

International Conversation Café

Lifestyle Topic: Love, Loving, and Lovers

What exactly happens to the brain when we are in love?

The following is quoted from an interview with Dr. Cacioppo who discusses what exactly love does to the brain, how to fight loneliness and how love is, literally, a product of the imagination.

The New York Times, By Hope Reese April 15, 2022

When we're falling in love with someone, the first thing we notice is how good it feels. It's because the brain releases feel-good neurotransmitters that boost our mood. When we find love, it is like biological fireworks. Our heart rate is elevated, our levels of the so-called love hormone oxytocin are rising, which makes us feel connected. Our levels of the hormone and neurotransmitter norepinephrine are spiking, which makes us lose track of time; our levels of adrenaline rise, which expands the capillaries in our cheeks and makes us flush.

Meanwhile, our levels of serotonin, a key hormone in regulating appetite and intrusive anxious thoughts, fall down. So when we are in love we might find ourselves eating irregularly or fixating on small details, worrying about sending "the perfect text," "saying the perfect words" and then replaying the text or the phone call over and over again in our head.

Then, when we start feeling a deep sense of calm and contentment with our partner, brain areas are activated that trigger not just basic emotions, but also more complex cognitive functions. This can lead to several positive results, like pain suppression, more compassion, better memory and greater creativity. Romantic love feels like a superpower that makes the brain thrive.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/15/well/mind/love-brain.html>

Read the following grouped questions. Invite each other to pick one of the questions to answer and then invite someone else to answer one of the questions.

What is love according to you?

Have you ever been in love? Please share if comfortable.

What do you value or think is essential (meaning without this the relationship is canceled), in a person for you to love? (appearance, humor, education, loyalty, money, or other qualities)

What makes us fall in love with a person?

How important is it to be "loved in a romantic way" by someone in this world?

Is 'Love at first sight' a real thing? Explain.

Who or what has taught you the most about love?

Is it possible to love someone and hate them at the same time? Explain.

Romantic quotes:

Read the following quotes and answer one of the questions in the group.

- "If I had a flower for every time I thought of you, I could walk through my garden forever." — *Alfred Tennyson*
- "Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down." — *Oprah Winfrey*
- "I love you not because of who you are, but because of who I am when I am with you." — *Roy Croft*
- "If I know what love is, it is because of you." — *Hermann Hesse*

How do these quotes resonate with you? Which quote do you like best?

Would you use any of these quotes in a letter to someone you had romantic feelings for?

Why do people have difficulty verbally expressing their love to others?

How do you express love to your:

- *Parents?*
- *Your best friend?*
- *The person you are romantically linked to?*

What is your love language? (what communicates love to you?)

Is 'love' and its' importance more of an American fascination or is it worldwide?

An International Perspective on Love

English only has one word for love, many languages have several words for love. For example, ancient Greek has these words: Eros = romantic love, Phileo = friendship type love, and Agape = unconditional love or God-like love.

Read the questions in groups of three and choose one of them to answer.

How do you say "I love you" in your 1st language? Is this said often in your culture?

Who loves you the most in this world?

Did your family verbalize love for each other? How did they show they loved each other?

How important is love in a marriage?

Is love in marriage more important than respect?

Is love necessary for a happy marriage?

Do you agree with this statement; "Love covers a multitude of sins." Explain your answer.

Do you believe God loves you? (and vice versa—Do you love God?) Why or why not?

How important is this answer for your life to be happy?



