Chapter 5

Romantic Love and Positive Families

Genes, Hormones, and Marriage

Evolution and Love

- Love has adaptive properties

- Compelling experience of romantic love cannot be fully understood by knowing only about genes, hormones, and neurotransmitters

Genes, Hormones, and Marriage

The Biochemistry of Love

- Oxytocin--hormone that increases in response to affection and love
  - *Linked with social bonding (e.g., breastfeeding), generosity, feelings of closeness and intimacy*
  - *Oxytocin related to reductions in stress and anxiety*
  - *Related to increased motivation to seek out social contact and support*

- Endogenous opioids
  - *Involved with social affiliation and can help diminish the impact of stress*

Genes, Hormones, and Marriage

Marriage and Subjective Well-Being

- ■ Married people happier and more satisfied in life than single people

- ■ Quality of marriage is also a significant predictor of subjective well-being

  - – *Positive interactions, more emotional expressiveness, greater role sharing*

  - – *Empathy and gratitude*

- ■ The effect of marriage on well-being is stronger for men

Genes, Hormones, and Marriage

Marriage and Subjective Well-Being

- Same-sex, Opposite-sex
    - *Same factors predict successful relationships/marriages*
        - Mutual trust
        - Good communication
        - Healthy conflict management
    - *One difference*
        - Same sex may suffer more stress if family/relatives are not supportive

The Varieties of Love
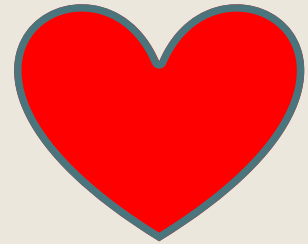
- Explicit theories analyze love in terms of its core elements or dimensions
  - *Many of these theories see love as unidimensional*
  - *As a unidimensional concept, love encompasses attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and motivations*
  - *Most theories view it as multidimensional*

The Varieties of Love

A Two-Factor Theory of Love

■ Fundamental and primary elements:
- *Passionate love*
- *Companionate love*

The Varieties of Love

Passionate love

- The intense arousal that fuels a romantic union

- A state of intense longing for union with another

- It is a complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors.

- Tend to fall passionately in love with people who are relatively good looking, personable, affectionate and similar to ourselves.

- Generally very fleeting

The Varieties of Love

Companionate love

- The soothing, steady warmth that sustains a relationship

- Involves feelings of mutual respect, trust and affection, while passionate love involves intense feelings and sexual attraction.

- Manifested in a strong bond and intertwining of lives that brings about feelings of comfort and peace

The Varieties of Love

The Love Styles: Six styles of love

Eros (passionate)

Storge (companionate)

Ludus ("game-playing" love...emotional manipulation)

Pragma (seek partner with certain conditions, e.g., wealth, physically attractive)

Mania (periods of wonderful highs and awful lows)

Agape (selfless love)

