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## **The Dark Side of Love**

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*Several passions, without no one being corresponded, progressively had a negative effect in my self-esteem and confidence, generating sadness, envy, solitude, pain, sorrow and an incapacity to deposit trust and faith in people. I try to comfort myself and make an effort in order to stay happy when I see passionate in love people that are happy, but this is not easy, in fact, it is not even something that I can do spontaneously, it's like trying to smile being dead inside, hollow.*

25-year-old Brazilian undergraduate

## **I. Introduction**

Love is usually associated with positive emotions such as joy, well-being, and happiness, but most of us have confronted its dark side. Often, the one we love fails to return our love, we find ourselves stuck in a promising relationship turned bad, or abandoned. Unrequited love can be a painful experience. Unfortunately, while scholars know a great deal about the joys of love, they rarely focus on its problems. When we accept romantic love, we are accepting the possibility of experiencing a tumble of emotions—joy and ecstasy as well as anxiety, sadness, and perhaps anger. The goal of this chapter is to present some research on the dark side of love. We hope that this exposition will help readers gain a better understanding of the nature of romantic heartbreak and help them to better deal with its vicissitudes.

## **II. Definitions of Passionate Love**

Scientists have proffered several different definitions of romantic and passionate love (Hatfield, Bensman, & Rapson, 2012). Scholars often define passionate love as:

*A state of intense longing for union with another. A complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors. Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy; unrequited love (separation) is associated with emptiness, anxiety, or despair (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986, p. 383).*

Passionate love is generally a bittersweet emotion. When someone is passionately and wildly in love, it is common to observe intrusive thinking about the beloved (Fisher, 2004), preoccupation with the loved one, a search for reciprocity, a desire for exclusivity, and idealization of the other and of the relationship.

### **A. Assessing Passionate Love**

In order to investigate passionate love, psychologists created several scales to assess this construct with precision (Hatfield, Benson, & Rapson, 2012). Three scales are most commonly used by researchers.

*The Passionate Love Scale* (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). The scale, a multidimensional self-report scale, was designed to tap the cognitive, emotional and behavioral components of passionate love. Higher scores indicate a greater intensity of passionate love. The scale is highly reliable, with excellent internal consistency, and has proven to be valid. This instrument has been translated for use in several countries such as France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Korea, Peru, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. In recent fMRI studies of brain activity, the PLS has been found to correlate well with certain well-defined patterns of neural activation. For example, Aron and his colleagues (2005) discovered that PLS scores correlate well with activation in a region of the *caudate* associated with reward (see Bartels & Zeki, 2000; and Hatfield & Rapson, 2009, for a review of recent neuroscience research correlating the PLS with participants' fMRI reactions.) The PLS has also been found to be highly correlated with a variety of measures of love, intimacy, and sexuality.

*The Love Attitudes Scale* (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). This scale measures six different types of love: Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Mania, and Agape. Two types of love are linked

with passionate love: Eros and Mania. This instrument has also been found to be reliable and valid in Brazil (De Andrade & Garcia, 2014; Neto et al., 2000).

*The Triangular Love Scale* (Sternberg, 1997). Different kinds of love (eight in total) are explored through three main components: Passion, Intimacy, and Decision/Commitment. Passionate love is conceived of as possessing a great deal of passion and intimacy but weak commitment. Cassepp-Borges (2010), in a translation for Brazil, found this scale to be reliable and comparable to the original.

Scholars generally conclude that these three measures of passion are measuring similar constructs. Researchers who have translated these scales into foreign languages, such as French and Portuguese, find that their translations are fully comparable to the originals. They reproduce the original factor structures and prove themselves to be reliable and valid measures (Graham & Christiansen, 2009; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1989; Masuda, 2003).

### **B. Passionate Love: A Cultural Universal**

Passionate love is as old as humankind. The world literature abounds in stories of lovers caught up in a sea of passion and violence: Daphnis and Chloe (Greek myths), Shiva and Sati (Indian), Hinemoa and Tutanekai (Maori), Emperor Ai and Dong Xian (Chinese), and the VhaVhenda lover who was turned into a crocodile (African).

Scholars from a wide variety of disciplines (anthropology, social psychology, sociology, sexology, history, and the neurosciences) have amassed a great deal of evidence as to the ubiquity of this emotion. Anthropologists have concluded that passion is a cultural universal: existing in almost all cultures and during all historical eras (Jankowiak, 1995; Neto, Deschamps, Barros, Benvindo, Camino, Falconi, Kagibanga & Machado, 2000; Pinto & Neto, 2008). People of all ages have been found

to be capable of falling passionately in love (Hatfield, Schimtz, Cornelius & Rapson, 1988), but adolescents and young adults seem most susceptible to its charms (Costa & Neto, 2010; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986). Cultural scholars generally find few cultural differences in how intensely (and frequently) passionate love is experienced by young people (Feybesse, Neto & Hatfield, 2013; Neto, Deschamps, Barros, Benvindo, Camino, Falconi, Kagibanga & Machado, 2000). They also find that, in most cultures, men and women are equally likely to fall in love (Hatfield & Rapson, 2005).

