Love and Intimacy

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I. Defining and Measuring Love
II. Passionate Love
III. Companionate Love

Attachment An emotional bond between infants and their caretakers. Infants are considered to be attached to their caretakers if they appear to be comfortable in their presence, cling to them when threatened, and become anxious if they are separated.

Commitment Decision/commitment refers, in the short term, to a couple's decision that they love one another, and in the long term, to their commitment to maintain that love.

Companionate Love The affection and tenderness men and women feel for those with whom their lives are deeply entwined. Companionate love is a complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors.

Intimacy A process in which couples, who feel close and who trust one another, reveal personal information and feelings to one another and, as a consequence, come to feel cared for, known, and validated.

Passionate Love A state of intense longing for union with another. Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy. Unrequited love (separation) with emptiness, anxiety, or despair. Passionate love is a complex functional whole including appraisals or appreciations, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors.

Scientists distinguish between two forms of LOVE—passionate love and compassionate love. Both kinds of love are based, in part, on the parent/child attachment experience. Researchers interested in passionate love tend to focus on infants' attachments to their caretakers as the prototype of later passionate attachments. Those interested in compassionate love tend to focus on maternal and parental attachments to one another and their children as the prototype of compassionate love. Of course, love relationships can involve both passion and companionship.

I. DEFINING AND MEASURING LOVE

Love is a basic emotion. It comes in a variety of forms. Most scientists distinguish between two kinds of love—passionate love and compassionate love. *Passionate love* is a "hot," intense emotion. It is sometimes also labeled obsessive love, puppy love, a crush, lovesickness, infatuation, or being-in-love. It has been defined as

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The Passionate Love Scale was developed to assess the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of such love.

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Companionate love is a "cooler," far less intense emotion. It is sometimes also called true love or conjugal love. It combines feelings of deep attachment, commitment, and intimacy. It has been defined as

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Psychologists have used a variety of scales to measure compassionate love. One of the most popular scales is the measure of Companionate Love, which includes measures of commitment and intimacy.

Social psychologists have observed that in close, compassionate, relationships, couples' thoughts, emotions, actions, and lives are profoundly linked. The close relationship is one of strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time. Researchers have developed scales to measure how close couples' thoughts, emotions, actions, and lives are profoundly linked. The close relationship is one of strong, frequent, and diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time. Researchers have developed scales to measure how close couples are—i.e., how closely linked their organized action sequences are.

Other scientists have proposed still other typologies of love. Some scientists contended that people could adopt any of six different styles of loving. The Love Attitudes Scale was designed to measure these love styles: *Eros* (passionate, intense, disclosing love), mania (obsessive, dependent, insecure love), *storge* (friendship-based, steady, secure love), *pragma* (practical, logical love), *agape* (altruistic, giving, spiritual love), and *ludis* (game-playing, cool, playful love). Robert Sternberg proposed a triangular model of love. He argued that the different kinds of love differ in how much of three different components—passion, intimacy, and the decision/commitment to stay together—they possess. Passionate love (which he labeled infatuation), for example, involves intense passionate arousal but little intimacy or commitment. Companionate love involves less passion but far more intimacy and commitment. The most complete form of love is consummate love, which combines passion, intimacy, and commitment.

II. PASSIONATE LOVE

A. Predictors of Romantic Attraction

Researchers have identified four factors which affect couples' interactions: "person" factors, "other" factors, "Person × other" factors, and "environmental" factors. Let us consider how the first two factors can affect men's and women's readiness for love and their preferences for various kinds of partners.

1. "Person" Factors

There is evidence that certain kinds of people, at certain times, are especially susceptible to passionate love.

a. Attachment Theory and Passionate Love Mary Ainsworth observed that infants and toddlers form different kinds of attachments to their caretakers. Some infants are securely attached. They are tightly bonded to their mothers. They feel comfortable in her presence. They are confident that she will be there when they need her; that she will support them when they feel brave enough to explore the world. (These infants may also be genetically predisposed to have an even temperament.) Other infants possess an anxious/ambivalent attachment to their caretakers. Their mothers may have been more responsive to her own rhythms than to their infants'. As a consequence, sometimes they "smother" their infants with unwanted affection; sometimes they ignore them. Since these infants have learned they cannot count on their mothers, they tend to be anxious and uncertain in their interactions with her. (Of course, some infants are simply born with a fearful disposition.) Finally, some infants develop an avoidant attachment with their caretakers. Perhaps their mothers generally ignored them. Perhaps the infants were simply lacking whatever it takes to form close relationships with anyone. In any case, such infants are unemotional and unresponsive.

