ROMANCE AIN'T DEAD

It's just a bit confused!

When you've absolutely, positively had enough of **bad dates, bad sex** and **bad relationships**, read this and put an END to **bad romance**!

Stephanie Priest

Introduction

Hello lovely you

I'm Stephanie, (that's me up there) and if you've picked this eBook then perhaps you're in the same dark place I was a couple of years ago – lamenting over yet another 'failed' relationship which ended after only a few months and signing up to yet another dating site (or 3)!

I had been nice hadn't I, an understanding (and passionate) girlfriend?

Why did I get ditched?

And why did I feel so rejected, sad, angry, frustrated, humiliated, utterly confused and so completely bewildered…and physically sick?!

Sound familiar?

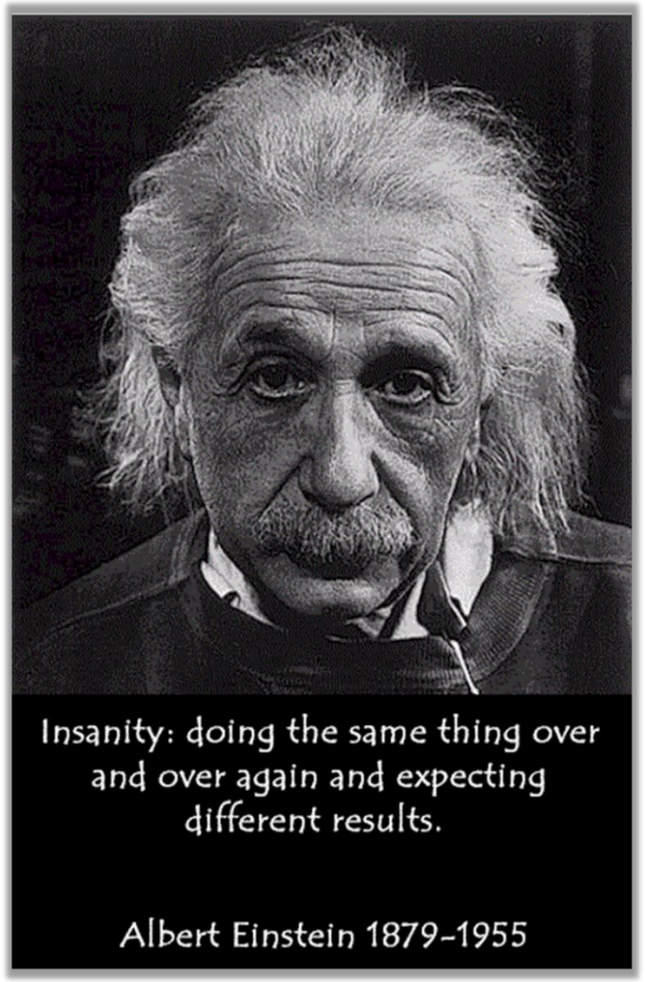
I went through the usual cycle of anger; I blamed the world, blamed my upbringing, blamed the guys, blamed the dating sites in fact, I blamed everything and everyone.

One day, as I looked back over recent events, I began to see a **pattern** to my relationships, not just my romantic relationships but my friendships too and I saw a pattern to my responses as well.

Despite my anger, my upset and fear, I faced the painful truth that it was not all 'them'.

Something had to change.

And I realised the change had to start with me.



The more I talked about feeling confused and frustrated with dating,
I found I was not alone.

The more I talked of wanting some old fashioned romance but,
felt WRONG for wanting it,
I saw I was not alone.

The more I talked about the utter bewilderment of using dating sites
(the main way to find romance these days it seems),
I realised I was SO not alone!

I wanted to understand why relationships caused me so much heartache and why dating, let alone **finding** a mutual love interest, was more difficult than ever before.

So I researched, I studied, I talked, I listened and I wrote stacks of notes and it started to really make sense, then I put the theory into practice and amazing things happened!

I began to tell others about it and wonderful things happened for them too!

Eventually, I wrapped it all up into this ebook and I truly, 100%, I-kid-you-not believe that...

Romance Ain't Dead... it really is just a wee bit confused!

Romance Ain't Dead!...

will help you see the multitude of influences that drive and affect romance. It will help you to understand your thinking, your dating, your loving, your romancing and why you need to identify those unhelpful thoughts so you can change them to ones that will improve your life.

ALL aspects of your life, not just your love-life.

Because when you think better, you feel better and when you feel better, you feel happier.

And I really, REALLY do feel much happier.

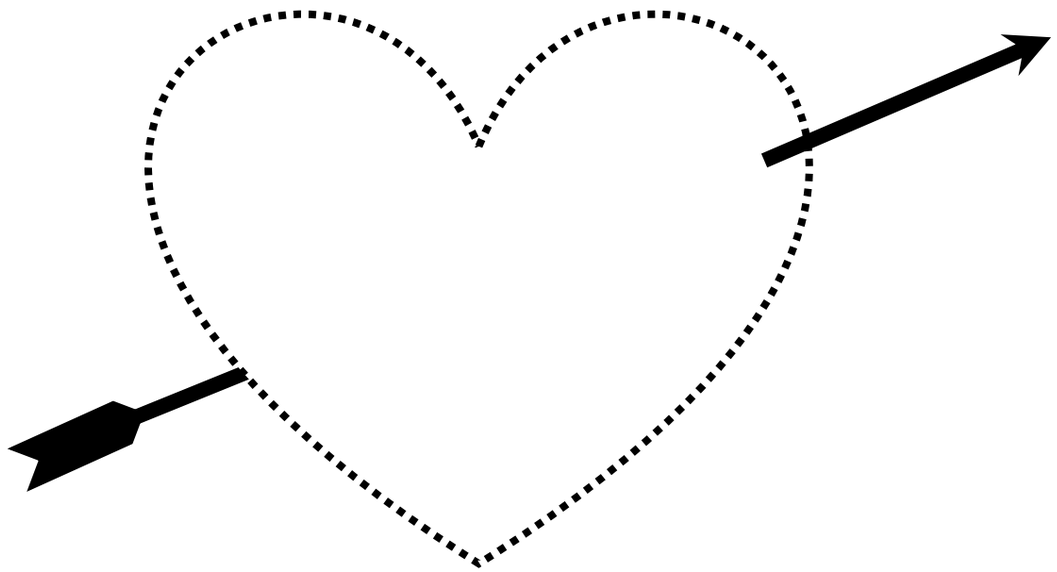
Happier than I've ever felt, I feel free, empowered, sassy and savvy!

*LIFE: Lovely, Interesting, Fun, Experiences

I aim to cast the lightest of touches on a variety of topics; neuroscience, biology, chemistry and psychology… to help you understand why we do what we do but, in terms that are easy to digest.

It's to give you an overview of all the influences that affect and drive romance through an amazing cycle of external influences, internal memories, our unique viewpoints and our hormones.

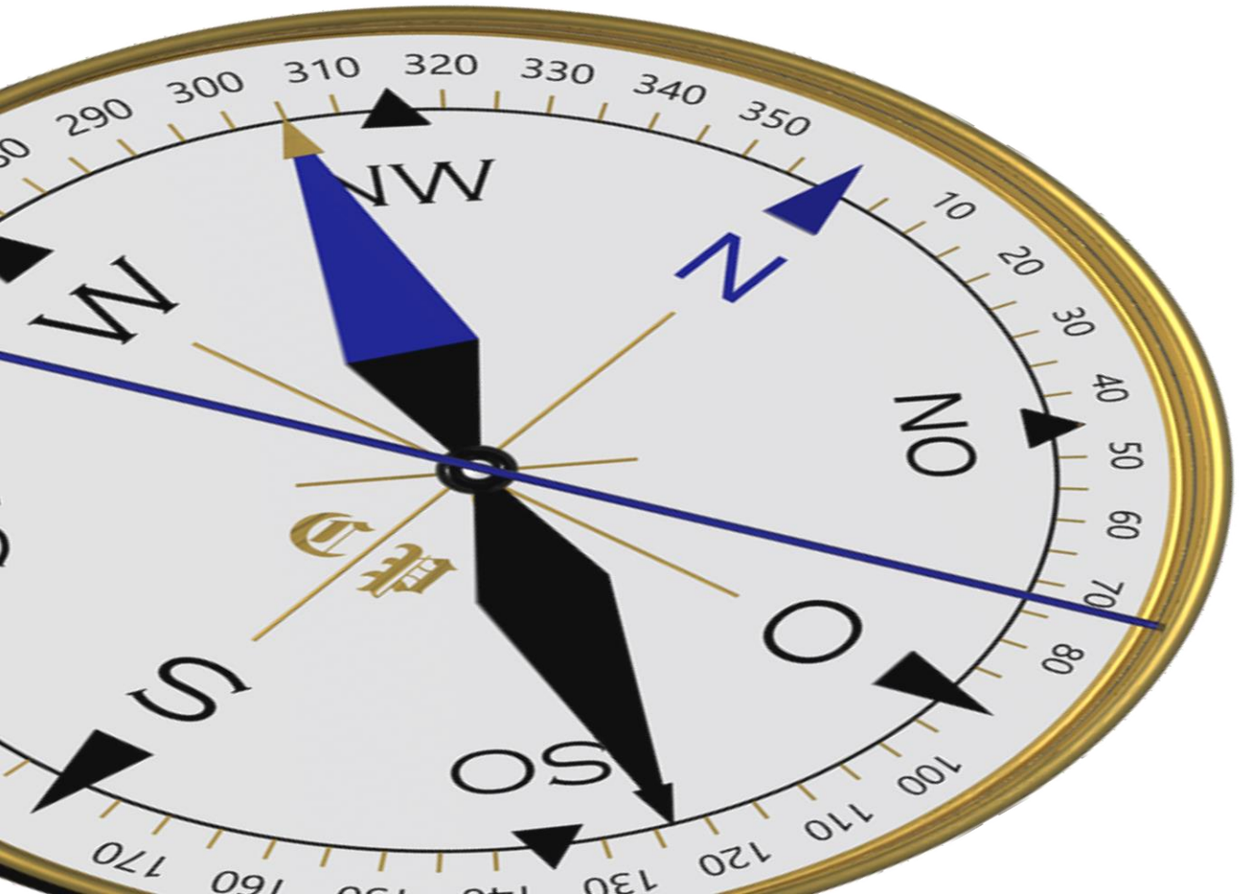
It offers an overview on how we connect to ourselves and why we get connected to each other.



And, the science of **how** and **why** we want to fall in love, form bonds, get joint mortgages, raise kids (or buy a puppy) and why **romance** is STILL such a vital part of the human cycle and is very much ALIVE.

Despite living in a world of sat-navs, many of us are finding ourselves a little lost when it comes to love and romance.

Let’s face it…



…trying to find love in this hectic, digital, cyber-dating, clickety-click, smartphone era can be confusing, bewildering, perplexing, exhausting and demoralising…

Yep, been there!

Pssst, guess what?

there are new ROLES
and new RULES,

we need new GOALS
and new TOOLS!©

"THE SECRET OF CHANGE IS TO FOCUS ALL OF YOUR ENERGY, NOT ON FIGHTING THE OLD, BUT ON BUILDING THE NEW."

— SOCRATES

Change is Good

Like me, I'm sure you're aware that making changes is not always an easy journey but, it is usually worth it.

Facing some home truths (and personally, I REALLY have) can be uncomfortable at times however, the truth, when confronted, is much easier to deal with than those pesky hidden demons.

But first

Please read this next bit, it's really important.

Contained in the following pages you'll find quite a few theories and quotes, all backed up by some extremely clever people in their respective fields of expertise.

