Love, Friendship, and Social Support

Instructor Manual

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The purpose of this instructor resource module is to help students understand the psychological bases of love, friendship, and social support, including how the Internet has influenced the development of these relationships. The provided discussion questions and activities will help lead a successful class.

Learning Objectives

- **Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)**

  - Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)

  - Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains (1.2)

  - Describe applications of psychology (1.3)

  - Engage in innovative and integrative thinking and problem solving (2.3)

  - Build and enhance interpersonal relationships (3.2)

  - Adopt values that build community at local, national, and global levels (3.3)

  - Interact effectively with others (4.3)

  - Exhibit self-efficacy and self-regulation (5.2)

  - Enhance teamwork capacity (5.4)

- **Content Specific Learning Objectives**

  - Understand what attracts us to others.

- Review research that suggests friendships are important for our health and well-being.
- Examine the influence of the Internet on friendship and developing relationships.
- Understand what happens to our brains when we are in love.
- Consider the complexity of love.
- Examine the construct and components of social support.

Abstract

Friendship and love, and more broadly, the relationships that people cultivate in their lives, are some of the most valuable treasures a person can own. This module explores ways in which we try to understand how friendships form, what attracts one person to another, and how love develops. It also explores how the Internet influences how we meet people and develop deep relationships. Finally, this module will examine social support and how this can help many through the hardest times and help make the best times even better.

Class Design Recommendations

This module can be taught in less than a single class period. Please also refer to the Noba PowerPoint slides that accompany this instructor's manual module.

Class period (50 min – 75 min):

- Introduction

  - Overview and the importance of relationships

- Attraction

  - Proximity, familiarity, similarity, reciprocity

- Friendship

  - Workplace and Internet friendships

- Love

  - Types of love (intimacy, passion, commitment)
  - Love and biology
  - Love and the Internet

- Social Support

  - Perceived vs. received
  - Quantity vs. quality

Module Outline

Introduction: Humans have basic needs and one of them is the need to belong; these needs are what make us human and give a sense of purpose and identity to our lives. This module will examine how relationships begin, the impact of technology on relationships, and why coworkers, acquaintances, friends, family, and intimate partners are so important in our lives.

Attraction: The Start of Friendship and Love

- *Proximity:* Physical nearness has been found to be a significant factor in the development of relationships. **Proximity** is not just about geographic distance, but involves **functional distance**, or the frequency with which we cross paths with others.

- *Familiarity:* People are more attracted to what is familiar. We also tend to feel safe with familiar people, as we are more likely to know what to expect from them.

- *Similarity:* While we often hear the saying "opposites attract," research has found that to be generally untrue; similarity is actually key. When it comes to marriage, research has found that couples tend to be very similar, particularly when it comes to age, social class, race, education, physical attractiveness, values, and attitudes. This phenomenon is known as the matching hypothesis.

- *Reciprocity:* This principle is based on the notion that we are more likely to like someone if they feel the same way toward us.

Friendship

- *Overview:* Close friendships can protect our mental and physical health when times get tough.

- *Workplace Friendships:* Friendships often take root in the workplace, due to the fact that people often spend as much or more time at work as they do with family and friends. People who worked in an environment where friendships could develop and be maintained were more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment, and they were less likely to leave that job.

- *Internet Friendships:* Virtual relationships are often as intimate as in-person relationships. This can be especially true for those individuals who are more socially anxious and lonely.

Love

- *Overview:* All types of love are comprised of three distinct areas: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Intimacy includes caring, closeness, and emotional support. The passion component of love is comprised of physiological and emotional arousal; these can include physical attraction, emotional responses that promote physiological changes, and sexual arousal. Lastly, commitment refers to the cognitive process and decision to commit to love another person, and the willingness to work to maintain that love over the course of your life.

- *Love and the Internet:* Social networking sites, and the Internet generally, perform three important tasks. Specifically, sites provide individuals with access to databases of other individuals who are interested in meeting someone. Dating sites generally reduce issues of proximity, as individuals do not have to be close in proximity to meet. Also, they provide a medium in which individuals can communicate with others. However, online relationships leave room for deception; thus, people have to be cautious.