Social psychologists proposed that children's early patterns of attachment should influence their adult attachments. They found that children who were securely attached did tend to mature into adults who were able to trust and depend on those they cared for and who were comfortable with intimacy. Those who were anxious/ambivalent tended to fall in love easily, seek extreme levels of closeness, worry that they

would be abandoned, and have short-lived love affairs in later life. The avoidant tended to become adults who were uncomfortable getting too close and who had difficulty depending on others. There is considerable evidence that childhood attachments do serve as a model for later passionate love relationships.

If passionate love is rooted in childhood attachments, it follows that anything that makes adults feel as helpless and dependent as they were as children, anything that makes them fear separation and loss, should increase their passionate craving to merge with others. There is some evidence that this is so. For example, researchers have found that when men and women's self-esteem is threatened, when they are anxious and afraid, when they feel insecure or are dependent on others, they tend to be especially vulnerable to falling in love. [*See* ATTACHMENT.]

b. Additional Person Factors There are other "Person" factors that affect susceptibility to passionate love. For example, in love, timing is often everything. There are certain times when people are ready for love; times when they are not. If young people are not in a romantic relationship and wish they were, they are especially vulnerable to potential romantic partners. Conversely, if they are already dating someone, they are unlikely to feel much attraction toward others; they may even devalue others in order not to be tempted.

2. "Other" Factors

Most people prefer dates and mates who are reasonably good looking, personable, warm and intelligent, and similar to themselves in background characteristics (such as age, race, socioeconomic class, religion, and educational level), as well as in attitudes and values, and perhaps even more. People reject potential dates who are arrogant, conceited, rude, boring, or consistently make life difficult.

B. The Emotional Consequences of Falling in Love

The previous section, dealing with the roots of passion, has painted a somewhat dismal picture. It focused on the bruised self-esteem, the dependence, and the insecurity that make people hunger for love. When people fall in love with someone and feel loved in return, however, they may well experience intense happiness and excitement. Interviews with lovers suggest that they may experience five kinds of awards. Moments of passionate bliss; feeling understood and accepted; sharing a sense of union; feeling secure and safe; and transcendence. Of course, passionate love may have its costs too. When hopes are dashed, or relationships fall apart, people's self-esteem may be shattered; they may feel lonely and miserable and may experience intense jealousy.

All in all, for most people, passionate love is a bittersweet experience. People from individualistic studies (such as America and Western Europe), which tend to idealize passionate love, generally have a fairly optimistic view of passionate love. They expect it to go well. People from collectivistic societies (such as Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle Eastern countries), generally assume "unrestrained" love is a threat to social order. They tend to be more pessimistic about the possibilities of passionate love.

C. How Long Does Passionate Love Last?

Passionate love is generally fleeting. Researchers surveyed dating couples, newlyweds, and couples married varying lengths of time to ascertain how passionately they loved one another. Initially, it was often passion that drew men and women together. As the relationship matured, however, passion began to fade into the background. After a while, what seemed to matter most was compassionate love, commitment, and intimacy.

III. COMPANIONATE LOVE

A. Evolutionary Antecedents

Theorists have often taken an evolutionary approach to explain the origins of compassionate love. They argued that emotional "packages" are inherited, adaptive patterns of emotional experience, physiological reaction, and behavior. At every phylogenetic level, they pointed out, organisms face the same problems. If they are to survive and reproduce they must find food, avoid being killed, mate, and reproduce. Many theorists believe that companionate love is built on the

ancient circuitry evolved to ensure that animals mate, reproduce, and care for their young. Recently neuroscientists, anthropologists, and developmentalists have begun to learn more about compassionate love.