The Varieties of Love

The Love Styles

- Henrick study on dating couples
  - *Happy couples showed similar love styles*
  - *Higher scores on eros—higher relationship satisfaction*
  - *Male are more satisfied with the relationship when women are passionate and altruistic*
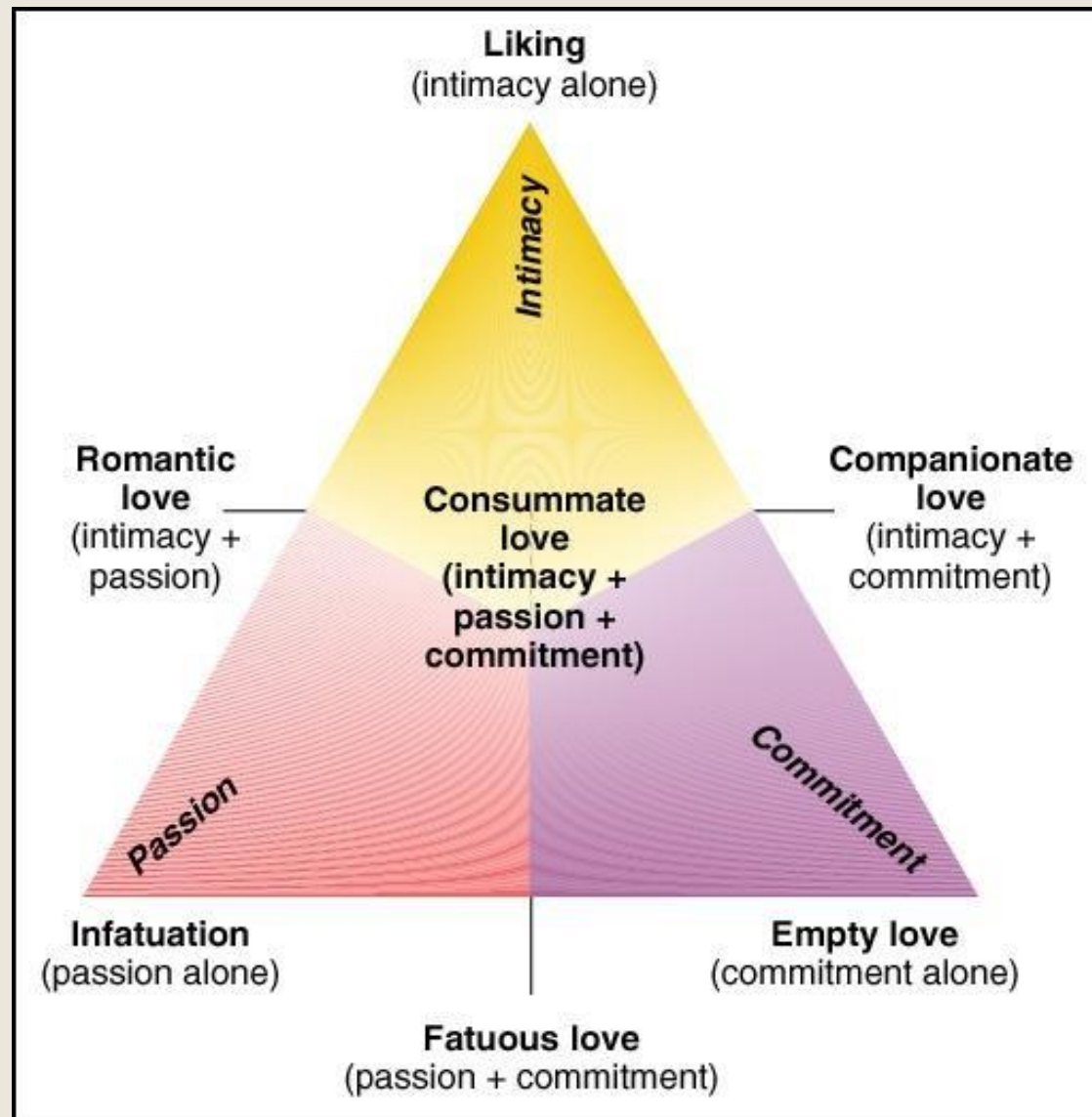
The Varieties of Love

Sternberg's Love Triangle

- Experiences of love based on three components:
  - *Passion: intense emotional response*
  - *Intimacy or liking: warmth, closeness*
  - *Commitment: decision to maintain relationship*

The Varieties of Love

Sternberg's Love Triangle

- Combination of two types of love:
  - *Romantic love (intimacy + passion)*
  - *Companionate love (intimacy + commitment)*
  - *Fatuous love (passion + commitment)*
  - *Consummate love (all three)*

Liking
(intimacy alone)

Intimacy

Romantic love
(intimacy + passion)

Consummate love
(intimacy + passion + commitment)

Companionate love
(intimacy + commitment)

Passion

Commitment

Infatuation
(passion alone)

Fatuous love
(passion + commitment)

Empty love
(commitment alone)

The Varieties of Love

Love as a Prototype or an Ideal

■ Implicit theories of love

   – *View love as extremely personal experience*

   – *Involve comparing our current feelings with a cultural standard or ideal*

■ Core aspects of our prototypes of love seem to be intimacy, passion, and commitment

The Varieties of Love

The Love Hierarchy

- Three levels of hierarchically arranged meanings that people used to describe love:
    - *Qualities people valued in their relationships: Trust, sincerity, mutual understanding, compatibility, fulfillment, sexuality, intimacy, and mutual needs (lowest level)*
    - *Compatibility and passion*
    - *Love (highest level)*

Finding Romance and Love

What Attracts Us to Someone?