### **III. Cultural Views of Romantic Love**

Although passionate love and sexual desire have always existed, cultures sometimes differ in their attitudes toward such love (Feybesse & Hatfield, 2014). Throughout history, most cultures (and the political and religious authorities that held power) viewed passionate lovers' primitive and powerful feelings as a threat to the social, political, and religious order, and thus they endeavored to suppress such dangerous feelings. In the West, during the early Christian era, suppression was especially harsh. For 1,500 years—from the earliest days of the Roman Catholic Church to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation—the Church proclaimed passionate love and sex (even marital sex) for any purpose other than procreation to be a mortal sin, punishable by eternal damnation (Gay, 1984). Even today, some cultures (especially traditional, collectivistic, poorer cultures) still view passionate love in this way. Other cultures (especially modern, affluent, individualistic cultures) view passion as one of the great joys of life. Today, in the west, passionate love is considered the *sine qua non* of marriage (Dion & Dion, 1996; Levine, Sato, Hashimoto, & Verma, 1995) and for some love (passionate, companionate, and sexual)

are seen as critical to maintaining a marriage (Sprecher & Hatfield, 2014). Researches have tended to analyze cultural differences by comparing collectivistic versus individualistic societies. With globalization, however, collectivist societies around the world are starting to adopt a more positive view of passionate love and to insist that passionate and companionate love are important for marital decisions and the maintenance of marriage (Hatfield & Rapson, 2005; Levine, et al., 1995).

#### **A. The Nature of Love: A Focus on Brazil**

A great deal of research on passionate love exists—it is probably more studied than any other form of love (Graham & Christiansen, 2009). In general, as we indicated earlier, throughout the world, including in Brazil, people tend to define passionate love in the same way, love with equal intensity, desire similar traits in a romantic partner, rejoice in love found, and to become upset and jealous when that love is threatened by a rival (Feybesse, Neto & Hatfield, 2011; Sim-Sim & Polido, 2013). Let us consider a sampling of this research, focusing on Brazil.

*The Intensity and Frequency of Passionate Love:* The Portuguese version of the Passionate Love Scale (Feybesse, Neto & Hatfield, 2011; Sim-Sim & Polido, 2013) has been found, in both Portugal and Brazil, to match the psychometric properties of the original PLS. Portuguese and Brazilian students seem to love with the same frequency and intensity as do young people in a variety of other nations.

*Traits Desired in a Mate:* Evolutionary psychologists have long been interested in the characteristics men and women desire in romantic partners, sexual partners, and mates.

David Buss (1989) asked more than 10,000 men and women, from 37 countries, what they desired in a potential mate. The cultures represented a wide range of cultural, geographic, political, ethnic, religious, racial, economic, and linguistic groups. Buss found that when men and women were asked what traits they cared most about, it was evident that both desired much the same things in a partner. Both desired someone who loved them, who was dependable, emotionally stable, and mature; who possessed a pleasant disposition, and so forth. Buss (1989) acknowledged that: “species-typical mate preferences may be more potent than sex-linked preferences” (p. 13.) When Buss moved down the list of valued qualities, however, he found that, as predicted, the sexes did differ slightly in how important they considered various traits to be. Men seemed to care more about traits that signaled *reproductive capacity*. They preferred partners who were two to three years younger than they. They cared more about good looks than did women. Women, on the other hand, seemed to care more about cues to *resource acquisition*. They preferred men who were three to four years older than they. They also valued mates who possessed status, good financial prospects, and who were ambitious and industrious.

Romantic preferences in Brazil have been tested in several studies. Brazil possesses one of the most diverse populations in the world. It is comprised of indigenous peoples, as well as those of Portuguese, African-European, and Asian descent. The various ethnic groups are not uniformly distributed throughout the country, however (Castro & Lopes, 2011). In Brazil, European physical characteristics are most highly valued. Therefore, in the “marriage market,” Brazilians of different ethnicities differ markedly in their chances of their securing their ideal mate. Ribeiro and Silva (2009), for

example, analyzed Brazilian marriage records from 1960, 1980, and 2000—looking at who possessed the greatest opportunities in the “marriage market—Europeans (whites), *morenos* or *pardos* (“browns”), or blacks. They found that marriage frequency was ordered as predicted: it was the blacks that proved to be at the biggest disadvantage in the marriage market. -Thankfully, the authors observe, interracial marriage is becoming more acceptable in Brazil. While it stood at 10% in 1960, it increased to 25% in 1980, and to 33% in 2000. Social status is very important in Brazil. Brazil has one of the biggest social gaps in the world. Interracial marriages seem to be more acceptable when dark-skinned men possess a higher status than do their whiter-hued wives. The authors speculate that as people become better educated, and thus more similar in social status, interracial marriages will become more common. One exception to this general tendency: highly educated men and women have become more selective in the years between 1960 and 2000—tending to be even more insistent that their partner’s level of education match their own.

Brazilian males and females value much the same characteristics that men and women value in the rest of the world—with one exception. In Brazil, both men and women consider a good sense of humor to be of crucial importance—whether they are interested in a short- or long-term involvement (Castro & Lopes, 2011).

As in many other societies, it is young women who possess the greatest market value. Brazilian women tend marry somewhat older man. Young women in their 20’s generally choose to marry somewhat older men. By their 30’s, they seek men closer to their own age (Otta, Queiroz, Campos, Da Silva & Silveira, 1998). As Brazilian women age, (as in most of the rest of the world) they find it increasingly difficult to find love.