1. The Chemistry of Love

Neuroscientists have begun to speculate about the biological bases of compassionate love and tenderness. They have identified a hormone, oxytocin, which seems to promote sexual and reproductive behavior and to facilitate affectionate, nurturant, close, intimate bonds between caretakers (usually mothers) and their infants.

2. The Looks, Sounds, and Postures of Love

Some theorists have argued that love's ancient heritage can be read today in the looks, gazes, and sounds of compassionate love. Emotions researchers have found that the universal emotions—such as joy, love, sadness, fear, and anger—reveal themselves in certain characteristic facial expressions. Some speculate that when men and women are feeling compassionate love and tenderness they tend to display traces of the expressions caretakers often instinctively display when they are gazing happily and tenderly at their young infants. They gaze downward (at the child). Their faces soften, and a slight, tender smile may play about their lips.

French psychophysiologists have argued that compassionate love is associated with certain breathing patterns and sounds. Mothers often coo or croon softly with their mouths held near the infant's head. They speculated that such tender maternal sounds become the forerunners of the breathing patterns associated with compassionate love and tenderness.

Desmond Morris argued that after birth, mothers instinctively try to recreate the security of the womb. They kiss, caress, fondle, and embrace their infants; they cradle them in their arms. In the womb, neonates hear the steady beat of the mothers' hearts—pulsing at 72 beats per minute. After birth, mothers instinctively hold their babies with their heads pressed against their left breasts, closest to the maternal heart. When their infants fret, mothers rock them at a rate of between 60 and 70 rocks per minutes, the rate that is most calming to infants. Morris points out: "It appears as if this rhythm, whether heard or felt, is the vital comforter, reminding the baby vividly of the lost paradise of the womb." Of course, in adulthood, these same kisses, tender caresses, and embraces continue to provide security for men and women—unconscious of their early origins.

Anthropologists have observed that primate mothers and infants and adults in all cultures reveal their close attachments in much the same ways. For instance, newborn infants rhythmically rotate their heads from side to side as they root for their mothers' nipples. As adults playfully nuzzle someone they love, they sometimes find themselves using motions, rhythms, and gestures from the distant past: holding the beloved's head and rubbing their lips against the other's cheek with a sideways movement of their head. They argue that such primitive kissing, mutual feeding, and embracing bonds people together.

Now that we have discussed the antecedents of compassionate love, let us focus on what scientists have learned about three of its components—affection and liking, intimacy, and commitment.

B. Affection and Liking

1. Reinforcement Theory

Many psychologists use reinforcement theory principles to explain why people love and like others. According to reinforcement theory, men and women come to care for those who provide them with important rewards and dislike those who punish them. They also come to feel the same way about people who are merely associated with pleasure or pain. For example, people judged members of the other sex to be more physically attractive if they made their assessments while they were listening to pleasant rock music rather than harsh avant-garde tones. Both men and women were more attracted to people they met in pleasant surroundings than to those they met in rooms that were too hot or too cold, too humid or too dry, crowded, or dirty.

Social psychologists contrasted the behavior of happily married couples with those who were distressed. Happy couples generally had positive exchanges. They smiled, nodded, and made eye contact. They spoke to each other in soft, tender, happy voices. They leaned forward to catch one another's words. Distressed couples had corrosive patterns of interacting. They tried to bludgeon one another into agreements by complaints and punishment. They sneered, cried, and frowned at one another. Their voices were tense, cold, impatient, whining. They made rude ges-

tures, pointed, jabbed, and threw up their hands in disgust; or they simply ignored one another. As soon as one partner resorted to these tactics, the other began to respond in the same way, leading to an escalation of reciprocal aversiveness.

Unfortunately, as couples settle into a routine, kind words are often replaced by harsh evaluations, thoughtful courtesies by neglect. For some reason, married couples frequently treat one another worse than they treat strangers.

2. Equity Theory

Couples care both about how rewarding their relationships are and how fair they seem to be.

A few theorists have argued that lovers and marital partners do not really care very much about fairness. A few social psychologists, for example, asserted that couples have very different ideas as to the nature of appropriate behavior in *communal* relationships (such as love relationships, family relationships, or close friendships) as opposed to *exchange* relationships (such as encounters with strangers or business associates). In communal relationships, they argued, couples feel responsible for one another's well-being. They wish to show their love and affection; to help those they love. They expect nothing in return. In exchange relationships, on the other hand, acquaintances do not feel particularly responsible for one another. They care very much about "what's in it for me?"