I have NO desire to stereotype men or women, or anything or anyone else for that matter because WE ARE ALL UNIQUE AND INDIVIDUAL.

But we MUST (for sanity's sake) accept that despite being unique, we do have some things in common, especially in the male/female arena.

The comments made in this book are NOT meant to insult or offend but, merely to demonstrate some of the differences between the sexes and how these differences affect us all to some greater or lesser degree.

Nor does this eBook, or I as its author, claim to tell you anything that isn't already out there in libraries, on the magnificent World Wide Web or in the wisdom of people who have seen something of life before you or I were even born!

It does however, aim to briefly **bring together** information (with a healthy dose of humour) which shows how human physiology, chemistry, biology, sociology, neurology and a whole host of other 'ologies' inform **why** we are, **how** we are and where **love** and **romance** fit in and how you can get more **romance** in your life!

Let's begin . . .

Chapter 1

That Was Then…

Only a few decades ago, sex before marriage was still frowned upon, divorced women were stigmatised and equal pay was still a dream yet to be realised!

People knew what was expected of them; men were the breadwinners, house-providers and held the majority of managerial and executive jobs.

Women were in charge of child rearing and home-making. They were financially dependent on their spouse and were not required to work after childbirth.

Each had their own role and, if respected and appreciated, all went smoothly.

The World Wars were witness to role-reversal *en masse* as women had to take over the jobs previously held by men whilst the men were away fighting the wars.

Even though women returned to their previous roles after the war, they'd had a taste of change and wanted more.

The ensuing decades played host to a cultural revolution that saw many women pushing at the boundaries previously imposed upon them to pursue careers outside the home. The introduction of the contraceptive pill in 1960 also gave some women a high degree of control over their own fertility.

Since the 1990s there have been tremendous changes in attitude, economy and domestic roles. More women are aiming for and achieving financial independence.

"According to 2011 research, currently 46 per cent of the UK's 376,000 millionaires are women.
The same source also suggests that this figure will increase to 53 per cent by the year 2020."

Financial independence now means women no longer have to secure a mate for income, accommodation or even fertilization! For some single parents, having their home and family already means they don't require a partner to provide these things for them, especially if that biological clock has ceased ticking.

So in this world of increased female independence and role-reversal, many people are left wondering what the heck to do in the **romance** arena. Exactly who is supposed to wear the trousers these days?

Should women be more like men, should men be more like women? Are we supposed to morph into a homogenised Man/Woman being?

Many **profiles** on the **dating sites** and portrayals the media suggest that men are not always sure how a modern woman will react if he chooses to adopt a traditional or dare I call it 'old fashioned' male role; insisting on paying the bill, opening doors, arranging dates… *personally I love this, I don't feel bought, I feel special!*

Likewise, women appear to want a man who not only goes shopping for shoes but actually enjoys it. They want a partner who is 'sensitive', will talk to them AND give up football at the weekend and still be manly enough to fix the car and house and fight for them if the situation arises!

People's needs and expectations have changed.

But it appears that men still want to be the romantic hero.

> *"Men want to be able to step in and be more masculine whenever they can, especially in this economy and paying for dinner, fixing a broken door and planning dates are ways they can feel like a source of strength for a woman. It's not that he wants to keep his 'little lady' in her place but that he simply wants to make her happy and perhaps fulfil his own gender role as a knight in shining armour."*

Benjamin Karney, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology – University of California at Los Angeles.

And what about the modern, independent woman?
Does independence mean that men and old-fashioned romance are redundant?

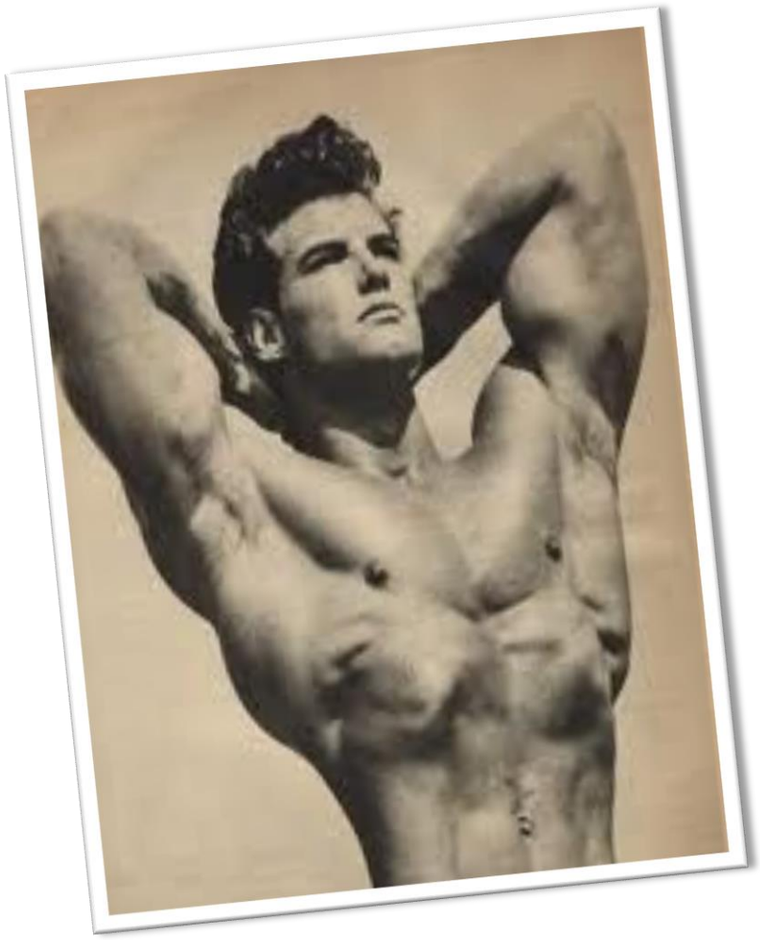
Not really, it would seem:

> *"A dirty little secret is being kept by many smart, independent women: In relationships, they'd prefer not to wear the pants. In fact, they long for their men in love to kick it old-school by, say, opening the car door, picking up the dinner tab (at least in the early days of dating), and eventually, asking Dad's permission for their hand in marriage.*

> *"Women work hard to be respected and taken seriously in so many areas of their lives, and some may feel as if they're betraying their 'strong female' identity by adopting old-fashioned romantic conventions in which the man is, in some ways, playing a dominant role,"*

Tara M. Emmers-Sommer, Ph.D., a professor of communication studies at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas.

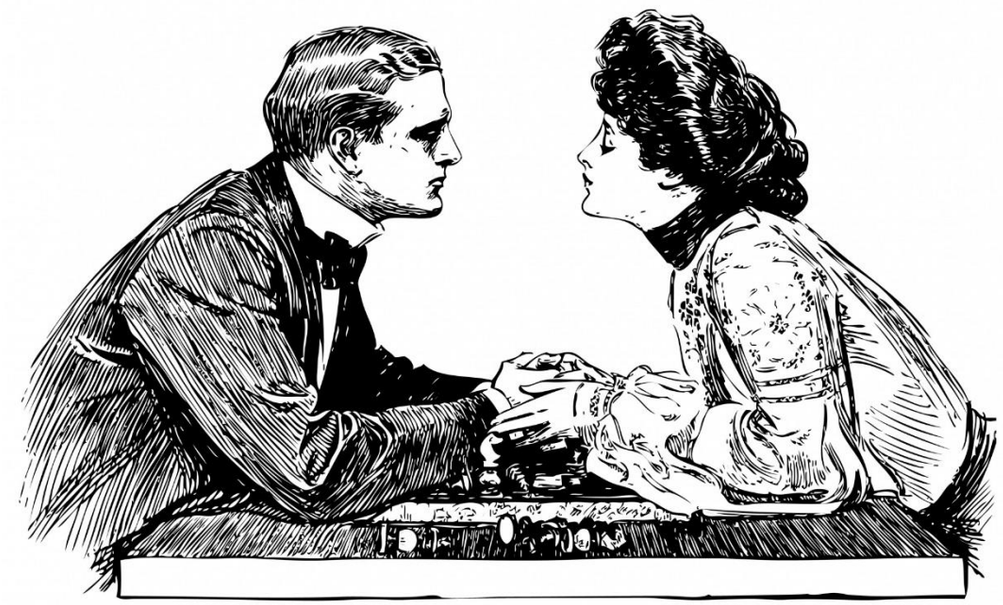
Helen Fisher, Ph.D., a professor of anthropology at Rutgers University in New Jersey and author of *Why We Love*, writes:



"Like all other animals, humans evolved to ensure healthy offspring. Millions of years ago, women wanted to mate with strong, resourceful, stable partners who could help provide for and protect their children. And although it has been a long time since women have needed men to support them financially, the cues that indicate those same qualities are still innately attractive to women."

Maybe we're not so different from our grandparents after all. Perhaps, for many people, we still want those old-fashioned values…but with modern perspectives.

Historically, the dating terrain has been difficult enough to navigate. Throw in some confusion about whether your date wants to be the strong alpha-male or a strong alpha-female, and you'd better arm yourself with a bomb detector before you step on a love landmine and blow yourself out of the romance before the waitress has even taken your order!



Ultimately, It comes down to **individuality**. Finding out what **you** like and want and being with someone who is **compatible**.

All too often we try to mould someone we fancy into our idea of ideal. Think about it, if you choose a suitable partner in the first place, then why try to change them? Likewise, someone who tries to change you beyond your comfort zone is best avoided.

Chapter 2

And This is Now

NEW ROLES
&
NEW RULES

Times...they are a 'changing

People just don't socialise or interact like they did 10 or 20 years ago. We have become more insular, communities are disappearing or just not getting formed and the local pub, once the hub of the community in the UK, is rapidly disappearing by the week.

Folk would meet and often gauge the object of their desire by their friends, their drinking habits - at least you could see what they really looked like instead of hiding behind a 10 year old, digitally enhanced photo!

We live in a new, techno-world of virtual friends, e-commerce, digital-dating and even online sex sites where partners are selected for intimacy like shopping for groceries.

Despite having a gazillion ways to **contact** each other, we are rapidly losing the art of **communicating** with one another, both in and out of relationships.

We spend more time than ever before 'talking' (or shouting) in the social media arena, but less time listening.

When we're bombarded with status updates, emails, texts, Tweets, adverts, videos, voicemails and blogs, it's easy to get overloaded with other people's opinions and switch off.

Back in 2006 when I joined my first internet dating site it was taboo. Any discussions about internet dating were conducted in hushed tones, behind hands, in dark corners and with a little twinge of embarrassment.

Now, it is *de rigueur* to be on not just one but several.

Whatever your penchant, there is a site (or several) dedicated to connecting you with others who share your passion.

Internet dating can help narrow the margins but they come with their pitfalls. It is possible, and fun, learn to navigate the dating sites. But ALWAYS use them with common sense and a healthy degree of caution.

The other big problem with dating sites and the influx of ‘dating’ and ‘meet up’ apps is that they encourage the ‘throwaway’ mindset!

Using apps where you swipe left or right to accept or decline further communication with someone is essentially like supermarket shopping - for someone to love!

So, the world has changed but, have we?

Do we still **crave** love?

Do we still **yearn** for that special someone in our lives?

Have we given up on relationships, marriage?

There are some staggering statistics out there that say NO,
we have NOT given up on these things.

People DO crave to be in love
People DO yearn to meet someone special…and stay together.
And people DO still believe in marriage.