Lucila de Sousa Campos and colleagues (2002) analyzed men's and women's lonely-hearts ads from a journal in São Paulo. They studied the attributes men and women of various ages offered (in their ads), the traits they sought, and how many replies men and women of various ages, placing various types of ads, garnered. As predicted, young women were most popular, regardless of the type of ad they placed. As women aged, recognizing the difficulty of finding a mate, they began to stress their own attractiveness and interest in sex. They also became less demanding—specifically, they were willing to settle for less attractive men, who possessed less occupational status, than they would once have demanded. It appears that in Brazil, as in the rest of the world, love is a bit of a marriage market.

*Jealously:* Evolutionary psychologist David Buss (2000) argues that although jealousy is primarily a sad and negative emotion, it has also an adaptive trait because it contributes to romantic relationship maintenance:

Jealousy, according to this perspective, is not a sign of immaturity, but rather a supremely important passion that helped our ancestors, and most likely continues to help us today, to cope with a host of real reproductive threats. Jealousy, for example, motivates us to ward off rivals with verbal threats and cold primate stares. It drives us to keep partners from straying with tactics such as escalating vigilance or showering a partner with affection. And it communicates commitment to a partner who may be wavering, serving an important purpose in the maintenance of love (p. 26).

César Ades (2003) studied jealousy among Brazilian undergraduates from the University of São Paulo. The students were asked to complete a questionnaire, in which they were asked to contemplate several scenarios and to indicate to what extent such events would cause them to feel jealous. Basically they were asked how they would feel if they discovered their partner was emotionally or sexually involved with somebody else. How hurt, angry and jealous (*magoado, com raiva, com ciúme*) would

they feel? Which type of betrayal would they consider the worst—emotional or sexual betrayal?

How exactly would they respond to such betrayal? Possibilities included “not say, not do anything” (*não diria nem faria nada*), “break off the relationship” (*romper*), “try to make your partner more interested in you” (*tentaria aumentar o interesse do parceiro por você*), “discuss and try to work through the issue” (*conversaria com o parceiro tentando acertar os ponteiros*) or “retaliate either physically or verbally” (*agrediria o parceiro física ou verbalmente*). Next they were asked how they would react to the person with whom their partner was involved [“ignore” (*ignorar*), “confront” (*tirar satisfação*) or “retaliate either verbally or physically” (*agredir verbalmente ou fisicamente*.)

As has been found previously, the authors found that in general men, especially those in committed relationships, were slightly more jealous (overall) than were women when faced with betrayal. And what was really upsetting for men was the discovery of sexual betrayal-- (inciting more pain, anger, and jealousy) and provoking the greatest desire to retaliate against a rival. In general, women were slightly more upset by emotional than sexual jealousy—probably because in their mind the two are tightly linked.

We see then that in Brazil men and women in love are much the same as those throughout the rest of the world.

#### **IV. Obstacles in Romantic Relationships**

One of the most hotly debated questions in psychology is what role smooth sailing versus rocky shoals play in romantic attraction. In the early days of research on passionate love, the answer seemed clear:

The psychological principle which is most frequently used to predict interpersonal attraction is the principle of *reinforcement*. We will like those who reward us; we will dislike those who punish us (Berscheid & Hatfield, 1969, p. 29).

Early scholars provided a compendium of evidence to support the thesis that love and reinforcement are tightly entwined. They documented that propinquity leads to love. That people feel passionate and romantic love for those who raise their self-esteem, admire them, share their attitudes and opinions, and reduce their anxiety and stress. Yet, even in the late 60's, there were tiny whispers that passion is different from liking. That sometimes lovers are besotted with those who are maddening; who do not love them; who join them in relationships that are neither convenient nor easy.

Today that niggling whisper has become a roar.

Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, is an archetypal tale of star-crossed lovers. Juliet is 13 years of age; Romeo just a bit older. For more than 400 years, the play has delighted audiences. Their families feud, forbidding the young lovers to even speak, while the passionate lovers burn with love, scheme, cry out in agony, risk all, and finally risk death to be together. When forced to choose between family and each other, their choice is clear: in the end, they choose love.

In a recent study, Cyrille Feybesse asked men and women from Paris Descartes University to list any obstacles (social or external) that stood in the way of their romantic relationships. A few students declared that they have never faced any obstacles to romance. The majority mentioned having to confront social obstacles (such as parental disapproval); a few mentioned having to deal with physical ones (eg., geographical separation, in long-distance relationships). The obstacles most cited were disagreement with one's boyfriend or girlfriend, physical distance, and infidelity. In a

second study, conducted in 2012, Feybesse administered the French version of the Passionate Love Scale, and asked students, who were currently in a relationship, to indicate whether or not they currently were facing any obstacles (Feybesse, Coudin & Hatfield, in preparation). The majority of men and women, however, declared they were, in fact, confronting one or more obstacles. Some reported they were facing one obstacle, others were confronting two or three; a few faced four or more obstacles. The obstacles ticket most often concerned geographical distance and time spent on work or study. Secondly, some subjects agreed that they were having to deal with parental or social network disapproval. Subjects were also asked about potential social, ethnical, or religious differences and the like. Contrary to predictions, there were no differences between the intensity of passionate love and the number of obstacles the couples faced. Interestingly, there was evidence that too many obstacles tended to cause serious problems. Apparently, enough was enough. Couples attempting to deal with four or more obstacles to romance tended to have a *lower* score on the Passionate Love Scale. Of course, if people are eager to exit a relationship, for whatever reason, they can begin to see obstacles never before recognized. In love it can be desirable to rewrite history. Feybesse argues that obstacles of any sort play a profound role in passionate love.