Most theorists, however, take the equity perspective. Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues, for example, assumed that couples must be careful to ensure that their partners feel loved, rewarded, and fairly treated. Otherwise, love relationships will suffer and possibly dissolve. Persons generally believe that if their partners loved them they would *wish* to treat them fairly; but it doesn't always work that way. If men and women get too much or too little from their relationships for too long a time it leads to serious trouble. In a number of studies, equity considerations have been found to be important in determining who gets into relationships in the first place, how those relationships go, and how likely they are to endure. Researchers have found that couples in equitable relationships are more likely to fall in love and become sexually involved. When couples who were sexually intimate were asked why they had decided to have sexual relations, those in equitable relationships were most likely to say that *both* of them wanted to have sexual intercourse. Couples in inequitable relationships were more likely to admit that sex had not been a mutual decision; often, one person had pressured the other into having sexual relations. It is not surprising then, that couples in equitable relationships had more satisfying sexual lives.

Equitable relationships tended to be happier and more satisfying. When researchers interviewed dating couples, newlyweds, and couples married for various lengths of time, they found that equitable relations were the most comfortable relations at every stage. If lovers gave too much and received nothing in return (not even gratitude), they eventually began to feel uneasy. Did the other really *love* them? If so, why didn't he or she seem to appreciate their sacrifices? The selfish usually began to have their doubts too. What kind of men or women would allow themselves to be made a doormat? Didn't they have any pride? Not surprisingly, those who feel they were receiving less than they deserved from their dating relationships and marriages were especially dissatisfied.

Couples were most committed to their relationships when they felt equitably treated. When undergraduates were asked to write an essay on "Why we broke up," 12% of them mentioned the lack of equity as a precipitating factor. Women were most likely to mention inequity as the reason they wanted out. (Perhaps many women keenly feel the injustice of having to work outside the home and then coming home to work a "second shift" cooking, shopping, doing housework, and caring for children.) Equitably treated men and women have also been found to be especially reluctant to risk their marriages by getting sexually and emotionally involved with someone else.

Researchers disagree as to how important equity is in determining whether couples remain together, separate, or divorce. Most agree, however, that it plays at least some part in such decisions.

C. Intimacy

The word intimacy is derived from *intimus*, the Latin term for "inner" or "inmost." Scientists reviewed the way most theorists have used this term. They found that almost all of them assumed that intimate relationships involved affection and warmth, self-disclosure, and closeness and interdependence. Most people mean much the same thing by intimacy. Some scientists asked college men and women to tell them about times

when they felt especially intimate with (or distant from) someone they cared about. For most people, intimate relations were associated with feelings of affection and warmth, with happiness and contentment, talking about personal things, and sharing pleasurable activities. What sorts of things put an impenetrable wall between couples? For most, distant relationships were associated with anger, resentment, and sadness as well as criticism, insensitivity, and inattention. Men and women seemed to mean something slightly different by "intimacy." Women tended to focus primarily on love and affection and the expression of warm feelings when recounting "intimate moments." They rarely mentioned sex. For men, a key feature of intimacy was sex and physical closeness.

Clinical psychologists developed the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR) to measure intimacy. They identified five types of intimacy: Emotional, social, intellectual, sexual, and recreational intimacy.

1. The Components of Intimacy

The threads of intimacy—affection, trust, emotional expressiveness, communication, and sex—are so entwined that it is almost impossible to tease them apart.

a. Love and Affection Men and women generally feel more love and affection for their intimates than for anyone else; such mutual affection is probably the first condition of intimacy.

b. Trust People seldom risk exposing their dreams or fears unless they know it is safe to do so.

c. Self-Disclosure When men and women are able to reveal their inner feelings and experiences to others, relationships bloom. Caring and trust may be the soil in which self-disclosure thrives, but self-disclosure, in turn, nourishes love, liking, caring, trust and understanding.