"In 2011, the provisional number of marriages in England and Wales increased by 1.7% to 247,890, from 243,808 in 2010"

ONS Org – Marriages in England and Wales

"Online dating is now one of the most popular ways to meet a new partner and there are more than 1400 sites in the UK alone, catering for people from all walks of life and interests."

The Daily Telegraph – 20 Most Useful Dating Sites

Many, many thousands of people are still getting married each year.

And millions upon millions of people are members of or have used a dating site to meet someone.

Yes, people are **still** searching for love!

Chapter 3

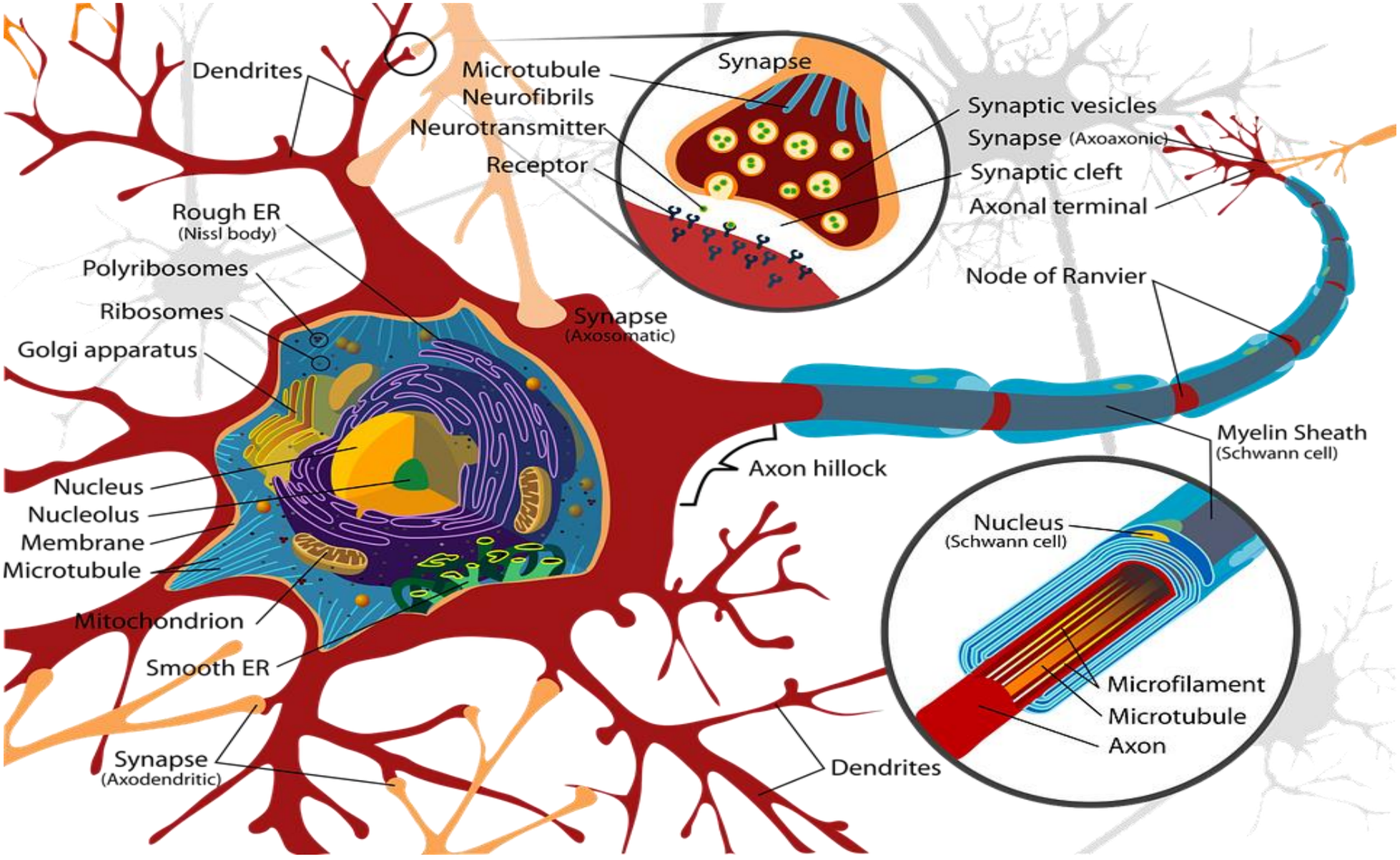
A Brief Encounter with Science

OK, so now we've seen that as a species we still like and want love.
We love companionship, flirting, dating, relationships and togetherness.

What we'll look at next is WHY.
To understand the WHY, we need to understand how we operate biologically and physically.

Our Brains

The scientific bit, don't worry you won't be tested on this! This diagram shows the overall function of a vital part of our brain. The brain is a computer, a grey squishy, organic, AMAZING supercomputer.



One of the components is the **neuron**

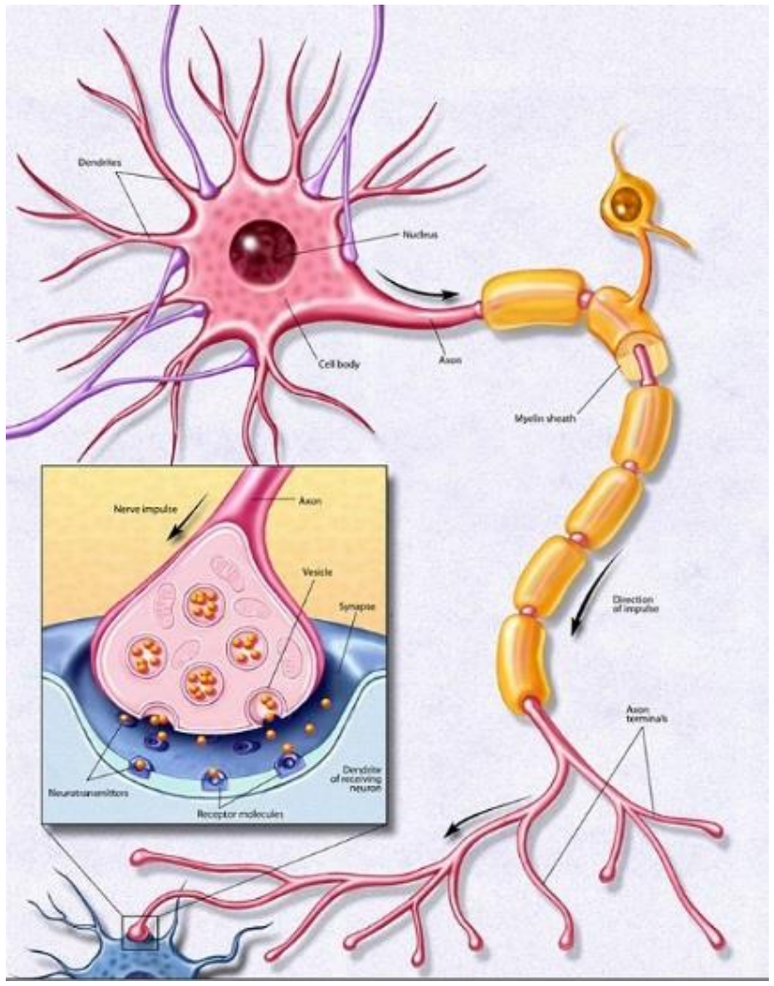
A **neuron** is a cell.

Tiny and invisible to the naked eye, in fact you could fit approximately **50** neurons on this full stop.

Millions of neurons in our brains, millions of dots.

In fact, there are approximately **100 billion** (100,000,000,000) neurons in the human brain!

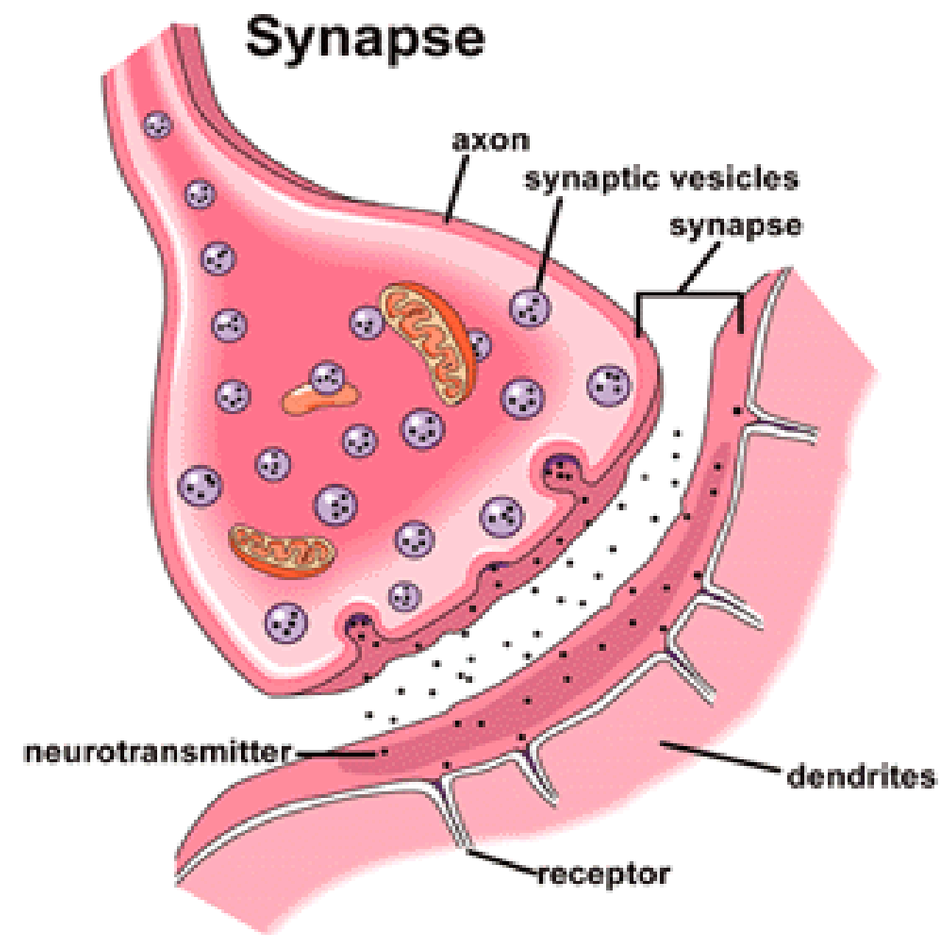
It processes and transmits **information** through chemical and electrical signals as a result of your body's different stimuli: touch, sight, sound, etc.