In the next few pages, we will review a sampling of the evidence, albeit inconsistent and contradictory, that demonstrates that perhaps “What doesn’t kill love may make it stronger.” We will end by offering some suggestions as to the conditions under which obstacles may heighten versus destroy passion.

***Uncertainty:*** For Feybesse, the power of uncertainty is the linchpin that helps us understand why obstacles have the power they do to intensify love. All the obstacles he

mentions make young people uncertain as to whether they are loved and how things will work out. Hence their power. Uncertainty has been found play an important role in romantic attraction. Researchers Whitchurch, Wilson and Gilbert (2011) asked college women to rate their attraction towards four male Facebook profiles. In one condition, they were told that the men who saw their profiles liked them a lot. In a second condition they were told that the men liked them an average amount. Finally, in a third condition (the uncertain condition), they were told that the college men either liked their profiles a lot or an average amount. The authors found that women tended to like the men that liked them, but they were most powerfully attracted to men when they were uncertain about men's desire. In the uncertain condition, college women admitted they liked the men a lot and that they found themselves thinking about them fairly often. Love, the author concludes, can be seen as a succession of certainties and doubts, an affair where passion and disillusionments coexist (Lamy, 2011).

***Playing Hard-to-Get:*** According to folklore, "playing hard to get" is an effective strategy in intensifying another's love. Theoretically, there are reasons why playing hard to get might be an effective strategy. Dissonance theory, for example, says we come to value those things we work hard to get. However, social psychological research provides inconsistent evidence as to the scheme's effectiveness. In a carefully controlled series of four different studies, Sprecher and Hatfield (1982) found no evidence that people like the hard to get. There are simply too many reasons why the hard- and easy- to get might be desirable or undesirable. Instead, they found that young men and women liked those who were *easy for them* to get, impossible for anyone else to attract. In recent years, however, a few scholars have found some

evidence that under the right circumstances, such playing be an effective strategy. (See Scott, 2009, for an up-to-date review of contradictory research.)

***Parental Opposition:*** Richard Driscoll and his colleagues (1972) observed a fascinating paradox. Parents interfere in passionate relationships in the hope of destroying them. But sometimes such meddling simply intensifies the couple's feelings. In Roman mythology, the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is built on the intensification of love by parental opposition: “They longed to marry, but their parents forbade it. Love, however, cannot be forbidden. The more the flame is covered up, the hotter it burns” (Hamilton, 1942, p. 101).

Driscoll and colleagues (1972) studied “the Romeo and Juliet effect”. They proposed that romantic love thrives in the fires of challenge and uncertainty. Conjugal love, on the other hand, flowers from the seeds of trust and genuine understanding. To test this notion, they asked couples to fill out three scales: 1. *Assessment of parental interference:* This scale asked couples to estimate the extent to which their parents meddled and caused problems in their relationship. Couples were asked whether or not they had ever complained to their mates that their parents tried to make them look bad, did not accept the couple, interfered, were a bad influence, or hurt the relationship.

2. *Assessment of passionate and companionate love.* Driscoll also asked couples how passionately and how companionately they loved one another. Most theorists distinguish between two kinds of love—passionate love (which is fueled by novelty and excitement) and companionate love (the sort of friendly, intimate, calm kind of love people often feel after years of marriage.) The authors found that, as predicted, parental interference did indeed tend to intensify couple's passionate feelings for one

another; young lovers loved more passionately when they were besieged by difficult, interfering parents than when they were not. The researchers also investigated whether *increasing* parental interference would provoke increased passion. Six to 10 months after the initial interview, the authors invited the couples back for a second interview. They asked whether the young couple's parents had continued to interfere or had become resigned to their relationship, and how the couple felt about one another now. As parents began to interfere more in a relationship, yet again the couple appeared to fall more deeply in love. If the parents had become resigned to the relationship and were now interfering less, the couples' passionate love actually began to wane. Parental interference took a toll, however, on the companionate love married couples felt. Subsequent research on the impact of social network approval on passion has sometimes found support for the "Romeo and Juliet" effect (Felmlee, 2001), and sometimes not (Johnson & Milardo, 1984; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). In an attempt to explain such discrepancies, some have proposed that the critical factor is whether or not the lovers agree or disagree with family and friends' opposition. They also point out that in committed love affairs and marriages, the approval of family and friends may increase relationship stability, that doesn't mean it will fuel passion as well.

**Network interference.** Johnson and Milardo (1984) focused on network interference. When lovers first meet, they observed, they often have their own friends and friendship networks. As they get more obsessed with each other, however, it is not unusual for friends to complain: "We never see you any more!" At this point, the couple may discover that their friends don't suffer this abandonment gladly. The network begins to interfere in the relationship; friends try to restore its boundaries.

Generally, however, love trumps friendship—that is until the love affair breaks up. Then, people often try to return to the fold.