Social Support

- *Perceived Social Support:* When things go wrong, you know you have friends and/or family members there to help you. Perceived support has been linked to well-being and can serve as a buffer to stress. That is, **perceived social support** increases happiness and well-being and makes our lives better in general.

- *Received Social Support:* This is the *actual* receipt of support or helping behaviors from others. Unlike perceived support, the benefits of received support have been beset with

mixed findings. Research has indicated that, regardless of the support-provider's intentions, the support may not be considered helpful to the person receiving it if it is unwanted.

- *Quality of Quantity?* We have a cognitive limit for how many people we can maintain social relationships with—the general consensus being about 150; we can only "really" know (maintain contact and relate to) about 150 people. However, the research shows that both quantity and quality matter.

Difficult Terms

Functional Distance
Mere-exposure effect
Perceived Social Support
Proximity
Received Social Support
Reciprocity
Support Network

Lecture Frameworks

Overview: One of the main reasons students love psychology is because it applies to their lives. This module in particular tends to be a very fun topic area for students. For the most part, relationships are an integral part of college students' experience, so they enjoy talking and thinking about those relationships (romantic and otherwise). If you have been having trouble getting students to talk, this unit is sure to get them to open up! Have fun with it and enjoy the lecture!

- **Warmup Discussion:**Get students warmed up by having them think about and reflect on relationships (romantic and Platonic). Example questions might include: Why are relationships important? What's the difference between romantic and Platonic love? What matters more—the quantity or quality of your friendships? Most students enjoy talking about relationships, so this will get them engaged and also allow you to assess their knowledge base.

- **Direct Instruction—Introduction:**Here, you can start by examining exactly why

relationships are important. What implications does being alone have for an individual?

- **Direct Instruction—Attraction (The Start of Friendship and Love):**Now that you have talked about the importance of relationships, you can begin talking about the very beginning of the relationship process: attraction. Explain the importance of proximity, familiarity, similarity, and reciprocity as factors that influence our attraction to others.

- *Proximity*: Physical nearness has been found to be a significant factor in the development of relationships. Proximity is not just about geographic nearness, but also functional nearness, or how frequently we cross paths with others.

- **Proximity Video**

  - Show the proximity video "If I didn't have you," by Tim Minchin (**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAzodf69rfk&featur...**

  - This video is a humorous song that taps into the concept of proximity. The comedian starts out talking about the chances of meeting your "soul mate" at the same high school/college/etc. He then sings a parody of a typical love song, except the premise is, "If I didn't have you, I'd probably be able to find someone else." If you like to keep the mood of class fun and lighthearted, this is a nice video choice. If you don't have time, or the tone of the video doesn't match your class, you can scrap this without losing a lot of content.

- **Direct Instruction—Familiarity**

  - Introduce the idea that people are more attracted to the familiar. We also tend to feel safer with familiar people, as we are more likely to know what to expect from them.

  - *Mere exposure effect:* This will resonate with students, as most of them will have had experiences (summer camp, classes, etc.) where they started out as friends or acquaintances with someone, but the better they got to know each other, the more attracted to one another they became.

- **Familiarity (Mere-Exposure) Video**

  - After talking about the formal psychological concepts behind familiarity, it might be fun to show how they have been depicted in popular culture. This clip is from the popular American TV show, How I Met Your Mother (a sitcom about five young adults in New York and their relationships/friendships; link starts at 30 seconds; **https://youtu.be/f1A5_gxL5_g?t=30).** Alternatively, you could start your discussion on familiarity with this clip and ask students if they think there is any merit to the "Mermaid Theory" as Barney describes it.

- The clip: According to Barney, men will eventually feel sexually attracted to women simply as a result of spending time with them, even if they initially don't find these women attractive at all; even the least physically attractive people ("manatees") will eventually look like mermaids. Barney predicts that Marshall will one day feel attracted to his female secretary simply because she works in his office, and Marshall becomes worried he will someday feel attracted to Robin (a close female friend) simply because they hang out a lot.