Neurons emit **neurotransmitters.**

Neurotransmitters

The **neurotransmitters** are small molecules that transmit nerve signals (impulses) from one neuron to another via the **synapse.**

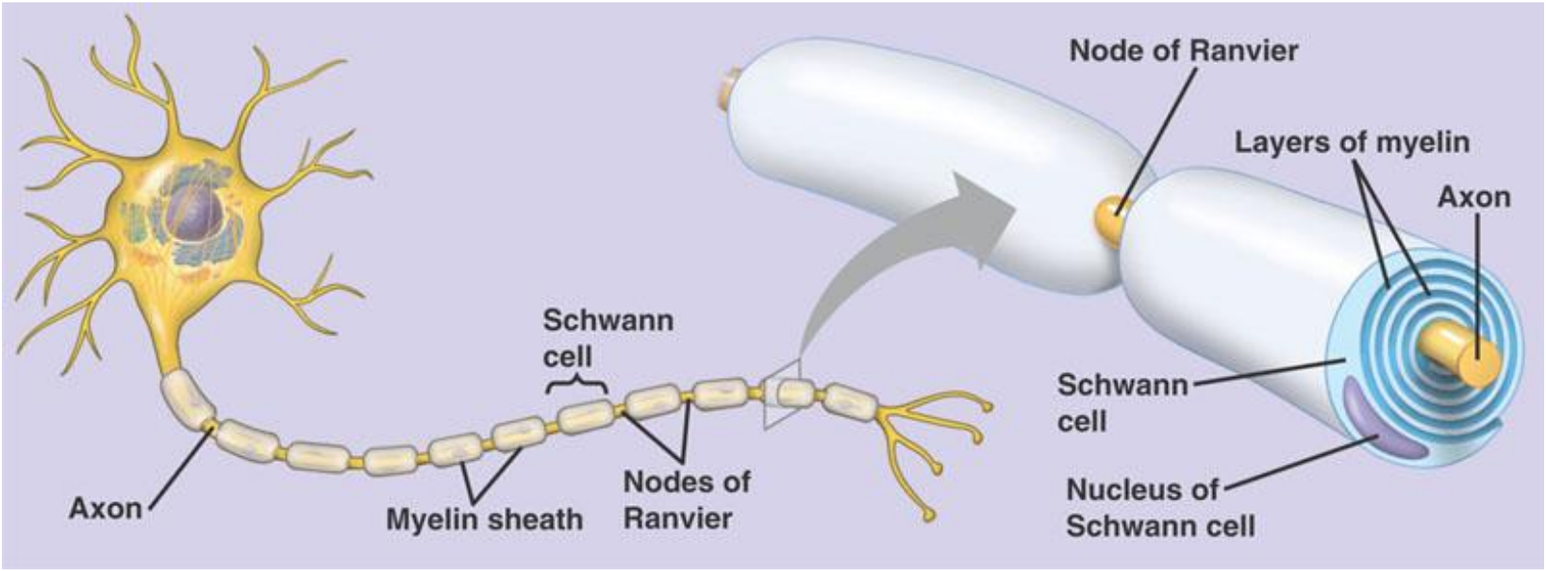


Think of it like the in-flight re-fuelling tentacle on aeroplanes.

The brain uses neurotransmitters to tell your body what to do. They tell your lungs, heart and stomach to do their jobs, for example (and you thought it just 'happened').

The signals travel along from neuron to neuron via the **axon**.

Connection



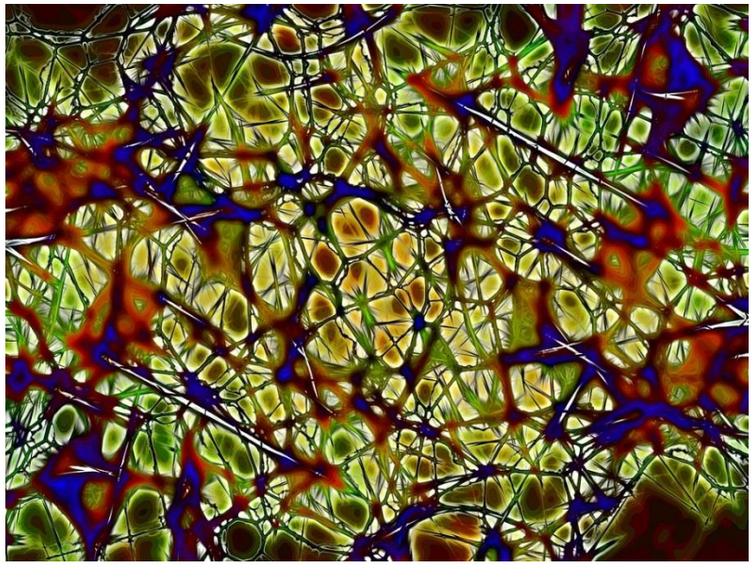
The **axon** is the fibre along which the impulse is conducted. It is coated with a fatty layer called **myelin** which acts as an insulating sheath.

Myelin is very important.

It helps to **preserve** and **speed up** the lines of communication to and from the other neurons.

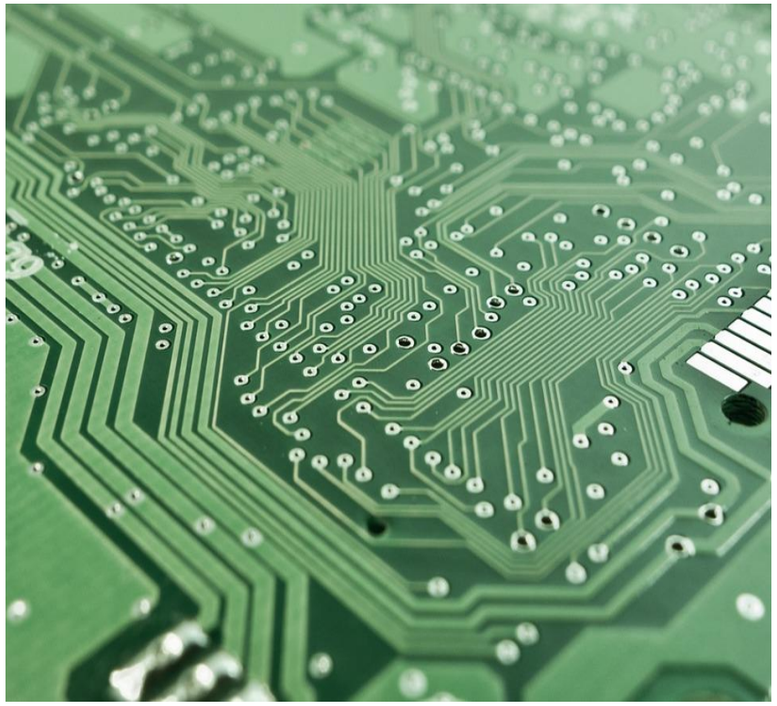
Networking

When **neurons** in your brain connect to other **neurons** via the **neurotransmitters** and the **synapse**, they form a **neural network**.



Like a dot-to-dot picture.

The strings of these **neural networks** carry a particular set of instructions; like cables to and from our electrical appliances or like the signal from a remote control.



Or like the circuitry inside the device you're using to read this!

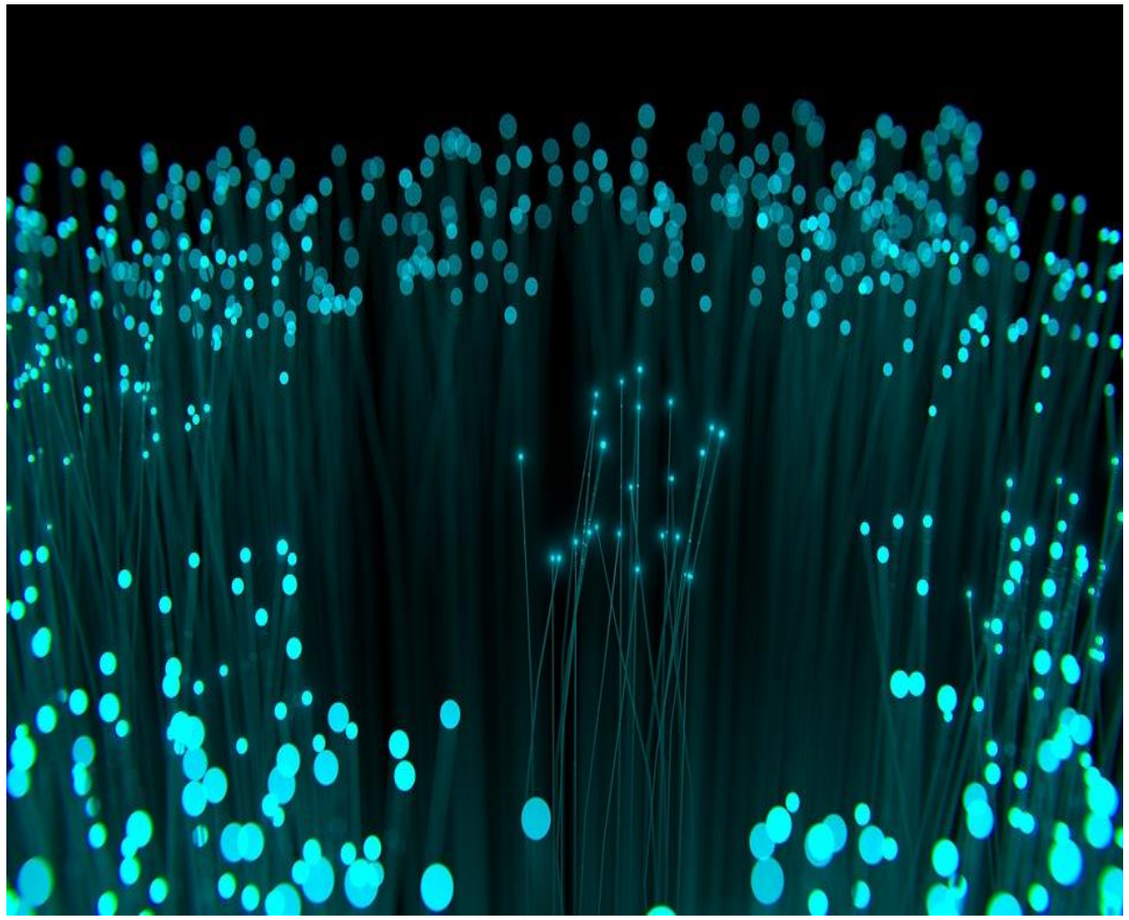
Whatever you press (or swipe or click) in a moment to move onto the next page of this eBook, a signal will be sent from the sensors under the keyboard or the screen.

The impulse travels along a pre-determined set of circuits and microprocessors which make the page move on your screen.

The neurons all work together on your body to instruct your physical, sensory, mental and emotional functions.

The more times the neurons get stimulated and the neural pathways get used, the thicker the myelin coating, the **stronger** the **connection** and the **quicker** the messages are transmitted.

Like superfast Broadband versus the old, slow 'Dial Up' system –



Habit

At first, when we learn something new the neural pathway is faint. But with continued use the pathway becomes clearer, faster and more robust. This becomes and feels automatic – it becomes a **habit**.

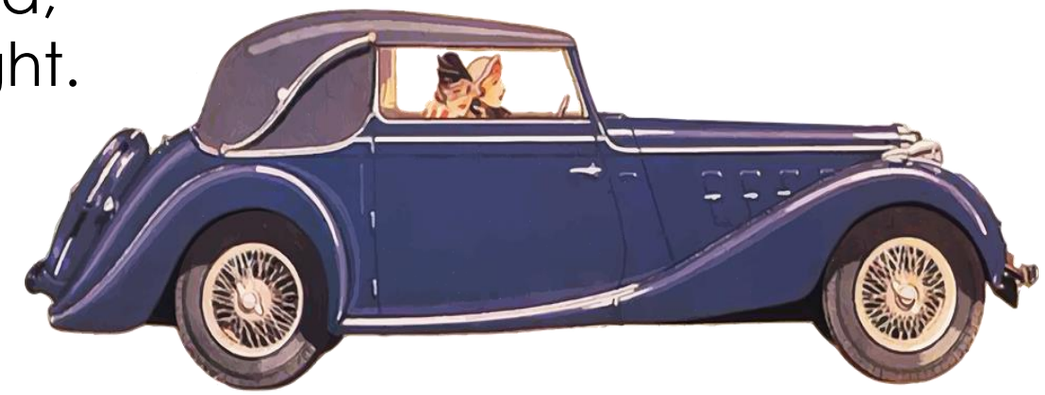
These habituated thoughts travel so fast and often unconsciously that we often don't question why we do things, we just do them!

Like walking, talking or driving maybe?

