – people who fall in 117
love quickly are more likely to do so if the target 118
of their affection is physically attractive 119
(Sangrador & Yela, 2000). 120

121 Researchers have documented that people also
122 vary in the prevalence of falling in love. Men may
123 be more susceptible to falling in love than are
124 women, whereas women may be more cautious
125 about falling in love (Rubin, Peplau, & Hill,
126 1981). Men have also been found to be more
127 likely than women to experience passionate or
128 game-playing love, whereas women have been
129 found to be more likely than men to experience
130 logical, friendship, and obsessive love (Hendrick,
131 Hendrick, Foote, & Slapion-Foote, 1984). Other
132 individual difference variables that predict the
133 susceptibility of falling in love include low
134 self-esteem and an insecure attachment style,
135 which both lead to a higher susceptibility to
136 falling in love (Aron et al., 2006).

137 People believe that falling in love is
138 a necessary precursor for committed relation-
139 ships such as marriage. The association between
140 love and marriage – people's preference for
141 marrying someone whom they love – became
142 stronger between the 1960s and the 1980s
143 (Simpson, Campbell, & Berscheid, 1986). In
144 research conducted over the past few decades,
145 a large majority of both men and women view
146 love as a prerequisite for marriage, although this
147 association is much stronger in individualistic
148 (e.g., U.S.A.) than collectivistic (e.g., India)
149 countries; men and women would not want to
150 marry someone whom they did not love, and see
151 love to be important in maintaining a relationship
152 (Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, & Verma, 1995).



153 People also associate love with lust. People in
154 love are typically viewed by others as possessing
155 sexual desire. Likewise, people who have sexual
156 desire for one another are viewed as more likely
157 to be in love (Regan, 1998).

158 Experiencing Love

159 Once a person falls in love, he or she may experi-
160 ence various physiological and psychological
161 changes. Research using *functional magnetic*
162 *resonance imaging* (fMRI) has found that when
163 people who are in love are exposed to images of
164 the target of their affection, they experience an
165 activation of the *caudate nucleus*: a part of
166 the brain's "reward system" (Fisher, Aron, &
167 Brown, 2005). Also, exposure to a target of
168 love leads to increases in levels of *dopamine*,
169 a neurotransmitter responsible for producing
170 pleasure (Hatfield & Rapson, 2009). Evolution-
171 ary theorists posit that these positive experiences
172 (both neurological and psychological (Fisher,
173 Aron, & Brown, 2006)) evolved in humans (and
174 perhaps other mammals) due to their reproduc-
175 tive advantages – romantic love facilitates pair
176 bonding between mates (Buss, 1995).

177 Being in love may lead people to change their
178 cognitions and behaviors. People who are in love
179 are less likely to pay attention to attractive
180 alternatives (i.e., people other than the current
181 romantic partner who can be perceived as
182 romantically desirable and available) than people
183 who are not in love (Miller, 1997). Being in love
184 can lead people to decrease their self-monitoring
185 (i.e., self-control and self-observations guided by
186 social situational cues (Snyder, 1974)) and
187 increase their general self-efficacy (i.e., one's
188 general confidence in ability to cope across
189 a variety of situations (Scholz, Doña, Sud, &
190 Schwarzer, 2002)) and self-esteem (Hendrick &
191 Hendrick, 1988). Furthermore, people who fall in
192 love are more likely than people who are not in
193 love to possess a more diverse self-concept. That
194 is, they use a more diverse array of words to
195 describe themselves when asked: "Who are you
196 today?" than do people who are not in love (Aron,
197 Paris, & Aron, 1995). The diversification of the
198 self-concept has been hypothesized to stem
199 from the human motivation to expand one's

self-concept by including others' self-concepts
200 in one's own through the formation of relation-
201 ships (Aron & Aron, 1986). 202