- **Activity—The Matching Game:**This is a quick class demo that really demonstrates the power of similarity. There is also a video you can show if you don't have time to do the actual activity (see the detailed description below).

- **Direct Instruction—Similarity:**Similarity can be a fun concept to teach because students are often under the impression that "opposites attract." In fact, you might consider starting out the lecture (or this portion of it) by polling whether students think "birds of a feather flock together" (supporting the similarity hypothesis) or "opposites attract" (supporting the complementarity hypothesis). You will find that a large proportion of students believe the latter, so it can be a fun topic of discussion.

- **Science of Sex Appeal—The Dating and Mating Pool Video:**This video clip is a demonstration of the matching game activity (above), and is meant to demonstrate the role similarity plays in attraction. If you are short on time and were unable to complete the activity, this video can be watched instead. Conversely, if you don't have the time following the activity, you might consider cutting this video. However, it might be helpful for students to see the matching hypothesis in action.

  - Link: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxoWUL0eqg4**

- **Direct Instruction and Discussion—Reciprocity**

  - This principle is based on the notion that we are more likely to like someone if they feel the same way toward us. There are lots of examples you can give here, so have fun with it!

  - Have students discuss how the principles of similarity and reciprocity have shaped both their Platonic and romantic relationships.

- **Direct Instruction—Friendship:**Here, you can talk about the friendships that are created through working relationships and the Internet. Given the use of social media and online platforms for discussion (e.g., Reddit, Twitter, Instagram, etc.), most students will be familiar with online relationships. Use this to your advantage to teach the concepts and engage students.

- **Direct Instruction and Discussion—Love**

  - Now that you have warmed students up with some of the basic principles of relationships, you can get to what they are really interested in: love. Ask them to define what it means to love another person (and remind them about operational definitions!). You will get a variety of responses, giving you a great platform for talking about the three components of love outlined in the lesson module: intimacy, passion, and commitment.

  - Here, it might be fun to bring up different types of relationships and have students decide which components of love are present/missing (e.g., parental love, best friend love, "puppy" love, etc.).

  - You can also have an interesting discussion on *Love and the Internet.* You can leverage the existence of countless dating sites (OkCupid, eHarmony, ChristianMingle, etc.) and several "hook-up" sites (e.g., Tinder) to have a fun and engaging conversation about love and the Internet. Again, since many students are tech and online savvy, they will be familiar with these sites and concepts, and likely have a lot to say about them.

- **Direct Instruction—Social Support:**This part of the lecture brings your class period full circle—by talking about the importance of relationships in terms of social support (which you talked about in the introduction). Most students inherently understand the difference between received and perceived social support, but few have ever thought explicitly about it (which means you can expect lots of aha! moments). Make sure to provide many examples to illustrate the difference (e.g., as teenagers, our parents telling us we are beautiful is *very* different than a person we're romantically interested in telling us we are beautiful).

- **Activity—Predict Your Spouse:**Throughout the lecture, you have been talking about different aspects of developing relationships. By now, students will have a wealth of information to draw on to predict what their future spouse might be like (e.g., race, age, SES, religion, attractiveness, etc.). This activity is designed to have them apply that information in a more concrete and personal way (see below for instructions).

- **Wrap-Up Discussion:**You can wind down the class by posing a few discussion questions to get the students thinking/reflecting on the content. Here are a few examples:

  - What is the difference between romantic and Platonic love?

  - How has the Internet changed what we know about relationships?

  - How have the principles from this module shaped your relationships (both Platonic and romantic)?

- **Classroom Assessment Technique Activity (CAT)—The One-Minute Paper:** Finally, you can end your class with a quick activity that lets you assess students' mastery of the material. Most students have ingrained views on relationships, so it might be fun and informative to ask them how their views have changed over the course of the lecture. It might also be interesting to ask them how what they've learned will affect their behavior in future relationships. No matter what you ask them, the goal is to get them reflecting on what they learned.

Activities & Demonstrations

Mastering Psychology—The Matching Game: This demo should be completed during class time. It can be done as a whole class (based on 10-20 volunteers) or in small groups (at least 10 people per group, must be an even number).