Have you ever arrived at your destination and wondered how you got there? Do you even think about which foot depresses the accelerator or which gear you need to be in?

Is it all automatic now, second nature, as easy as breathing?

Yet all of these things had to be learned, now executed without conscious thought.



Let's take a well known habit like nail-biting. Most people I've met who bite their nails excessively usually wished they didn't.

So why can't they stop?

Because the behaviour is **hard-wired** into their brains. The circuitry, the neural pathways are programmed to perform the function '**BITE**' before '**NOT bite**'.

It's the well-worn path, easier and faster to navigate than wandering onto unfamiliar terrain.

We think we think!

So we **think** (!) we're in control of our feelings and thoughts but, it is our **neurons** and **hormones** which influence both **thinking** and **feeling.**

The brain is the body's CPU.

It is CONSTANTLY churning out signals to move us towards our goals.

Chapter 4

‘Chemistry’ or Chemicals

We often use these words to describe those heady, intoxicating feel-good emotions we experience around someone we're attracted to.

"But we've got such good chemistry"

"The chemistry is electric"

or

"There's NO chemistry at all"

We'll look at how the body's actual chemicals influence how we **feel** towards someone and even how we **see** someone. We'll also explore why it's important to understand the difference between the words **chemistry** and **chemicals.**

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What Stimulates the Neurons?

It's a cycle; initially neurons get activated as a result of stimulation from a variety of senses: what we see, hear, smell etc. A good example is the 'fight or flight' reaction.

Scenario: You are suddenly startled

and feel the **sensation** of fear.

The neurons send out messages to the relevant cells:

- dilate pupils (to expand your vision),
- increase muscle tension (ready to spring into action),
- make heart beat faster, increase blood pressure (required for a burst of energy).
- increase perspiration, empty the bowels and bladder (dispose of unnecessary weight!)

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You body receives these signals to prepare for speed and survival. The external stimuli causes your internal reaction based on primitive genetic blue-printing and/or memories.

Our prior experiences, instincts and knowledge will fire up the relevant neurons leading to the release of appropriate hormones. These cause a reaction or response from the senses, muscles, cells, other hormones…and thoughts.

Where **romance** is concerned, when you are physically close to someone you're attracted to or love or even **imagine** being with them (your memories or desires), your **brain** will activate the neurons and neural networks to release the relevant **hormones**.

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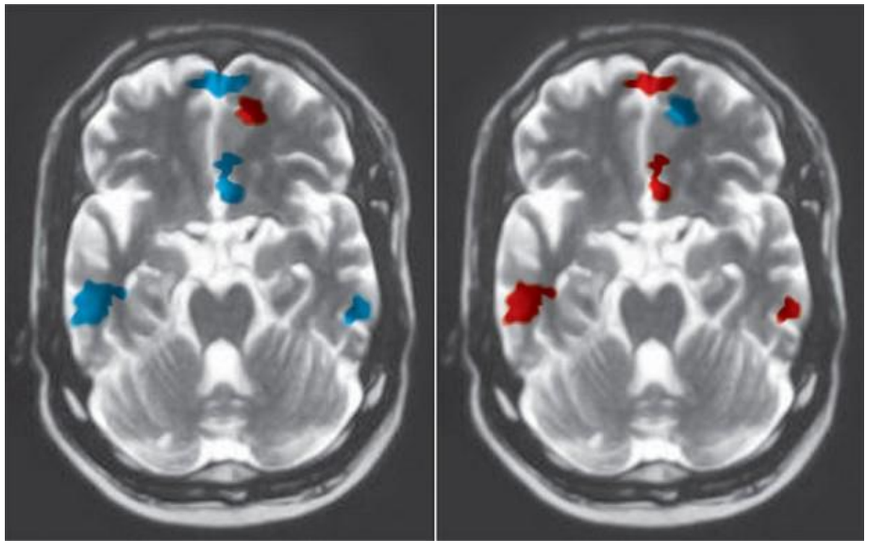
What Happens When We Feel 'Lurve'?

It is said that the sensations experienced when we're 'loved-up' are alarmingly close to those experienced through drugs…..you know, DRUGS!

When we 'screen' for a mate, (remember our DNA wants us to sniff out a prospective partner who will help us populate the gene pool with strong humans!) the drug factories inside us go into overdrive to help Mother Nature along!
When we find a compatible partner – whatever our objectives are, the loved-up feelings hit us.

MRI scans of the brains of people in love show the sensations of 'love' are dealt with in three areas of the brain:



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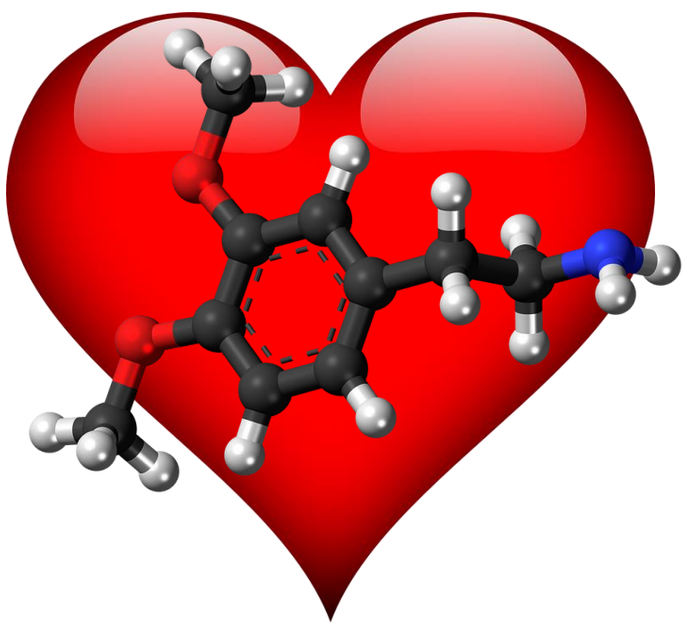
Ventral Tegmental (Dopamine)

The ventral tegmental is located in the lower regions of the brain and is the main dopamine factory. Dopamine is responsible for lots of things but, the most noticeable is its function to regulate 'reward'.



Dopamine is responsible for the thrill of winning at bingo or your favourite team beating their opponent or bidding in the last few seconds on eBay! When you have something to look forward to; bar of cheeky chocolate, a night out with your mates…..a much anticipated date, the pleasure of anticipation is caused and sustained by…Dopamine.

It creates motivation, yearning, goal-orientated behaviour and feelings of rapture.

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Dopamine

Dopamine helps regulate movement and emotional responses and it enables us to see **rewards** AND take action to **move toward** them!

The presence of a particular kind of dopamine receptor is also associated with **sensation-seeking** which motivates us to seek more! For example:

If you like hugs and want more you would behave in a way to **seek out** hugs!

The interesting thing is that the brain does not distinguish between something **real** or **imagined**. If you think of something you fear, your brain will stimulate your adrenaline, your heart will beat faster, breathing gets rapid and so on, the same goes for something or someone you like, just the thought of them causes those butterflies to flutter!

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If you think of something you really **like**, chocolate perhaps, your body will respond accordingly.

Or you could think about Colin Firth!

Let's try it now and take note of our feelings and responses…

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Er...where were we?

Oh yes, chemicals...

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Nucleus Accumbens (Oxytocin)

The ventral tegmental does not work alone. As with the fiercest of fires, elevated feelings of ecstasy and passion settle down eventually, feelings of such intensity simply cannot be sustained indefinitely.

But, those electrifying sensations of delight start in the lower brain and are processed in the nucleus accumbens via not just Dopamine but via Serotonin and…….Oxytocin.

The process of childbirth during labour and subsequently through nursing, floods the woman's body with Oxytocin. It is why new mothers bond so strongly and deeply…before they even know their baby!

Even males who's partners are expecting a baby experience higher levels of Oxytocin to ensure they also bond with their new-born child!

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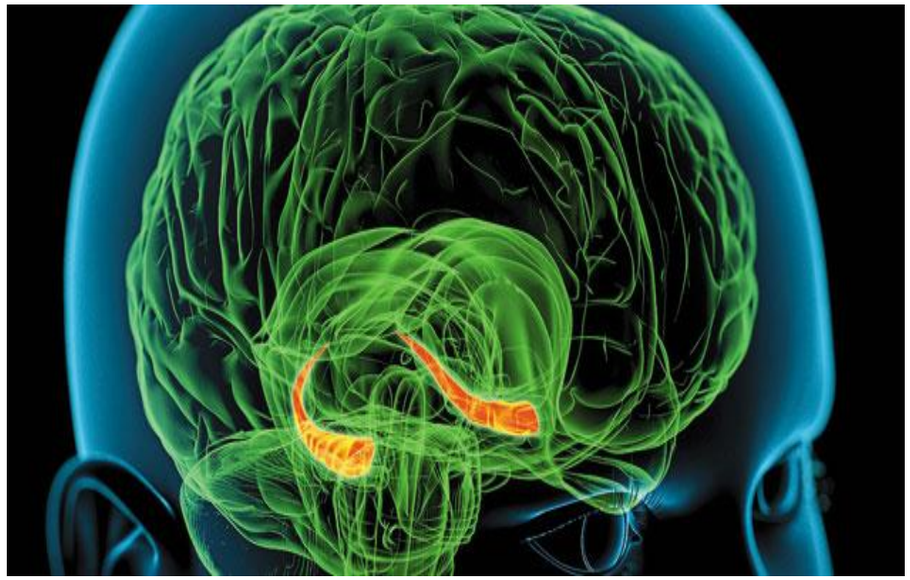
The Caudate Nuclei

On either side of our brains we have the Caudate Nuclei, small structures responsible for storing patterns and mundane habits like remembering how to ride a bike! When all the 'love' patterns are established here, it is that storage capacity which embeds passion and turns it into long-term commitment.



So, three primal chemical factories operating at once, that's a sure-fire recipe for some strong feelings and it's easy to see how we become enraptured with a mate.

It also explains how some can become obsessive.

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Chemicals and Anchoring

It also goes some way to explain the way 'chemicals' distort our perceptions to such a degree that some become reckless and get involved with people we shouldn't, people we THINK we know and trust and, how some people stay in abusive relationships.

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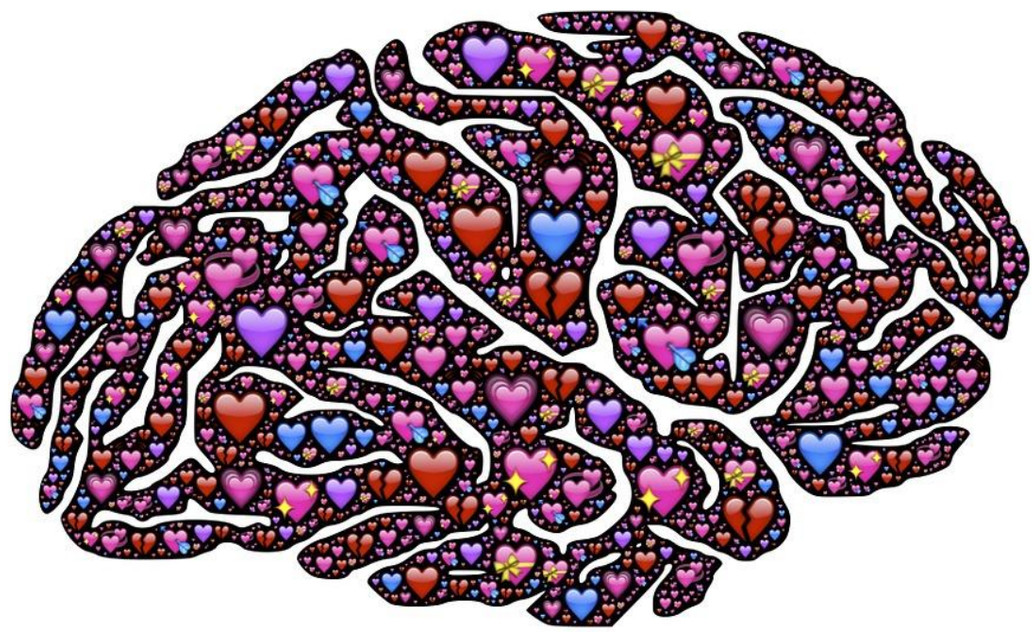
Jeffrey Kluger wrote in his article for Time Magazine 'The Science of Romance: Why We Love' -

"When hormones and natural opioids get activated, explains psychologist and sex researcher Jim Pfaus of Concordia University in Montreal, you start drawing connections to the person who was present when those good feelings were created. "You think someone made you feel good," Pfaus says, "but really it's your brain that made you feel good."