- Proximity, physical attractiveness, attitude similarity, and reciprocity

- Physical allure

- The color red

- Ideals of attractiveness differ among cultures

- Similarity of attitudes and values (homogamy)- high similarity with happily married couples

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

"Satisfaction" is not an end state…it is a dynamic process that changes over time in response to situations, stresses, and the personal growth of each person

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Personality Traits

- Surveys asked for highest ranked quality: tend to list healthy personality traits (e.g., confident, gentle, integrity, warm, ability to love)

- Most frequent predictor of poor relationships was neuroticism

  - *Chronic neuroticism often leads to chronic focus on self*

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Personality Traits...Note

- Traits are broad summaries of behaviors over time...not getting at psychological processes in relationship satisfaction

- Love involves more than personality traits

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Communication

- Most couples want more time and better conversations, not more sex

- Bids for attention
  - *Gestures that indicate affection, attention, humor or support*

- The topics couples discuss together may be important to well-being of a relationship

- Meaningful conversations help foster increased relationship satisfaction and happiness

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Satisfied Couples

- More mutually supportive

- Laugh together more

- Withhold comments that may be received negatively

- Agree more about a variety of topics

Dissatisfied Couples

- Exhibit communication characterized by greater disagreement

- Less humor and laughter

- More expression of negative emotions like anger or disgust

- Fewer helpful comments

- More criticism

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

John and Julie Gottman

Longitudinal studies of married couples

Magic ratio for marriages: 5:1

5 positive interactions to one negative needed to maintain a healthy relationship

As ratio approaches 1:1, divorce is likely

5:1 does not mean no arguments...talk about difficult situations with positive interactions of warmth, affection, and humor

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Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Communication: Capitalization

- Capitalization…an example of social support
  - *Helpful to the person sharing, the person listening, or both*
  - *Means revealing positive things about oneself or one's experiences*

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Communication: Capitalization

- Capitalization…an example of social support

  Spouse smiling home from work and says "I was just offered a big promotion at work"

  - *Passive-destructive "did you get dinner?"*
  - *Active-destructive "I'll see less of you"*
  - *Passive-constructive "Nice."*
  - *Active-constructive** "That's great. I'm proud of you. You will be great at it"*

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Communication: Self-Disclosure

- Self-disclosure: Revealing to oneself and others exactly who, what, and where one is
  - *Transparency: live more zestfully because not wasting time/energy disguising true feelings or thoughts*
  - *Involves self-awareness*
  - *Value to intimate relationships, not the person you meet on the street*
  - *Caution: self-disclosure in the workplace*

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Communication: Gratitude, Empathy, and Curiosity

- Gratitude: Helps to maintain and enhance social relationships
  - *Frequent and small better than big and rare*

Relationship Satisfaction: What Makes Them Feel Good

Communication: Gratitude, Empathy, and Curiosity

- Empathy: Social glue to maintain the relationship
  - *Affective: emotional engagement with other's situation*
  - *Cognitive: intellectual awareness of other's situation*

Relationship Stability: What Makes It Last?

- High satisfaction with a relationship does not necessarily translate into long-term stability

- All terminal marriages are not failures
  - *Low quality marriages affect spouse and children*

Relationship Stability: What Makes It Last?

- Surveyed 300 married 15+yrs (ave length 1st marriage is 8yrs; median 11yrs)

- Qualities most important to successful marriage:
  - *My spouse is my best friend*
  - *I like my spouse as a person*
  - *I believe that marriage is a LT commitment*
  - *We agree on aims and goals*
  - *My spouse has grown more interesting over the years*
  - *I want the relationship to succeed*
  - *Marriage is a sacred institution*

Relationship Stability: What Makes It Last?

Research on Stability?