- Time: 5-15 minutes, depending on how you decide to run the activity
- Materials: Post-it notes for each group (needs to have a sticky side so they can be stuck on each person)
- Directions:

1. First, watch this video. It is a clear demonstration of what you will be doing in class: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxoWUL0eqg4.
2. Before class, create the sticky notes in pairs, with ratings corresponding to the number of pairs. For example, if you are going to have 10 volunteers, you will have 5 pairs, so you should label your sticky notes from 1-5 (and create two for each number).
3. Select 10-20 volunteers (mostly dependent on class size and how much time you have; use fewer volunteers if you have a small class or are short on time). Needs to be an even number.
4. Once your volunteers are selected, randomly assign each of them one of the numbers. Have them place the sticky notes on their forehead or back. The important thing is that other students can see their number but they can't.
5. Give them the following directions: I am assigning you a number. WITHOUT LOOKING AT IT, place the number on your forehead. Your goal is to find the best mate possible: the higher the number, the better the mate. When you have found someone with a high number, try to shake the person's hand. If that person accepts your hand, both of you

move to the side. If he or she does not accept your hand, try to find someone else to pair up with. Again, your goal is the get the BEST mate possible (the highest number).

6. Once all students have paired up, have them take off their numbers and see how they matched up (don't expect exact matches). Time for a fun class discussion!

- Considerations: Given that this is a psych class, you may have a low number of male participants, which means you won't have an even match of men and women. Let them know that for the purpose of this activity the gender of their "mate" doesn't matter (they aren't basing their decision on the literal person in front of them, only on the number that the person is wearing/representing).

Psychology Applied—Predict your Spouse: This activity is best completed after your class discussion. For this activity, students try to picture what their future spouse will be like. Students should directly apply the material from class.

- Time: 5-10 minutes depending on depth of explanation
- Materials: pen and paper for students
- Directions:

1. Post the following questions on the board: Where are you most likely to meet your significant other? What will he/she most likely look like? What are some of his/her characteristics (religion, age, race, values, SES, etc.)?

2. Direct students to use class material to answer these questions (not just their preferences for a supermodel/millionaire/etc.).

3. Responses can be either written individually or discussed as a class. Either way, the goal is for students to apply to their own lives what they have learned in class.

Additional Activities

Isbell, L. M., & Tyler, J. M. (2005). Using students' personal ads to teach about interpersonal attraction and intimate relationships. *Teaching of Psychology, 32*, 170-172. doi:10.1207/s15328023top3203_9

- Many students have beliefs about interpersonal relationships that are inconsistent with

empirical research. This activity is designed to challenge students' beliefs about the factors of attraction and relationships. Have students write personal ads and anonymously exchange them. Then, have the students read the ads aloud and discuss how the ads relate to important issues in interpersonal research.

Lewis, B. P., & Gurung, R. A. R. (2003). Mixing, matching, and mating: Demonstrating the effect of contrast on relationship satisfaction. *Teaching of Psychology, 30*, 303-306. doi:10.1207/S15328023TOP3004_04

- This is based on the same pairing activity described earlier ("the matching game"), but has some twists and additions. Similar to before, the goal of this activity is to illustrate the matching phenomenon (individuals choosing romantic partners who tend to match them on a variety of traits) to demonstrate several relationship issues, including contrast effects, the impact of alternative mates on relationship satisfaction, and social exchange and equity theories. Students first place playing cards of differing values on their foreheads and pair with another student to achieve the highest combined card value. Students are unaware of their own card value. However, this article suggests alternative options for adding "twists" to the game. For example, after all have paired, a student with a more valuable card is introduced into the mix. Students then reassess their pairings and relationship satisfaction, and the process is repeated. Data indicated that this demonstration significantly enhances student knowledge of the subject material.

Discussion Points

1. What is the difference between romantic and Platonic love?

   - This discussion question is both an explicit and implicit knowledge check (a good question to start out with, as it is pretty "safe"). You can continue the discussion by asking for (or providing) examples of different kinds of relationships and whether they typify romantic or Platonic love.