All those chemicals flooding and swooshing around our brains and bodies…making us think we think!

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Serotonin

This neurotransmitter plays a role in mood fluctuations, anxiety, **impulse control** and **arousal levels**.

It is a contributor to feelings of well-being and happiness.

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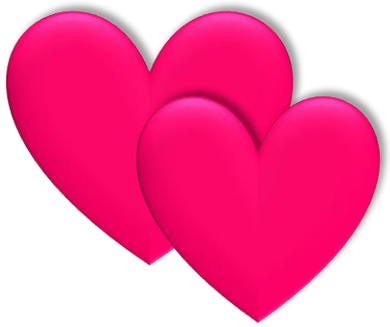
Oxytocin

Now, oxytocin is a very powerful hormone. It is a large contributor to **reward-motivated** behaviour.

Oxytocin gives us **FEELINGS** of **contentment**, reductions in anxiety, and feelings of **calmness, trust** and **security** around the mate.

This hormone is greatly boosted during sex.



Yep…

Sex **STIMULATES** Oxytocin release!

When we're around people we're attracted to or love or even think of someone we like, Oxytocin levels are elevated. This chemical perpetuates the **feelings** of **love** and **trust**. It plays a huge role in pair-bonding and is part of the reason parents bond so strongly with their new-born babies.

So powerful is this chemical it is sometimes referred to as

the 'love hormone'!

Remember:

It's **your** brain, **your** hormones and **your** thoughts

which make you feel good.

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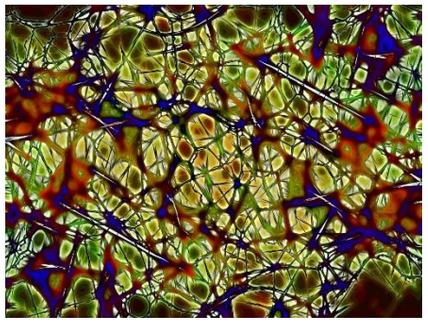
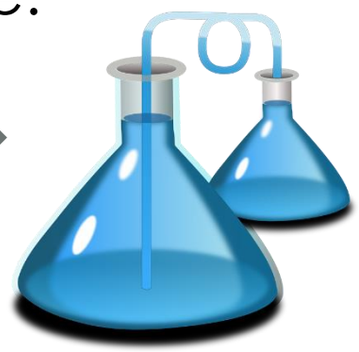
Making Connections

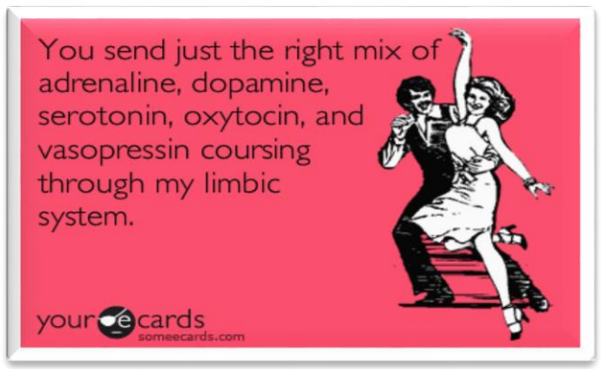
So, once our neurons have been stimulated and have sent out their message, the relevant neurotransmitters and hormones do their bit to encourage the appropriate behaviour - actions and 'thinking' - required to make you **seek out** and find your reward.

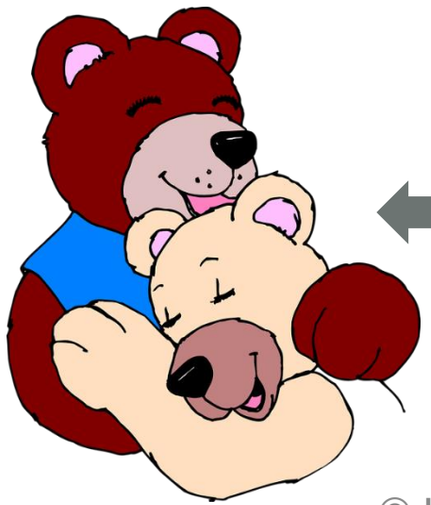
Combine all of that with the **chemistry** (chemicals such as adrenaline and vasopressin as well as the others shown previously) and the feelings of **euphoria** result. These feelings are **similar to the high experienced from cocaine!**

No wonder we can feel 'hooked' on someone.









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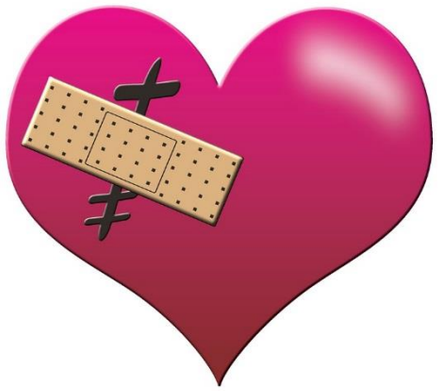
And, no wonder we feel physically sick after a break-up, it feels like the withdrawal process from cocaine. Narcacon states:

> *Cocaine does have withdrawal symptoms. Someone coming down from long-term cocaine use or a binge will crash, experiencing strong cravings, fatigue, anxiety, agitation and an inability to feel pleasure. The former cocaine user will often be depressed and restless. This withdrawal is the first phase of recovering from cocaine addiction.*



Break-ups hurt, so give yourself time and treatment to heal.

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Chapter 5

The Language of Love

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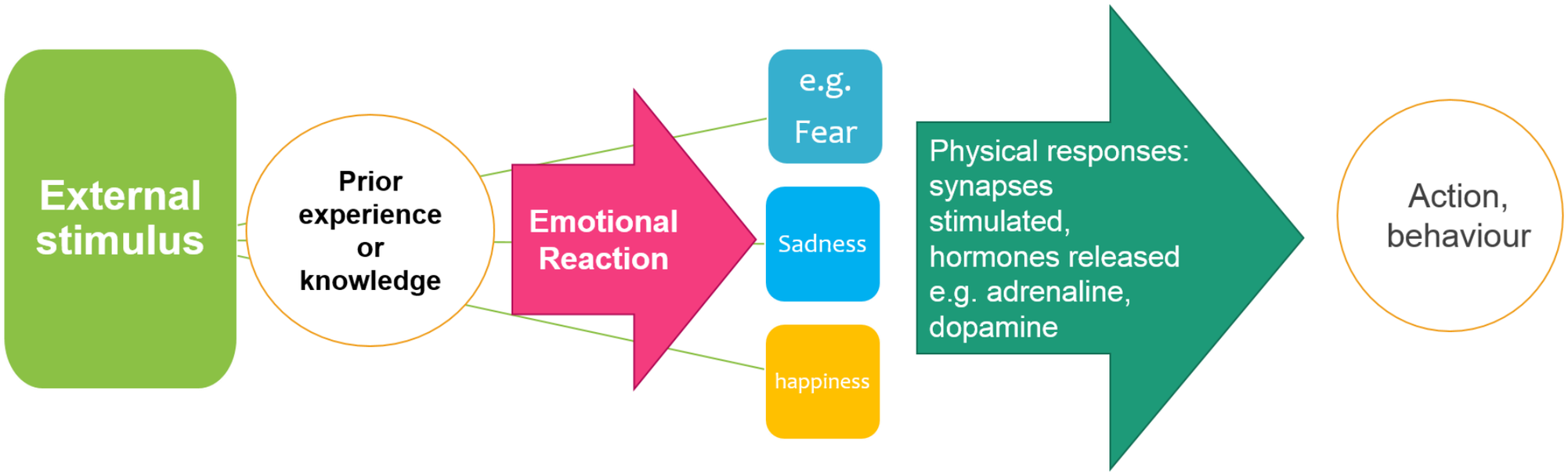
Language: how it affects our thoughts, hormones and behaviour

As we've already seen, external stimuli generate a cause and effect process:



© S.Priest: The Romance Club

Language, (spoken, non-verbal and written) is another stimuli.

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Using different forms of language**:** body language, facial expressions, verbal and non-verbal and written, helps us process the information from the **senses**. To interpret what goes on around us and respond accordingly.

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How we are educated, informed and our prior experiences, all influence how we create memories to which we **anchor** feelings.

We all have our very own, individual and unique data-bank of memories and perceptions.

These memories and perceptions inform our thinking and subsequent behaviours and our responses.

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Positive Language

Positive language helps us to bond right from infancy. Think of how we talk to babies. When a baby cries, the usual response is to use calming tones and loving words.

Parents and care-givers use positive, loving **non-verbal communication** too: eye contact, kissing, cuddling and rocking. All behaviours aimed at reassuring the infant.

Those of us who love and care for animals exhibit the same kind of behaviour towards our pets.

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Positive language helps adults to form bonds too.

The sharing of secrets and dreams even pet names for each other, affirming language (in and out of the bedroom) it is all part of bonding, to develop and deepen feelings of trust and connection.

The behaviour is driven by **hormones**…driven by **neurons**.

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Language and Virtual Dating

Now here's where problems can arise with positive language. The dating sites!

As you have now seen, positive language can instigate and perpetuate the whole cycle of attraction, a whole host of feelings, even those feelings of trust.

A series of emails and texts, perhaps 'phone calls too, shared confidences, affirming words, they all help to stimulate those love hormones making you **feel** 'in love'.

But we've all heard the sad and sometimes terrible stories of men and women who have been conned, 'played', even assaulted as a result of being tricked via the internet.

The very least of our problems can be when someone turns up looking very different from their photograph!

Don't misunderstand me, there are millions of wonderful, genuine people on the sites – but internet dating should be approached and used sensibly and safely.

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Self-destructive Language and Self-Image

An area that causes many problems connected with language and those neurons again.

If we hear something enough times, see something, experience or feel something enough times our brains will **believe** it. Information and experiences, especially those formed at an early age, form our self-image.

And if we **believe** it, we behave accordingly (remember those neural networks), and sometimes we don't even question why. **It just IS!**

"I'm not clever enough"

"I can't lose weight"

"I always get used"

"I'm always unlucky in love"

"It's not my fault"

"I give up"

"People don't like me"

"I CAN'T…"

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In his book *Change Your Life 7 Days*, Paul McKenna Ph.D. writes:

> *"Your self-image is the way you see yourself in your imagination. The reason your self-image is so powerful is because your behaviour will almost never deviate from this internal map. It acts as a form of self-fulfilling prophecy."*
>
> *"How you think of yourself also affects how other people feel about you. Because over 90 per cent of what we communicate is unconscious, the people around you are continually responding to your body language, tone of voice and the emotional signals you are transmitting."*
>
> ***"You are constantly letting other people know how to treat you by the way you treat yourself."***

Sometimes we're not even aware of the impact of negative language on ourselves, our internal self-image, until we take a closer look.