**Separation.** Most people start out dating men and women who live and work close to them (Hatfield & Walster, 1978). (That may be changing with the invention of social media and dating and marital web sites.) But in today's world, young people often travel for school, work, and pleasure. What effect do such separations usually have on love relationships? Laura Stafford (1990 and 2006) studied students involved in long-distance romantic relationships. She observed that 75% of American college students will face a long-distance relationship during the time they are in college. Such separations are common around the world. In Hawaii, where Hatfield teaches, many Chinese students who come to Hawaii for college are separated from their mates for years or even decades. Stafford compared students who lived in close proximity to their beloved with those in long distance relationships and found that for most “absence made the heart grow fonder.” They felt more love for their beloved and idealised them more than did their peers. Ironically, they were also more satisfied with the communication they had with their beloved and with their relationships. Nevertheless, not all couples found that “absence makes the heart grow fonder”. There were a sizable number of break-ups both at the time of transition and again later on. In fact, after getting back together, a minority of couples broke up; their relationships survived, on average, three months.

**A Reconciliation: When Do Obstacles Spark Passion? When Do they Destroy a Relationship?**

How can we reconcile the greatly conflicting results we have just described? A variety of factors may shape the impact of obstacles on passion.

The first fact of importance may be “How attracted and committed to one another is the couple at the time obstacles arise? Are they wildly in love? Fully committed to one another?” (If so, opposition may well intensify their feelings.) “Or is their love tepid? Are they secretly looking for a way out?” (If so, obstacles may be the straw that broke the camel’s back.)

Secondly, “How legitimate do they feel the interference and criticism are?” The more legitimate friends and families’ objections, the more likely it is that criticism will cause them to rethink the relationship.

Thirdly, “How serious are the obstacles?” Small obstacles may add a pinch of spice to a relationship. Serious ones may prove overwhelming. The person may feel so much stress and anxiety that they long to escape.

Fourthly, “Is it a new relationship where passion is high or a long-time one, where passion has declined, but comfort, security, and companionate love remain high?” In a long-term relationship, overwhelming obstacles (poverty, illness, the death of a child) may well threaten a relationship.

Fifthly, perhaps the relationship between passion and obstacles is curvilinear. A few trivial obstacles may add sparkle to a love affair. Too many obstacles may overwhelm the lovers and destroy their feelings for one another.

Sixth, “Are there gender and cultural differences in the impact of obstacles on passionate love?”

The anthropologist Helen Fisher (2004) has argued that barriers, be they social or physical ones, can fire up a passion. The author called this the “the frustration-attraction” phenomenon (Fisher, 2004). Obstacles can be big or small--cultural differences, racial or ethnic differences, or insurmountable geographical distances. It matters not. Besotted lovers will still yearn for the other. In fact, it may be easier to pine for an imaginary lover than a real one, with his or her flaws (“It’s not you, it’s our terrible situation.”) Fights, separations, may all stimulate passionate love. Lovers are goal-directed, and they will act to overcome any obstacle that gets in the way. (Aron, Fisher, Mashek, Strong, Li & Brown, 2005) (In fact, defining characteristic of motivation is the desire and ability to surmount obstacles in an effort to achieve that goal (Custers, Mass, Wildenbeest & Aarts, 2008).

People possess very different notions about the power of love. Romantics sometimes believe: “Love conquers all”; that if a couple is truly in love they can overcome any obstacle (Sprecher & Metts, 1989). Others are, of course, more cynical. Romantic beliefs (be they cynical or romantic) may shape the impact that obstacles have on a love affair and on how hard couples are willing to work on a faltering relationships (Weaver & Ganong, 2004).

There is no evidence that there are cultural differences in the belief that love conquers all. Shannon Weaver and Lawrence Ganong (2004) set out to determine if African-Americans possessed the same romantic beliefs that European-Americans did. They concluded that although love might have slightly different meanings in these two groups (the factor structure for the Romantic Beliefs Scale was a bit different), in both

groups men and women possessed a strong conviction that “love finds a way” and that even the most daunting obstacles can be overcome.

Men tend to initiate romantic encounters. In fact, in the West, in earlier eras, it was assumed that men would initiate romantic and sexual encounters, while women would modestly resist them. Even today, men have been found to subscribe to romantic beliefs (like love conquers all) more often than do women (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) and are more rapid in confessing that they are in love (Ackerman, Griskevicius & Li, 2011). They are slightly more resistant to attempts to persuade them that a more realistic view of love and life is in order (Sharp & Ganong, 2000 in Wheaver & Ganong, 2004). Given all this, it is not surprising that they are less daunted by the discovery of courtship obstacles and try harder to overcome them.

#### **V. The End of The Affair: Introduction**

Today, most young people are fairly optimistic about the fate of love. Yet, the odds are against a youthful romance turning into serious love affair and then into a long and satisfying marriage. Hill, Rubin, and Peplau (1979) interviewed 231 young Boston couples to find out what happened to love affairs over a two-year period. At the beginning of the study, most couples (60%) saw each other every day. Most (75%) were dating one another exclusively; some (20%) were living together; a few (10%) were engaged. They interviewed these same couples again six months, one year, and two years later. By the end of two years, 45% of them had broken up.

There is a great deal of controversy as to how long passionate love lasts (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Hatfield, et al., 2008). Some psychologists argue that passion love is, by its nature short lived. It is, they claim, the glue that keeps couples together

until they complete the difficult task of protecting a child through the first difficult years of childhood—generally thought to be about four years. After that, the couples can separate and breed with others. Such sequential monogamy is thought to promote genetic diversity and thus survival of the tribe (Fisher, 2004).

