

In Love With Love

By Scott Mabe

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Reading

I Am Love by Robert W. Dickinson

I am love.

I am beautiful, yet humble.

I am not proud or boastful.

I demand nothing for myself — I am not selfish.

And though my pockets are empty, I am rich.

I am love. I have wealth beyond measure.

I am love.

I think not of myself, but others.

I am frequently misunderstood, though mentioned often.

I am mysterious and intriguing, yet simple and plain.

I am love. I sacrifice my life for others.

I am love.

If you see me, embrace me.

Take a piece of me, and share me with others.

The more you take of me, the more I will give...

So you can give to others.

I have an endless bounty.

I am love...

I am yours.

Scott Mabe – In Love With Love

It appears that we are in love with love. We celebrate today, Valentine's Day, as a day of love and a time to exchange symbols of love.

And, as the video has just noted, love is not limited by gender, race, disability, age, or religion.

This morning, I will briefly note how our culture, through love songs, romantic movies, biological research and psychological theory, attempts to define and explain love. I will also share some of what I have learned about love from the women and men with whom I worked during 25 years of couple counseling. I will then invite you to share your experiences and what you have learned about love.

Love is difficult to define because we use the word in so many ways. Is love between intimate partners the same love as the love of ice cream or the love of a parent for a child?

While love is one of the most common words we use in everyday life, efforts to explain what love truly is have been elusive... somewhat like trying to describe the wind, which we can only "see" as we observe its effects.

Love songs

What are the two most common words in popular love songs? Baby and love. Does anyone remember the song, "Baby Love" made famous by Diana Ross and the Supremes?

Researchers at a nearby state university have explored the most popular love songs over the past 50 years and their study discovered 12 major key themes. Some of the top themes were desire, loss, pain, breakup, desperation and confusion. This list offers a pretty wide range of feelings, but few of them could be described as happy! Perhaps many love songs are influenced by feelings of lust, infatuation, and dependency which are often confused with feelings of love.

Romantic movies

(Love Story, Romeo and Juliet, West Side Story, Somewhere in Time, Titanic)

What do these popular movies have in common?

They are all romantic movies that emphasize the feelings of intimacy and passion but usually fail to include the element of commitment. Why no commitment? Frequently, the forever love that would have developed between the couple is denied by obstacles such as physical illness and death, racial or social class status, or families that threaten to break their union. Romantic movies depict a love that would have been so much larger than life had it been able to continue. Much like the imaginary larger-than-life fish story and the one that got away!

In Love Story, Jenny dies of leukemia; In Romeo and Juliet, the feuding families lead to the suicide of the lovers; In West Side Story, gang violence leads to the death of Tony; In Somewhere in Time, Richard can only reunite with Elise after his death; and in the Titanic, Jack dies after helping Rose survive the sinking of the ship.

Biological research into love

Biologists see love as being essential for human survival. We need love to live. Dr. Arthur Janov, author of *The Biology of Love*, points out that we are feeling beings long before we are thinking ones. The right hemisphere of the brain is the site of feelings and emotions. The left hemisphere is the site of thinking and planning. While the right hemisphere is largely mature at the second year of life, the left brain is only beginning its maturation at that time. Dr. Janov also notes that neglect, or lack of love, has a serious impact on human ability to survive and develop properly and that infants who are neglected have brains that are significantly different from normal brains.

Biologists have also found that there is a significant increase in the amount of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brains of people who have recently fallen in love. Serotonin is a contributor to feelings of well-being and happiness.

Psychological theory of love

Although the field of psychology has struggled with the question of how to define love, psychologist Dr. Robert Sternberg has developed a triangular theory of love. His theory suggests that love can be seen as a triangle that contains three main dimensions.

The first dimension is intimacy, which is the extent to which your relationship is characterized by feelings of closeness, connectedness, and strong emotional bonds.

The second dimension is passion that reflects the intensity of your desire for your partner, and may take the form of romantic attachment as well as a strong sexual attraction.

The third dimension is commitment that reflects your decision to stay in the relationship. People who are strongly committed to their relationship make a vow to stay in that relationship through thick and thin, and therefore are willing to work hard to keep it going even if the thin outweighs the thick at times.

Sternberg theorized that one type of love, which he called consummate love, includes a high level of all of the three dimensions. He suggests that this is the most complete and satisfying form of love. However it is also an ideal that is difficult to attain.

It is important to remember that love relationships are not static and they continue to evolve and change over time. What the dimension of passion may look like at age 30 probably looks very differently at age 80. At age 30, the picture of passion may feel like fireworks during the 4th of July and at age 80, the passion may resemble the steady warmth of a fireplace. The dimensions of intimacy and commitment also change over time as they develop and mature (like fine wine) for many lovers.

What I have learned about love:

- Love begins with self.

- Lasting love relationships depend on friendship.
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- We don't fall in or out of love.

- Love is healing.

- Love creates energy while hate destroys it.

- Forgiveness is essential to love. (Love does include saying that you are sorry)

- Love does not seek to control or dominate.

- Love requires on-going actions of love.

- Healthy love is much like burning logs that are placed close enough together for warmth, yet far enough apart to breathe.

- Humor is the WD-40 of love. I am sure that most of you are familiar with the product, WD-40, but for those of you who are not, WD-40 is an industrial lubricate that helps to release rusty and stuck things like nuts and bolts. Humor, much like WD-40, can also help love relationships that have become neglected (rusty) or deadlocked (stuck).

Ending quote: "All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt." - Charles M. Schulz