- Friendship is essential

  - *Specific ways couples interact...genuine interest, communication, affection*

  - *Culture of appreciation*

    - Gottman: take 5min/daily express sincere appreciation

- Traits of self-confidence and nurturance

Minding Relationships

- Minding: "reciprocal knowing process involving the nonstop, interrelated thoughts, feelings, & behaviors of persons in a relationship"

- A way of paying close attention to relationships

Minding Relationships

- Five components help enhance closeness, intimacy, caring, and commitment
  - *Knowing and being known*
  - *Attribution*
  - *Acceptance and respect*
  - *Reciprocity*
  - *Continuity*

Minding Relationships

Knowing and Being Known aka"love maps"

■ A desire to know and understand your partner (preferences, habits, memories of important events)

■ Dispositional authenticity

– *Ability to be open, honest with self and in congruence with deepest beliefs*

■ Trait mindfulness

– *Greater awareness of one's partner*

– *Helps increase emotional regulation*

Minding Relationships

Attributions

- Judgment of the causes of partner's behavior

- Fundamental attribution error
  - *Satisfied couples...dispositional and stable attributions for positive behavior, situational, temporary for negative behavior*

- Use of optimistic or pessimistic explanatory styles

Minding Relationships

Attributions: Positive Romantic Illusions: Is Love Really Blind?

- Positive romantic illusions are vital for relationship success

- The Michelangelo phenomenon
  - *Close relationship partners are often active participants in each other's personal development and goal pursuit...not going well, hinder personal development of the other*

Minding Relationships

Acceptance and Respect

■ Realistic acknowledgment of one's partner with honesty

■ Healthy relationships are balance between independence and dependence

■ Gratitude

■ Empathic accuracy and forgiveness

– *Self-compassionate couples displayed more positive relationship behavior*

Minding Relationships

Acceptance and Respect

■ Self-expansion model

– *Motivation to expand concept of self by incorporating qualities of those one feels close to*

Minding Relationships

Reciprocity

- Fair balance of benefits from being together

- Two theories have dominated this aspect of marital satisfaction and stability:
  - *Balance theory*
  - *Social exchange theory*
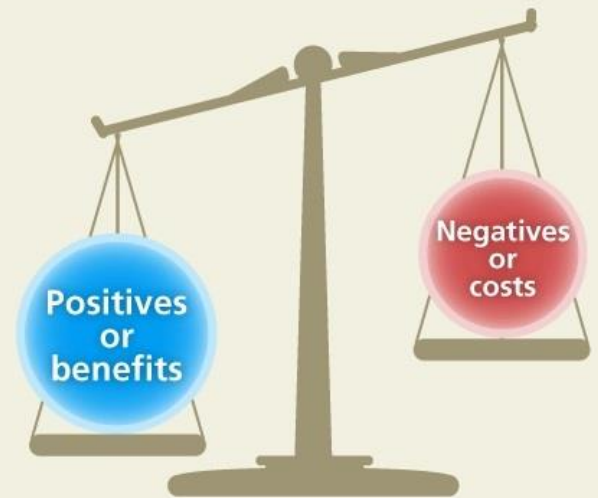
Minding Relationships

Reciprocity: Balance Theory

- How negative emotions are *regulated* is important for stability (not absence of them)

- *Regulated couples*: balanced and predictable
  - *Validating couples: stable and free from undue conflict*

- *Non-regulated couples*
  - *More negative emotionality, more sever problems, less positive affect, lower satisfaction, greater likelihood of ending*

Minding Relationships

Reciprocity: Social exchange theory

- Relationships are an exchange of rewards and costs
  - *Cost-benefit analysis: ratio of positive to negative interactions*

Minding Relationships

Continuity

- Continuity requires adaptability, flexibility, and an ongoing desire to recommit to minding, despite external stresses or an overfamiliarity that can lead to boredom

Minding Relationships

Continuity: Relationships as a Vehicle for Personal Growth

- All relationships eventually experience some difficulties

- Psychological challenges may lead to development of greater psychological maturity in themselves and in relationship

Minding Relationships

Continuity: Virtues and Marital Well-Being

- Relationships need a strong commitment to virtues
    - *Loyalty, courage, generosity, justice*
- Manage and overcome difficulties

Minding Relationships

Continuity: Cuddling, Sex, and Tenderness

- Greater relationship satisfaction for men and women with sexual satisfaction
  - *Sexual desire and activity remain well into 70s and 80s*
- Cuddling builds positivity in romantic partners and perceived as nurturant

Positive Families

- Children have little impact on couple satisfaction
  - *Parenthood may increase life satisfaction when couple is married, over 30, middle class and college educated*

- Family life cycle

- Parenthood

- Psychological boost from child-rearing

Positive Families

What Makes a Flourishing Family?