Researchers reviewed a series of studies on the "social penetration process." They made two major discoveries: (1) intimacy takes time. As couples began to get better acquainted, they began to disclose more. (2) Acquaintances tend to match one another in how intimate their disclosures are. In some relationships, both participants are willing to reveal a great deal about themselves. In others, both confine themselves to small talk.

Intimates confide two very different kinds of information—feelings and facts—to one another. On a first encounter, acquaintances usually reveal only the bare facts of their lives; they talk little about their feelings. New acquaintances are careful not to reveal too much too soon and not to reveal much more than their partners do. Daters tend to warm up fairly quickly, however. After 6 weeks or so, people are already confiding in one another at about as high a level as they ever will. It is in long-term love relationships that intimates can be *most* relaxed and trusting. Once couples know each other well, the recital of mere facts counts for little; it is the communication of feelings that is critical to dating and marital satisfaction. In long-term relationships, moment-to-moment reciprocity becomes unimportant. Things can wait. When relationships are about to end, however, the pattern of self-disclosure changes. Now, words can be used to wound. In terminal relationships, couples often begin to spew out the ugly accusations that they have kept hidden. They begin to spill out years of hatred, anger, and exaggerated grievances. Couples may begin to talk through the night, trying to figure out what went wrong and if there is any chance to set things right.

d. Nonverbal Communication Intimates feel comfortable in close physical proximity. They sneak little looks at their mates to convey shared understandings, gaze at one another, touch, stand close, and even lean on one another. Of course, people can reveal how alienated and distant they feel from one another via the flip side of these same techniques. If a person feels that a potential date they have just met is moving too fast and they are starting to feel cornered, they can reduce intimacy in several ways—by averting their gaze, shrinking back, shifting their body orientation, or simply by changing the subject and steering clear of intimate topics. We all know how enemies behave when they want to sever all contact. They glare, clench their jaws, sigh in disgust, or walk on ahead.

2. Perspectives on Intimacy

Theorists have taken a trio of approaches to intimacy:

a. Life-Span Developmental Models Developmental theorists have observed that young people must learn how to be intimate. Erik Erikson pointed out that infants, children, adolescents, and adults face a continuing series of developmental tasks. If loved and

nurtured, infants develop a basic trust in the universe. They develop the ability to hope. In early, middle and late childhood, children learn to be autonomous, to take initiative, and to be industrious. They develop a will of their own, a sense of purpose, and a belief in their own competence. The next two stages are those in which we are primarily interested. In adolescence, teenagers must develop some sense of their own identity. Only when adolescents have formed a relatively stable, independent identity are they able to master their next "crisis"—to learn how to become intimate with someone, to learn how to love. Mature relationships, then, according to Erikson, involve an ability to balance intimacy and independence.

b. Motivational Approaches Psychiatrists and psychologists have pointed out that people are *motivated to be intimate*. Developmental psychologists point out that some people are high in intimacy motivation. They tend to be more loving and affectionate, warmer, more egalitarian, less self-centered, and less dominant than their peers. They spend more time thinking about people and relationships, more time talking and writing to others; they are more tactful and less outspoken. They stand closer to others. Not surprisingly, others like them, too.

c. Equilibrium Models Researchers point out that people prefer an optimal level of intimacy. Too much or too little intimacy makes everyone uncomfortable. When people get close to us, we become physiologically aroused. If we feel positive about this arousal we will move closer to them. If it is "too much" we will back off. We literally back up when someone gets too close too fast. We move forward when they seem to be slipping away. Two features of this model are worth noting. First, researchers view intimacy from a dialectical perspective. They see people as constantly adjusting the level of their intimate encounters. Second, they point out that once the intimacy equibilibrium has been disturbed, any of several different techniques can be used to set things right. People differ markedly in how much intimacy they desire. Attaining the "right degree" of intimacy often requires a delicate balancing act.