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We can end up on a cycle of self-criticism, self-doubt and self-fulfilling prophecies; feeling unwanted or in an unfulfilling relationship or being single when we want to be with someone.

The trouble with a self-fulfilling prophecy is when a person's behaviour matches their beliefs, for example:

"Nobody could ever love me"

They unconsciously play out the role of being the Unlovable One, sometimes even sabotaging the situation by pushing at people boundaries, testing the relationship and casting accusations. Even using commanding language: "you **don't** love me", reinforcing negative thinking on both sides.

And often questioning their partner and/or the relationship, all behaviours which result in driving their partner away thus 'proving' their original theory; "nobody could ever love me". Then, the Unlovable One is able to say, with some conviction:

"See, I was RIGHT!"

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Self-image and the Media

We may not be EVERYONE'S cup of tea, but perhaps its better to have a FEW people in our lives who know and love us for who we are, than crowds of people who misunderstand and judge us or try to mould us into someone THEY approve of?

Unfortunately the media doesn't help with our self-image.

We are constantly bombarded with images of men and women with perfect, air-brushed skin, dazzling white teeth and living celebrity lifestyles, all surreptitiously sending out the message that anything over a size zero is fat, old age should be erased with miracle creams and you're nothing, if you're not wearing the latest trends.

When we learn to be comfortable with and happy with **who we are** and to heal any hurts we've endured previously, we can embrace ourselves and embrace life.

Aren't happier people much nicer to be around?

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Negative Language

When emotions like jealousy, fear (of loss, for instance), resentment, anger and frustration drive our thoughts, then the language we use can become very negative.

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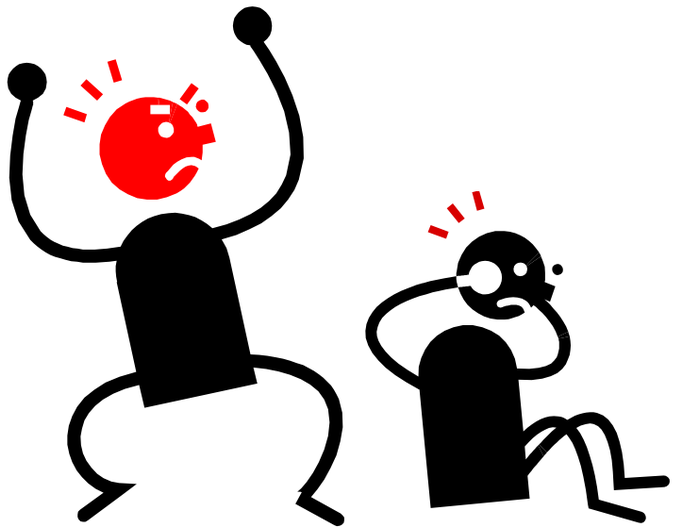

When a person uses negative language to belittle others because of their own insecurities or to insult, manipulate, cause fear and exercise control over another – resentment, problems or unpleasant experiences often occur in relationships.

Fear, especially when coupled with sex which releases and boosts those **love hormones** remember, is why some people find themselves in abusive relationships but can't let go.

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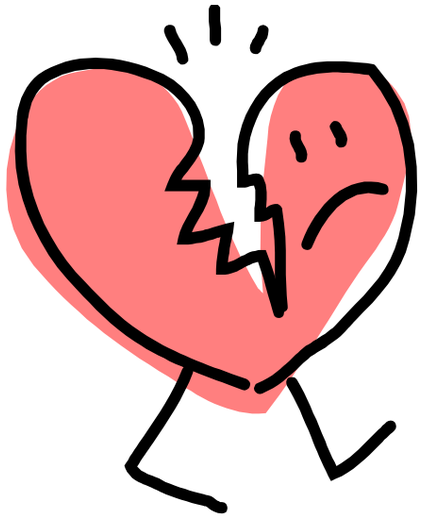
There have always been and always will be, people who use verbal and non-verbal language to behave insincerely or dishonestly.

Sometimes to win the affections of another, sometimes for sexual satisfaction, to fulfil a psychological need, for financial gain or a combination of all of these things!



Learning to identify this type of behaviour, manage our own emotions and make better choices, helps to minimise the heartache.

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Love Language

Dr Chapman has identified several tyles of 'love language' in his best-selling book: *The 5 Love Languages*. Dr Chapman writes that we each have our own love language, our **methods** of wanting to give and to receive love.

We generally treat people as **we** ourselves would like to be treated but, as Dr Chapman states, how we love others is not always the way **they** want to be loved.

> *"All of us need to feel loved and appreciated. When we don't feel appreciated or respected, being put down again and again by our spouse makes us feel that they think we're inferior. It's difficult to live like that."*

Understanding each others' love language ('*Quality Time*' or '*Words of Affirmation*', for example) helps us to **connect** and **bond**.

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Chapter 6

A Change of Perspective

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Perception

What do the words “love”, “romance”, “dating” and “relationship” mean to you?

Regardless of what **you** think they mean, each person will have their own perceptions and meanings of these words.

And because we all have our own ways of seeing things, it can be very frustrating when we just don’t get each other’s point of view, especially in relationships.

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The 'Marmite' Principle

A few years ago whilst working as a college lecturer, I conducted icebreakers with each new intake of students. One of these icebreakers was "The Marmite Principle"

I would ask each student their opinion on Marmite, yes I know this is contentious!

The group would often be clearly divided: The Lovers and The Haters. For a few minutes a fierce verbal battle would ensue between the two factions.

"It's DISGUSTING, oh my God, oh my God how can you like it"
"It's not disgusting its gorgeous, how can you say it's bad"
It's gross, it tastes like sh.. (mindful that their lecturer was there) like crap!"
"NO, no, no it DOESN'T it tastes lovely"

And so on…
The next question guaranteed instant silence every time:

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“So who is right and who is wrong?”

In that one moment they got it.

Opinion is <u>NOT</u> **fact**!

We think it is fact because it FEELS so RIGHT and REAL to us, it makes SENSE to us.

Accepting that someone else has a different point of view or perception does not mean we have to **agree** with it. Healthy discussions on differences of opinion can be enlightening and help to bond. It requires self-respect and respect for others.

What is NOT healthy is brow-beating, shouting down and insulting someone for their thoughts, opinions, beliefs or even lack of comprehension.

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Point of View

So yes, we all THINK we're right. We even FEEL we're right and we may, as a majority, agree on some things; the sky is blue, the grass is green. But, what are these colours to someone with colour blindness? What then is 'green'? Are they 'right' or are you?

Sometimes, perhaps more often than we care to admit, dating and romance problems occur as a result of the assumption that the other person…

- Thinks
- Feels
- Perceives
- Responds

in the same way as we do!

But not only do we all have our own unique way of looking at the world, it appears that men and women even have their own, gender-based way of thinking and feeling.

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Clinical research has now shown that men and women generally process information differently…no kidding!

From an article in Science: How Stuff Works:

> *"In 2001, researchers from Harvard found that certain parts of the brain were differently sized in males and females, which may help balance out the overall size difference. The study found that parts of the frontal lobe, responsible for problem-solving and decision-making, and the limbic cortex, responsible for regulating emotions, were larger in women [source: Hoag]. In men, the parietal cortex, which is involved in space perception, and the amygdala, which regulates sexual and social behaviour, were larger"*

It seems that, in the battle for equality, men and women have forgotten that they are actually different.

Being different is not wrong (in my humble opinion.)

Learning to see and accept each other's unique (and sometimes gender-related) point of view, even if we can't always fully **understand** it, goes a long way to creating and maintaining a harmonious relationship – all relationships.

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It is worth bearing this in mind when we're meeting new people to try to avoid judging and dismissing someone because they're not like you, or without getting to know them individually.

And it can work the other way too, judging a person by their looks or 'impressive' lifestyle does not always guarantee them as an ideal mate or warrant a positive result.

And if you're currently in a relationship which is going through an 'identity crisis', try to see things from each other's perspective; if you can't (remember the passionate remarks about Marmite) then work on **accepting** that the other person has a different view on things.

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Chapter 7

Mother Nature and our DNA

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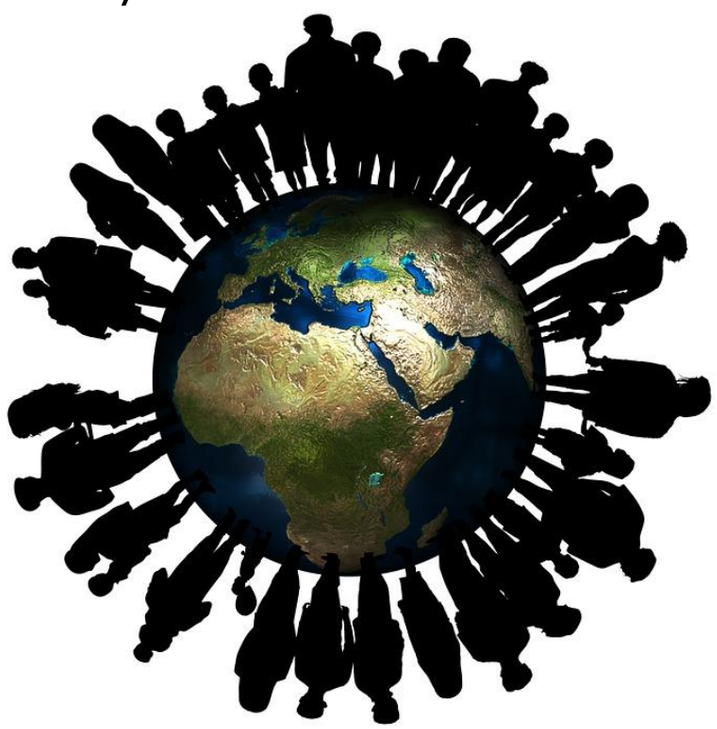
Why do our brains and bodies do all of this?

Beneath it all, beneath the neurons, the hormones, the flirting, the fluttering eyelashes and chest-beating (or Wonderbras and fancy cars), the texts and the long gazes across a crowded supermarket aisle - our instincts and DNA as mammals drive us towards one purpose and one purpose alone: **To procreate!**

To engage in sexual congress, make love, have sex, get laid, to screw, to 'get jiggy with'! Whatever you choose to call it, it all exists simply to further the human race!



To add to the gene pool by **encouraging** humans to **mate.**
To provide stability and protection for the helpless offspring thereby ensuring they stand the best possible chance of **survival**!