- Adler believed every child strives for competency in the world and within family

- Psychologically healthy family exhibits four vital characteristics

  - *Warmth and respect among family*

  - *Democratic decision making (no authoritative)*

  - *Rules and practices that encourage emotional maturity and autonomy*

  - *Friendly and constructive relations within family and wider community*

Positive Families

What Makes a Flourishing Family?

- Baumrind: Authoritative parenting style
    - *Reasonable rules, high demands, high communication, high warmth and support.*

- Maintaining continuity in positive caregiving

- Maintaining high but reasonable emotional engagement with their children

Positive Families

The Family Life Cycle

- Marital satisfaction decreases after the arrival of children, satisfaction with parenting roles and other elements of family live rises

- Satisfaction is high during the initial years of marriage

- Empty nest syndrome is a myth

- Staying attuned to each other's lives despite the added stress

- Parenthood as a collaborative effort

What Hurts Relationships?

Conflict

- Primary cause of marital dissolution

- Communication problems are the chief reason given for getting divorced

What Hurts Relationships?

The Demand-Withdraw Pattern and Stonewalling

- Four-step pattern particularly destructive to relationships

- Stonewalling: A passive-aggressive attempt to punish the other person

- Demand-withdrawal pattern of marital communication

Gottman's Multidimensional Therapy Approach

Relationship Undermining Behaviors

1. Criticism

2. Contempt

3. Defensiveness

4. Stonewalling

Replace With Relationship Enhancing Behaviors

1. Complaint

2. Appreciation

3. Responsibility

4. Self-soothing

Gottman 4 Horsemen of Apocalypse

- Criticism

    - *Complaint vs. criticism*

    - *Complaining is normal and focuses on behavior*

    - *Criticism attacks the character of the person*

- Complaint: "You should have told me earlier that you're too tired to make love. I'm disappointed, and I feel embarrassed."

- Criticism: "Why are you so selfish? It was really nasty of you to lead me on. You should have told me earlier that you were too tired to make love."

Gottman 4 Horsemen of Apocalypse

■ Contempt

    – *Often follows criticism*

    – *Person uses "sarcasm, cynicism, name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery, and hostile humor*

■ Worst of the 4 because it communicates disgust to the person it is directed toward, which escalates conflict

Gottman 4 Horsemen of Apocalypse

- **Defensiveness**
  - *When one partner uses contempt, the other typically becomes defensive*

- **Stonewalling**
  - *One partner tunes out the other*
  - *More common in men than women*

THE FOUR HORSEMEN
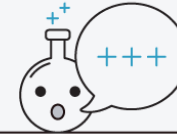## AND HOW TO STOP THEM WITH THEIR ANTIDOTES

CRITICISM
Verbally attacking personality or character.

GENTLE START UP
Talk about your feelings using "I" statements and express a positive need.

CONTEMPT
Attacking sense of self with an intent to insult or abuse.

BUILD CULTURE OF APPRECIATION
Remind yourself of your partner's positive qualities and find gratitude for positive actions.

DEFENSIVENESS
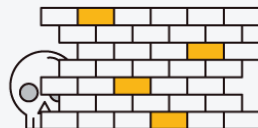Victimizing yourself to ward off a perceived attack and reverse the blame.

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY
Accept your partner's perspective and offer an apology for any wrongdoing.

STONEWALLING
Withdrawing to avoid conflict and convey disapproval, distance, and separation.

PHYSIOLOGICAL SELF-SOOTHING
Take a break and spend that time doing something soothing and distracting.

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How to Nurture Positive Relationships That Last

- The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work (Gottman & Silver)
  - *Enhance your love maps*
  - *Nurture your fondness and admiration*
  - *Turn toward each other instead of away*
  - *Let your partner influence you*
  - *Solve your solvable problems*
  - *Overcome gridlock and move toward dialogue*
  - *Create shared meaning*

How to Nurture Positive Relationships That Last

- Magic 5 hr per week
  - *Work daily on building relationship*
- Focusing on the negatives almost never is productive...rather focus on what your partner is doing right