3. Why People Seek Intimacy

If seems a bit odd to ask *why* people wish for intimacy. When scientists ask men and women what they most desire in life, they generally mention a close intimate relationship. People can feel sad and lonely for two very different reasons. Some lonely people are experiencing *emotional loneliness*; they hunger for one special intimate. Others are experiencing *social loneliness*; they merely lack friends and casual acquaintances. Of the two, it is emotional loneliness that is the more painful. Contentment is better predicted by the existence of intimacy (i.e., lack of loneliness) than popularity, the frequency of contact with friends, or the amount of time spent with acquaintances. Theorists contend that intimacy has the three following major beneficial effects.

a. Its Intrinsic Appeal If people were happily in love, over 90% of them were also "very happy in general." If they were generally unhappy, most thought that love was the one thing that they needed to be happy. So people long for intimacy in and of itself.

b. Its Links to Psychological Well-Being A number of studies document that intimacy and psychological health seem to go hand-in-hand. Intimacy has been shown to be associated with happiness, contentment, and a sense of well-being. Happy (intimate) marriages provide social support.

c. Its Links to Mental and Physical Well-Being A number of medical researches have confirmed that intimacy and mental and physical well-being are connected. Intimate relationships apparently buffer the impact of stress. Intimacy problems are closely linked to many mental health disorders. If persons have a chance to disclose emotionally upsetting material to someone who seems to care, they exhibit improved mental and physical health in follow-up physical examinations. Most of our knowledge about the ties between intimate relationships and physical health comes from studies of the impact of a husband or wife's death on the survivor's mental and physical health. Investigators find that bereavement increases the likelihood of a host of mental and physical problems. Bereavement increases vulnerability to mental illness; produces 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 fatigue); aggravates existing illnesses; causes physical illness; predisposes a person to engage in risky behaviors—

such as smoking, drinking, and drug use; and increases the likelihood of death. Of course, a "close" relationship filled with hatred and strife can be worse than no relationship at all for couples' mental and physical health. [*See* BEREAVEMENT; COPING WITH STRESS.]

4. Why People Avoid Intimacy

Given all the advantages of intimate relationships, why would people ever be reluctant to become intimate with others? Men and women admit that they are hesitant to get too deeply involved with others for a variety of reasons: Some people feared that if they get too close to someone they will end up "stuck" with them; having to take care of someone worse off than themselves. Some people fear that if they begin to confide in others, they will end up feeling worse—aware of how sad, frightened, or angry they really are. Some fear that if they reveal too much about themselves, others will criticize them, be disappointed in them, or get angry at them. Some worried that if a relationship were to end, vindictive dates or mates would confide the innermost details of their lives to subsequent dates, mates, or business associates. Close relationship researchers developed the Perceptions of Risk in Intimacy scale to measure people's fear of intimacy.

5. Are There Gender Differences in Intimacy?

Researchers have observed that there is a gap between men's and women's ideas of what constitutes intimacy. Researchers interviewed 130 married couples at the University of Texas. They found that for the wives, intimacy meant talking things over. The husbands, by and large, were more interested in action. They thought that if they did things (took out the garbage, for instance) and if they engaged in some joint activities, that should be enough. Huston found that during courtship men were willing to spend a great deal of time in intimate conversation. But after marriage, as time went on, they reduced the time for close marital conversation while devoting increasingly greater time to work or hanging around with their own friends. Ted Huston observed:

> Men put on a big show of interest when they are courting, but after the marriage their actual level of interest in the partner often does not seem as great as you would think, judging from the courtship. The intimacy of courtship is instrumental for the men, a way to capture the woman's interest. But that sort of intimacy is not natural for many men. Women complain about men's "emotional stingyness."

Huston suggested a compromise: Couples should try to engage in the sort of intimate conversation which springs spontaneously from shared interests. This requires, of course, that couples share some interests—that they read books, or watch films, or plan trips to Europe together, and so forth.

Researchers pointed out that men are taught to take pride in being independent while women take pride in being close and nurturant. Erik Erikson contended that as men mature, they find it easy to achieve an independent identity; they experience more difficulty in learning to be intimate with those they love. Women have an easy time learning to be close to others; they have more trouble learning how to be independent. There is considerable evidence that men are less comfortable with intimacy than women.

Researchers find that in casual encounters, women disclose far more to others than do men. In our culture, women have traditionally been encouraged to show feelings. Men have been taught to hide their emotions and to avoid displays of weakness. In a study of college students, social psychologists found that women's friendships were more deeply intimate than were men's. Women placed great emphasis on talking and emotional sharing in their relationships. Men tended to emphasize shared activities; they generally limited their conversations to sports, money, and sex.