Others claim that both passionate and companionate love can last far longer. In a sample of couples, ranging in age from young dating couples to the elderly, Hatfield, Pillemer, O'Brien, and Li (2008) found that, from an initial high, passionate and companionate love tend to decline slightly but steadily over time. They also found that a few couples were able to maintain fairly high levels of both types of love over a long lifetime.

Can romantic love for the same partner last forever? Acevedo and Aron (2012) found strong support for that contention. The authors used functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRIs) to scan the brains of couples who reported that they were still intensely in love with their spouse after an average of two decades of marriage. They compared the brain images of these long married couple with those of couples who had just fallen madly in love (Aron et al., 2005). They found that when couples thought about (or viewed a picture) of their beloved there were many similarities in brain activity between the two groups. Women and men in groups showed activity in dopamine-rich regions of the ventral tegmental area (VTA), caudate and putamen-- brain regions associated with the motivation to win rewards. The region of the VTA activated what that “lit up” when individuals feel the rush of cocaine.

The comparison of these two groups did reveal a few differences between individuals in love long term relationships and those experiencing early stage, intense

romantic love: Those intensely in love after many years showed activity in brain areas associated with feelings of calmness and pain-suppression, including the raphe nuclei and periaqueductal gray (PAG). In contrast, those who had just fallen madly in love showed activity in brain regions associated with obsessive thinking and intense focus, including the anterior cingulate, medial caudate body and posterior cingulate/retrosplenial cortex. Those in love long term also showed activity in oxytocin and vasopressin-rich areas of the nucleus accumbens and ventral pallidum, areas that are critical to the formation and maintenance of monogamous pair-bonds in other mammals.

These results suggest that those who experience long term romantic love continue to crave union with their spouse and remain highly motivated to maintain, enhance and protect the relationship—like those in early stage intense romantic love. Their spouse continues to be a source of reward and well-being. Yet, long-term romantic love is associated with less obsession and anxiety and increased calm and attachment.

For centuries, laymen, philosophers, poets, and physicians have wondered whether romantic love can be maintained long term. They have recognized that feelings of romantic love and attachment play pivotal roles in human marital stability and individual well-being. These data suggest that romantic love and deep attachment to a partner can last for many years. Generally, however, it does not.

Many people assume that it is “normal” to have a happy marriage. Yet, in most cultures, many marriages end in divorce. For example, the divorce to marriage ratio is 21% in Brazil, 55% in France, and 53% in the United States (Wikipedia, 2014.) Nearly

everyone has experienced the breakup of an affair that had begun promisingly, but came to a sad end.

## **VI. The Emotional Aftermath**

### **A. Unrequited Love**

The tradition of love literature, romantic poetry, and grand opera expresses, almost exclusively, great passion that ends very badly. Today, country music, novels, and films are filled with stories of lovers who loved and lost. Surprisingly, we rarely listen to songs about the misery of people who were loved passionately but failed to love in return.

Roy Baumeister and Sara Wotman (1991) asked college students to write two stories of unrequited love: to describe a time when they were in love with someone who didn't love them and to describe another time when they were loved but found it impossible to reciprocate that love. They found that the lovers and their beloveds react very differently to unrequited love. Those who were loved, suffered the most. At first, their self-esteem may have been slightly bolstered by all the adoration they received from the supplicant. At the same time, they found themselves in an impossible situation. They felt guilty. Whatever they did was wrong. First, they felt it was wrong to reject someone. (It is hard enough to tell someone you are not interested, much less why.) It felt even worse leading someone on. But, if the supplicant persisted, guilt turns to irritation soon turned to rage. Eventually, the beloved began to feel trapped and persecuted. What could be motivating the besotted lover? Why wouldn't she go away? Was he crazy? How could she deceive herself this way? Didn't he see he was driving her crazy?

All in all, lovers fared far better than did their prey. At first the besotted were filled with love and hope. They focused entirely on their own needs, wants, and desires; they wallowed in the drama of their misery. They were oblivious and indifferent to what the rejecting person was going through. They viewed the beloved with incomprehension. How could X not love them when they loved X? They blamed X for not reciprocating their love; they felt angry, annoyed, and resentful at X's stubbornness. They cared little about X's feelings. They felt released from normal moral constraints ("all's fair in love and war"). Sometimes, the rejected lover's pursuit of the other turned into harassment. In years to come, the unrequited lover remembered the infatuation as a bittersweet affair despite the poison of disappointment.

### **Casual and More Serious Relationships**

We receive many letters from young people suffering the pain of a broken heart.

This one is typical:

*Dear Mrs. Hatfield,  
my problem is i got final exams,  
and sometimes i fall in love with a great man,  
well and my mind block, and i dont want to feel that feeling  
cause i have to concentrate on my tests  
do you have learning tipps,  
or what to do if my mind block?mostly cause of love?  
its such an owerwhelming feeling, i am like shockend, scared and speechless,  
and dont want to feel it, just getting over it  
cause i thing emotional intelignce, emotional independence, financial  
indepence, being beautiful inside, outside, christan values, intelligence in  
general very important for everlasting love and selfesteem  
but without a job, hard to find mr. right,  
losing concentration not good, what to do, if i got a mind block again, cause of  
love...?*

Researchers have documented the devastating array of emotions people feel after a breakup. They find that when an affair ends, young people feel a swirl of

emotions—elation and relief (if they wanted the affair to end) and love, sadness and depression, guilt, anger and bitterness (Field, 2011), jealousy, and loneliness (if they didn't) (de Jong-Gierveld, 1986; Perlman & Peplau, 1981). See Perilloux and Buss (2008) for a review of these reactions.