2. How has the Internet changed what we know about relationships?

   - This is a fun question because the current generation of college students is much more familiar with using technology in their relationships (e.g., using eHarmony or OkCupid for dating, Tinder for sexual relationships, etc.). This question will probably elicit interesting responses from your class and get them talking about the class content!

3. How have the principles from this module shaped your relationships (both Platonic and

romantic)?

- ○ This is a much more personal question. (You can have them do a one-minute paper on this question if you want to keep answers more private). It gives the students the opportunity to reflect on their own life and apply the content in a meaningful way. Just make sure that as students answer the questions they apply the information (not just talk about their relationships, which they love to do!).

Outside Resources

Movie: Official Website of Catfish the Movie
http://www.iamrogue.com/catfish

Video: Ted Talk from Helen Fisher on the brain in love
http://www.ted.com/talks/helen_fisher_studies_the_brain_in_love.html

Video: The Science of Heartbreak
https://youtu.be/lGglw8eAikY

Web: Groundbreaking longitudinal study on longevity from Howard S. Friedman and Leslie R. Martin
http://www.howardsfriedman.com/longevityproject/

Evidence-Based Teaching

Freng, S., & Webber, D. (2009). Turning up the heat on online teaching evaluations: Does "hotness" matter? *Teaching of Psychology, 36*, 189-193. doi:10.1080/00986280902959739

- Previous research has linked teachers' physical attractiveness and students' evaluations of teaching. The authors used data from RateMyProfessors.com, a database popular among college students, and examined the unique variance that physical attractiveness explains in student evaluations of teaching, while controlling for factors previously shown to predict teaching evaluations (e.g., rater interest in material, ease of professor or course). After controlling for the number of student ratings, rater interest, and class difficulty level,

physical attractiveness (i.e., hotness) accounted for over 8% of the variance in student evaluations of teaching. This could be a fun discussion point when talking about attraction.

Dietz-Uhler, B., & Bishop-Clark, C. (2002). The psychology of computer-mediated communication: Four classroom activities. *Psychology Learning & Teaching, 2*, 25-31. doi:10.2304/plat.2002.2.1.25

- This paper describes four classroom activities constructed to demonstrate various psychological issues associated with computer-mediated communication (CMC). Using concepts such as deindividuation, anonymity, social loafing, and social diffusion, the authors talk about how these behaviors influence online friendships.

Goldstein, G. S., & Benassi, V. A. (1994). The relation between teacher self-disclosure and student classroom participation. *Teaching of Psychology, 21*, 212-217. doi:10.1207/s15328023top2104_2

- This article focuses on the relationship between teacher self-disclosure and student classroom participation, based on norms of reciprocity. Teachers can use the theory of reciprocity to improve class participation and their relationships with students.

Links to ToPIX Materials

Activities, Demonstrations, or Handouts
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981041/Social%20in%20the%20Classroom

Current Events/News
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/23142325/Social%20in%20the%20News

Videos/Audio
http://topix.teachpsych.org/w/page/19981040/Social%20Video

Teaching Topics

Teaching The Most Important Course
https://nobaproject.com/documents/1_Teaching_The_Most_Important_Course.pdf

Content Coverage
https://nobaproject.com/documents/2_Content_Coverage.pdf

Motivating Students
https://nobaproject.com/documents/3_Motivating_Students_Tips.pdf

Engaging Large Classes
https://nobaproject.com/documents/4_Engaging_Large_Classes.pdf

Assessment Learning
https://nobaproject.com/documents/5_Assessment_Learning.pdf

Teaching Biological Psychology
https://nobaproject.com/documents/6_Teaching_Bio_Psych.pdf

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/178/Love,%20Friendship,%20and%20Social%20Support.ppt?1475878447.

About Noba

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- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award- winning university teachers.

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R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), Noba Textbook Series: Psychology. Champaign, IL: DEF Publishers. Retrieved from **http://noba.to/5cnsfqk9**

The Internet addresses listed in the text were accurate at the time of publication. The inclusion of a Website does not indicate an endorsement by the authors or the Diener Education Fund, and the Diener Education Fund does not guarantee the accuracy of the information presented at these sites.

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