Experiencing love tends to spark oscillations
203 in emotions. Typically labeled as the "emotional
204 roller-coaster," passionate love is a strong
205 predictor of experiencing both positive emotions
206 (e.g., happy, joyful) and negative emotions (e.g.,
207 angry, frustrated), especially for men (Kim &
208 Hatfield, 2004). Love, especially romantic love,
209 when unrequited (i.e., unreciprocated), can lead
210 to both the lover and the beloved to experience
211 distress (Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell,
212 1993). Those who are in love but not loved in
213 return may experience a decline in self-esteem,
214 accompanied by shame and feelings of being
215 misled by the target of their love. The beloved
216 (i.e., the rejecter) may feel guilty and find the
217 other's love nettlesome (Baumeister et al., 1993). 218

Another negative experience that may be
219 related to love (especially passionate love) is
220 jealousy: a negative affective reaction to a real
221 or imagined rival threatening one's relationship
222 (Buss & Haselton, 2005). Unlike companionate
223 love, which involves a deep emotional
224 connection between the partners, passionate
225 love entails both sexual and emotional dimen-
226 sions, which have also been found to be the pri-
227 mary cues that elicit jealousy (Buss, Larsen,
228 Westen, & Semmelroth, 1992). Experiencing
229 passionate (but not companionate) love is corre-
230 lated with experiencing jealousy in both men and
231 women (Sprecher & Regan, 1998). 232

Love and Quality of Life 233

Love – and the intimacy that it entails – has been
234 found to positively influence well-being and
235 health (Hatfield & Rapson, 2006). Intimacy, for
236 example, can assuage the negative psychological
237 impact of stress and facilitate self-disclosure
238 (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998).
239 Love has also been found to be related to patterns
240 of sexual activity. People who are in love are
241 more likely to give and receive oral sex, as well
242 as to engage in sexual activity in general,
243 compared to people who are not in love (Kaestle
244 & Halpern, 2007). The presence of romantic love
245 has been found to be associated with satisfaction
246

247 in long-term relationships (Acevedo & Aron,
 248 2009). Although passionate love typically wanes
 249 through the course of a relationship (Sprecher &
 250 Regan, 1998), if a couple is able to sustain
 251 passionate love (for example, by engaging in
 252 novel and arousing activities (Aron, Norman,
 253 Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000)), then rela-
 254 tionship satisfaction will increase. Companionate
 255 love has been found to be a strong predictor of
 256 subjective well-being in both collectivistic and
 257 individualistic cultural samples, especially for
 258 women (Kim & Hatfield, 2004). Like passionate
 259 love, however, companionate love can also
 260 decrease over time in relationships (Hatfield,
 261 Pillemer, O'Brien, & Le, 2008).

262 **Conclusion**

263 In this entry, we have discussed how scientists
 264 and laypeople define love, how people fall in
 265 love, and the effects that love may have on
 266 people, including their psychological and physi-
 267 cal well-being. Love is a universal human expe-
 268 rience that has been historically lauded in various
 269 works of art, music, and literature. The history of
 270 the scientific research on love, which has
 271 flourished over the last five decades, has seen
 272 several taxonomies that uniquely classified love
 273 into several categories. Love has been perceived
 274 as the epitome of positive human emotions, and
 275 indeed, empirical research on love has
 276 found consistent evidence that love can lead to
 277 numerous positive outcomes such as increased
 278 self-esteem, a more diverse self-concept, more
 279 satisfying relationships, and a higher overall
 280 well-being. Love, however, can have negative
 281 effects as well, including oscillation in mood,
 282 from both positive to negative emotions.
 283 Unrequited love can lead people to a lower
 284 self-esteem (if one is rejected), or feelings of
 285 guilt (if one is rejecting). Throughout the positive
 286 and the negative experiences, love is omnipresent
 287 in human lives, as it is the foundation to facilitate
 288 the social bonds that define what it is to be
 289 human.

Cross-References

290

- ▶ Attachment 291
- ▶ Compassion 292
- ▶ Dating 293
- ▶ Intimacy 294
- ▶ Lust 295
- ▶ Passion 296
- ▶ Romance 297

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