Means (1991), for example, interviewed college students who had recently broken up. Almost all the men and women said they were still feeling strong love for their partners. To some extent, both wanted the relationship to continue. Nonetheless, it had failed. Two months after things had fallen apart, over 40% of students in these doomed relationships were still experiencing clinically measurable depression. Scores on the *Beck Depression Inventory* (Beck, Steer, & Brown, 1996) revealed that two percent of them were experiencing “severe depression,” 10% were experiencing “moderate to severe depression,” 31% were experiencing “mild to moderate depression,” and 1% were experiencing “minimal” depression.”

The newly broken up are also especially vulnerable to a variety of mental and physical health problems (Traupmann & Hatfield, 1981). Alex Gardner (2005), a clinical psychologist in Glasgow, said: “People can die from a broken heart” (p. 1). There is evidence he may be right. Field (2011) reviewed the medical literature to determine how heartbreak sparked a variety of medical problems. These include intrusive thoughts, insomnia, alcoholism and drug use, heartbreak syndrome (i.e. experiencing faux heart attacks), and a compromised immune system. Bereavement is also known to increase susceptibility to diabetes, heart disease, tuberculosis, and cirrhosis of the liver. Bereavement increases a person's vulnerability to mental illness. It sparks a variety of physical symptoms. These include migraines, headaches, facial

pain, rashes, indigestion, peptic ulcers, weight gain or loss, heart palpitations, chest pain, asthma, infections, and so forth. It predisposes people to engage in risky behaviors—such as smoking, drinking, and drug use. The bereaved are also more likely to die from natural causes, twice as likely to commit suicide, and more likely to be murdered than are the married (Bloom, et al, 1979; Hatfield & Rapson, 1983).

### **The Neuroscience of Breakups**

Helen Fisher and her colleagues (2010) studied men and women who had just been jilted by their beloved. First, they hung a flyer on the SUNY at Stony Brook bulletin board. “Have you just been rejected in love. But can’t let go?” Rejected sweethearts were quick to respond. In initial interviews, Fisher found that heartbroken men and women were caught up in a swirl of conflicting emotions—they were still wildly in love, yet feeling abandoned, depressed, angry, and in despair.

But what was going on in their brains? To find out, Fisher and her colleagues followed the same protocol they’d utilized in testing happily-in-love men and women—i.e., they asked participants to alternately view a photograph of their one-time beloved and a photograph of a familiar, but emotionally neutral individual. In short, the authors found that jilted lovers’ brains “lit up” in the areas associated with anxiety, pain, and attempts at controlling anger; as well as addiction, risk taking, and obsessive/compulsive behaviors. Jilted lovers did, indeed, appear to experience a storm of passion—passionate love, sexual desire, plus anguish, rejection, rage, emptiness, and despair. (For additional information on the brain activity of women grieving from the loss of a romantic relationship, see Najib and his colleagues (2004).

### **V. Dealing With Loss**

It is normal, naturally, to suffer after a show of disinterest, a rejection, a breakup, or a divorce. Usually, young men and women simply need to sigh and get on with it. Sometimes, however, the loss is so shattering that people need to take more serious action. Let us now consider now some of these alternatives.

#### **A. Gender Differences in Strategies for Dealing with Loss**

Historically, women have been stereotyped as the more emotional gender, especially in their close relationships (Perilloux & Buss, 2008; Sprecher & Hatfield, 1987). In addition, stress researchers contend that men and women may cope with stressful life events in different ways. Men seem to ignore stressful events and to distract themselves from what they are feeling. They may exercise, take drugs, drink, or lose themselves in their work. Women tend to brood about problems. They try to figure out if they were to blame, to sort out exactly what went wrong. They talk to other people to get their ideas. They try to set things right (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Ingram, et al., 1988). These are the stereotypes. Recent research suggests, however, that at least in the area of love, men and women are not so different as they are purported to be.

Lisa Orimoto and her colleagues (1991) interviewed 237 University of Hawaii students. The researchers asked the students about their emotional state after a recent breakup and how they tried to cope with the situation. The authors found that men's and women's emotional reactions differed surprisingly little. Both were usually devastated by the breakup. They felt a kaleidoscope of emotions--love, anger, and, grief. . . as well as occasional relief that things were finally over.

How did they deal with their feelings and with the practical problems they faced following the breakup? Women were more likely to try to focus on the problem and try to figure out what had happened and whether they could make improvements next time around. In the main, however, both men and women used similar strategies. Both men and women felt that they should have coped better than they actually did.

1. *Women paid attention to the problem.* They were more prone to cry, to talk to their friends, to read self-help books and magazines, and to see therapists in an effort to understanding better the workings of love.

Men and women were equally likely to use the other techniques.

2. *Both men and women sometimes tried to play things down.* They tried to hide their feelings so others wouldn't know what they were going through. They binge. They drank or took drugs (tranquilizers, sleeping pills, marijuana). They went out of their way to avoid bumping into the one they loved. They avoided going to places or doing things that had been parts of their lives together. They stayed in bed.

3. *Both used cognitive techniques to manage their feelings.* They talked to themselves like a Dutch uncle. "Who needs him (or her) anyway?" "It's his (her) loss!" "There are lots of good fish in the sea." "I'm lucky to have gotten out of that relationship." Or, "You've learned a valuable lesson."