In their deeply intimate relationships, however, men and women differ little, if at all, in how much they are willing to reveal to one another. Researchers, for example, asked dating couples how much they had revealed to their steady dates. Did they talk about their current relationships? previous affairs? their feelings about their parents and friends? their self-concepts and life views? their attitudes and interests? their day-to-day activities? Overall, men and women did not differ in how much they were willing to confide to their partners. They did differ, however, in the kinds of things they shared. Men found it easy to talk about politics; women found it easy to talk about people. Men found it easy to talk about their strengths; women found it easy to talk about their own fears and weaknesses. Interestingly enough, traditional men and women were most likely to limit themselves to stereotyped patterns

of communication. More modern men and women were more relaxed about talking about all sorts of intimate matters—politics, friends, their strengths and their weaknesses.

Women receive more disclosures than do men. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the amount of information people reveal to others has an enormous impact on the amount of information they receive in return. In any case, both men and women seem to feel most comfortable confiding in women. Modern tradition dictates that women should be the "intimacy experts."

Some authors have observed that currently neither men nor women may be getting exactly the amount of intimacy they would like. Women tend to desire more intimacy than they are getting; men may prefer more privacy and distance. Couples tend to negotiate a pattern of self-disclosure that is bearable to both. Unfortunately, this may ensure that neither of them gets what they really want. Of course, as men and women's roles become more alike, this double standard of intimacy might be expected to decline.

6. A Prescription for Intimacy

Most humans appear to flourish in a warm intimate relationship. Yet, intimacy is risky. What then is the solution? What advice do social psychologists give as to how to secure the benefits of deep commitment without being engulfed by its dangers? A variety of therapists and researchers have developed programs to teach young people intimacy skills. Generally, they focus on teaching men and women four types of skills: (1) encouraging people to accept themselves as they are; (2) encouraging people to recognize their intimates for what they are; (3) encouraging people to express themselves; and (4) teaching people to deal with their intimate's reactions.

D. Commitment

1. Perspectives on Commitment

It is not always easy for people to know how committed they and others are to one another. Researchers have begun to elaborate on how the commitment process works. Researchers proposed that a close relationship's cohesiveness (stability) can be defined as "the total field of forces which act" on the pair to keep them in the marriage." There are three kinds of forces that influence cohesiveness: (1) Attractiveness of the relationship. Is the relationship more (or less) rewarding than the couple expected? The more rewarding and the less costly the relationship, the more stable it will be. (2) Alternative attractions. Is this relationship more attractive than other relationships or than living alone? The more attractive the alternatives, the more likely the marriage is to dissolve. (3) Barriers against leaving the relationship. These are the "psychological restraining forces" that keep people in marriages. They include religious, legal, economic, and social barriers as well as responsibilities to children. Other researchers proposed a similar model to explain who likely will persevere in a relationship as opposed to those most likely to separate or divorce. They argued that the more satisfied couples are, the more eager they will be to preserve their relationships; the more they have invested in their relationships (in time, money, and effort) and the more limited their alternatives, the more reluctant they will be to sacrifice everything by leaving.

Recently, scientists attempted to test the relative importance of the factors that attract people to relationships (love and reward) versus the factors that prevent them from leaving (feelings of commitment and a knowledge that they have invested a great deal in the relationship) in keeping couples together in times of stress. They found that although love and rewards are important, even more important are the commitments couples feel they have made to the relationship and the practical investments they have made in it.

E. How Long Does Companionate Love Last?

Researchers have studied the fate of passionate and companionate love. One researcher interviewed couples married one month to 36 years. Initially, it was passion that drew men and women to one another. As the relationship matured, passion began to fade into the background. "Passion is the quickest to develop, and the quickest to fade," he observed. After a while, what mattered most was companionate love—which comprises commitment and intimacy. It took longer for couples to feel fully committed to their marriages and to become intimate with one another, but in love, these were the things that seemed to last.

This article has been reprinted from the *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior, Volume 3.*

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