4. *Both tried to distract themselves from their loss.* They did things to improve their looks or sex appeal (got a haircut, bought clothes, or went on a diet). They kept themselves busy with sports, schoolwork, or career. They engaged in physical activities (they jogged, played basketball, or went swimming).

#### **A. Common-Sense Strategies**

What happens if one's usual strategies don't work? Clinical psychologists have written a variety of self-help books offering advice on how to deal with the loss of love. Such books make a number of practical suggestions; interestingly enough, almost all of them are based on what scientists have discovered about cognitive-behavioral techniques for dealing with emotions. Behavioral therapists Debora Phillips and Bob Judd (2013), for instance, in *How to Fall Out of Love* offer a variety of techniques for getting over a love affair. First, of course, they acknowledge that one has to begin by acknowledging the pain of breakup and wallowing in it briefly. But after a while, it will be time to move on. They suggested use of three techniques—thought stopping, silent ridicule, and association of the lover with disgusting imaginings—to eliminate the pain of the dissolution. But one need only go on Amazon.com to find a number of resources for dealing with loss. These self-help books provide strategies for meeting new people, social skills training, improving your ability to make good choices, learning what it's practical to expect (and not expect) from a relationship, building up a friendship network, and how to communicate with others. (Gottman & Notarius, 1979; Gottman & Silver, 2007).

## **B. Clinical Interventions**

Sometimes people are too quick to identify ordinary sadness at a breakup with pathology. Go on the Web and you will find sites titled “Lovesick? You might have a legit illness” (O’Shea, 2011). “Anti-love drug may be ticket to bliss (Tierney, 2009). Or, check out Google Scholar and find scholarly papers pointing out how similar passionate love is to drug addiction (Fisher, et al., 2010) or obsessive-compulsive disorders and advocating chemical treatments to subdue that affliction (Hennien, 2015).

To someone who spends a lot of time with young people, it is clear how very ordinary such “afflictions” are.

Nonetheless, there are times when a besotted lover’s pain is so severe that professional counseling is helpful in understanding one’s feelings and helping one recover from the pain of loss. Researchers have probably employed cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) most frequently (Beck & Beck, 2011). Cognitive behavioral therapy attempts to examine the relationship between clients’ thoughts, feelings, and behavior. By exploring self-defeating patterns of thinking (say, “I am worthless,” “If only someone loved me I would be happy,” “I will never find love”) that lead to self-destructive behavior, therapists hope to alter clients’ lives. Clinicians tend to be problem-focused and goal directed in pinpointing problem cognitions. Clients are urged to “run experiments” to test the truth of such hypotheses. The hope is that by changing cognitions and behavior, clients can recover from heartbreak and go on to lead more satisfying lives.

Donatella Marazitti (2005), a professor of psychiatry at the University of Pisa in Italy, has studied the biochemistry of lovesickness. She conducted an experiment in which she compared lovers serotonin levels with those of people suffering from OCD and another group who were free of both passion and mental illness. Her main finding was that men and women who were in the early romantic phase of love with not different from OCD patients. The levels of serotonin in both groups were 40% lower than that of normal subjects. She argued:

We, therefore, agree with others . . . that love, pair bonding, and pathological conditions, such as OCD and paranoia, can be related to the same neurobiological systems . . . Probably nature has created this sort of

transitory madness in order to render us more open and prone towards non-related individuals,” (p. 336).

Love, she adds, may also possess paranoid features. In the case of lovesickness, she suggests, one may utilize the same chemical treatments utilized to treat other anxiety and OCD disorders. For a review of psychologists who have documented the link between passionate love, limerence, and obsessive-compulsive disorders, see Hennien (2015).

There are some people who are unable to get over the rage and fury they feel for those who have never loved them or who have jilted them. These people, suffering from anger may be advised to take anger management classes or to use mediation to deal with their problems. (See Deffenbacher (2003) and Kassinove & Tafrate (2002) for a discussion of these techniques.)

## **VI. In Conclusion**

Today, most young people go through many relationships and experience the pain of a disappointing love affair time after time. And while in this chapter we have focused on the pathos of lost love and long for the supposed stabilities of the past, it is well to remind ourselves of a couple of ideas. First, humans tend to learn through pain. By the experience of many relationships, the opportunities for gaining wisdom about ourselves, others, and the complexities of love do exist. Most moderns may be significantly smarter about love, through experience, than our ancestors. And second, more of us *have* loved. The taste of love can be so sweet (or bittersweet) that lost love only deters us from seeking more love for a short while. Fewer lines of poetry are spoken more frequently, almost to the point of cliché, than those composed in 1850, at

the height of the Romantic Movement, by Alfred, Lord Tennyson: “Tis better to have loved and lost/ Than never to have loved at all.”

But in the last analysis, we wish to leave the reader of this chapter about love, sex, and intimacy with this paradox: The best way to gain a fulfilling relationship lies not in an obsession with love but with greater efforts toward building a balanced life based on one's unique biology, history, personality, and individuality. Romantic intimacy can bestow on us one of the glories of being alive. But there are other kinds of intimacy and other glories as well that form parts of the gift of life and that can enhance romance or even replace it when necessary: fruitful work, family, friends, fun, children, healing, creation, music, sunrises, and sunsets.

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