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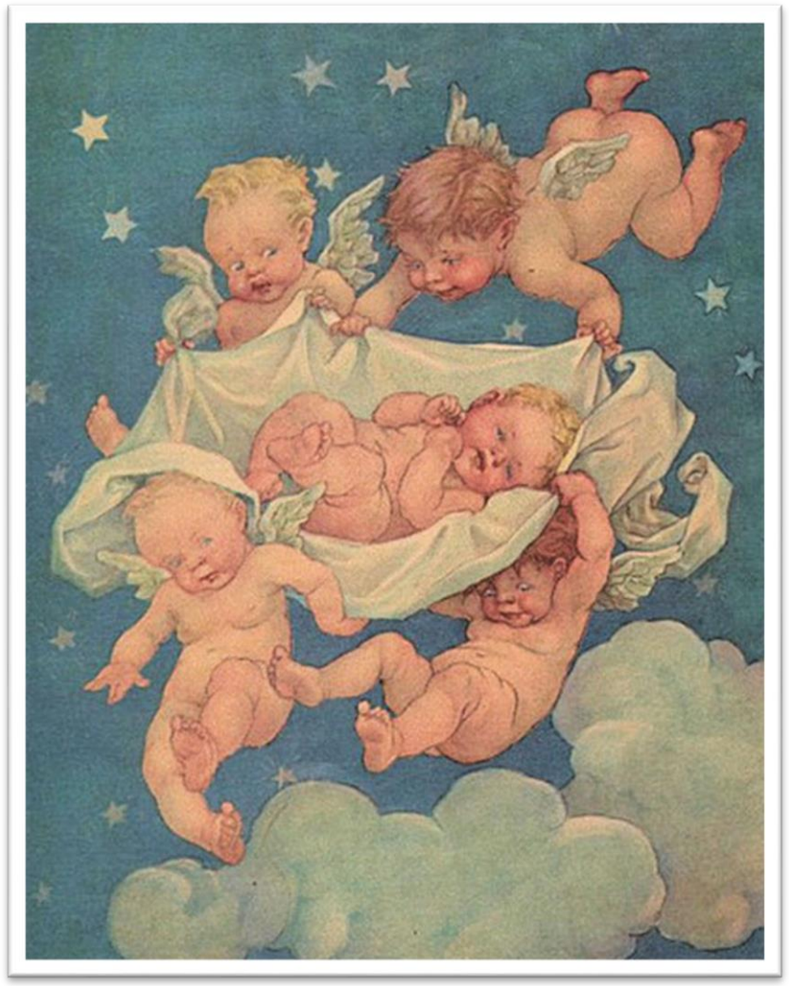
That's it!

It's just Mother Nature's way of urging us to make babies!



Whether we **choose** not to have children or if, for some reason, we are unable to have children, those primitive instincts still drive us towards SEX.

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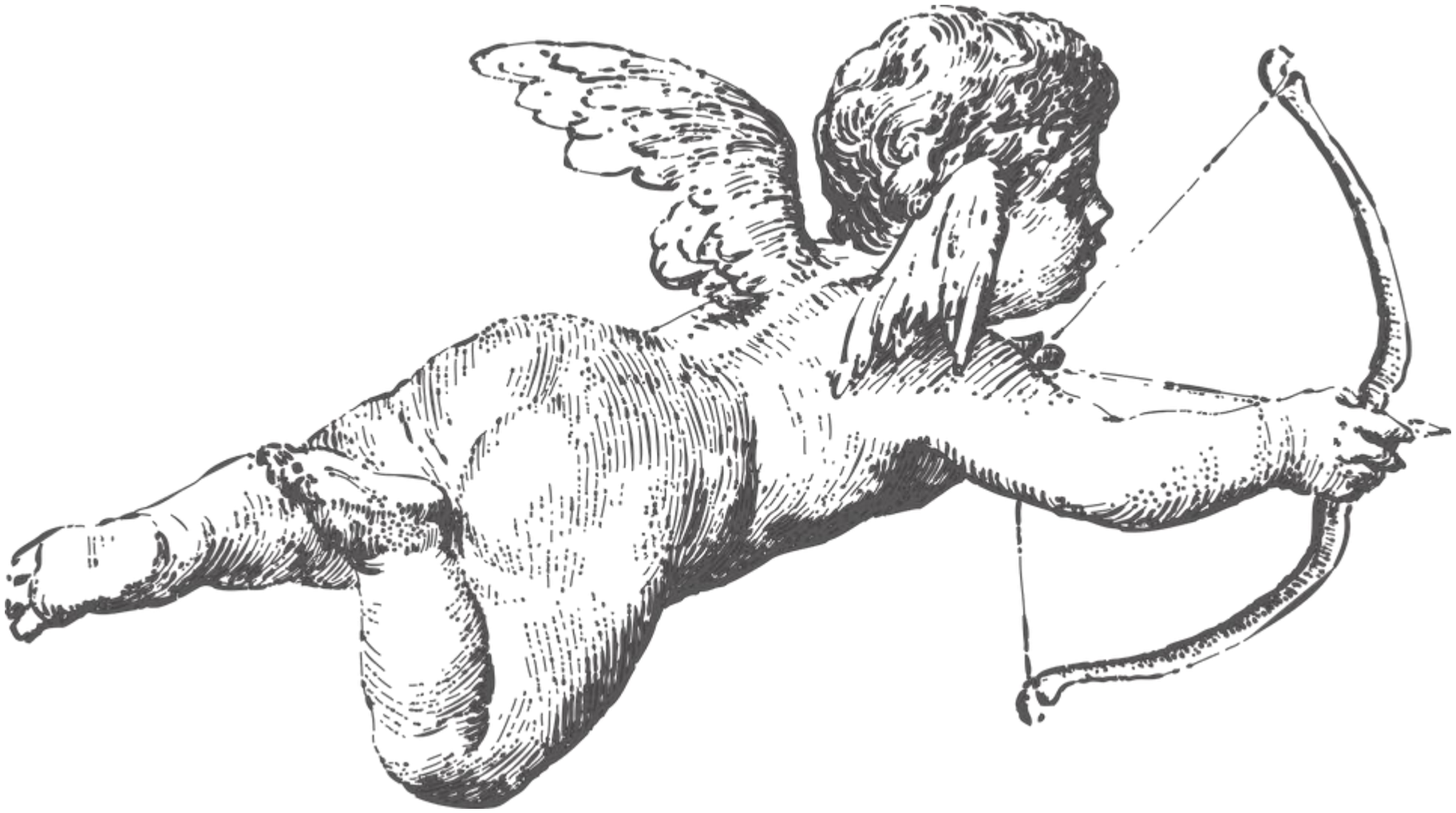
“So what’s all the fuss about **romance** then?” I hear you cry.

Well, let’s look at it this way:



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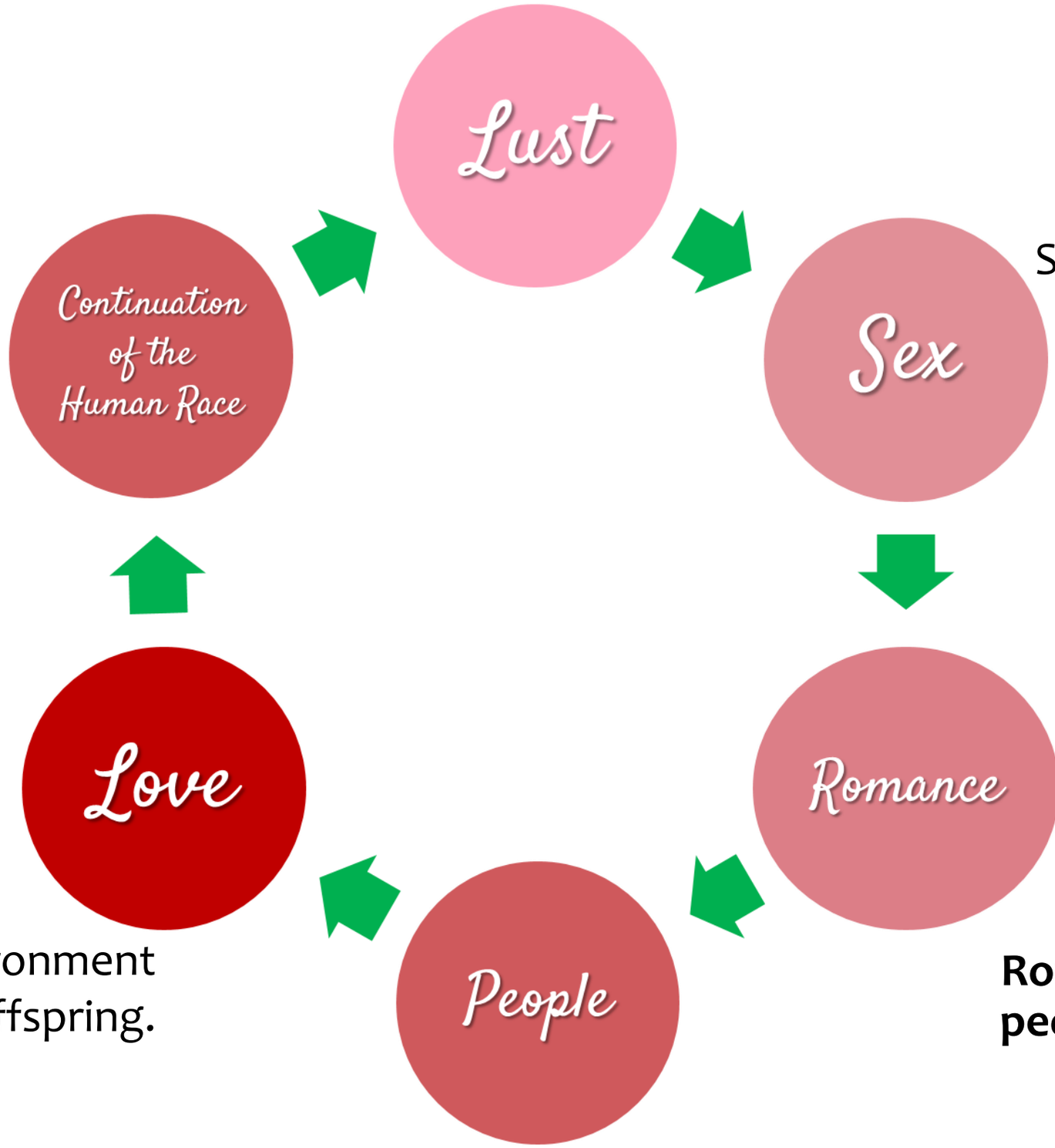
Lust: drives us to seek **sex.**



Healthy offspring: more **people**!

Seeking **Sex:** drives us to **Romance.**

Romance: drives us to **people,** to find a mate

People: drive us to **Love**

Love: A healthy environment for **raising** offspring.

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Romance **IS** an integral part of mate-finding, attraction and pair-bonding and it's Mother Nature's way of ensuring survival of the human race.

Sure, it's a little confusing these days with so many cultural changes but, we want it, we need it and there's nothing wrong with that!

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So fellas, splash on the aftershave and polish up that medallion.

Ladies, you book that spray tan and grab that LBD, because guys ‘n’ gals…

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Romance Ain't Dead!

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The Mating Game

In fact, all that preening and primping is a necessary part of the mating ritual. How we look projects information about our fertility and health.

It's our 'screening' method.

It's in our DNA to make ourselves look appealing.

This filtering process does becomes skewed with copious amounts of alcohol though!

We use our senses to find out whether we are genetically compatible with another person and when we find a match, those neurons connect to switch on the **lust** hormones to encourage the production of offspring.

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Making Judgments

The **genetic screening** process is linked to a primal instinct which is located in a part of the brain called the amygdala. This part of the brain controls the **judgment** instinct - an automatic response impulse designed to protect our primitive ancestors:

The 'fight or flight' response.

When they were confronted by someone or something they were unfamiliar with, who may have posed a threat to them or to their food supply for instance, they needed rapid responses for self-preservation.

Whilst we no longer rely on this automatic response on a daily basis to ensure our needs are met – they didn't have supermarkets in caveman days and we have a welfare and judicial system now - this primitive instinct still functions to make quick judgements.

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When the judgement instinct is used negatively or expanded in order to exert power over another, is when the judgement mode has gone to far.

It's wholly unfair and unrealistic to dismiss a person without knowing anything about them, such as an unflattering photograph or a poorly-written profile. And impolite to insult them (either to their face or behind their back) simply because they are different to you, different from 'the norm' (whatever that is)or not what you want?

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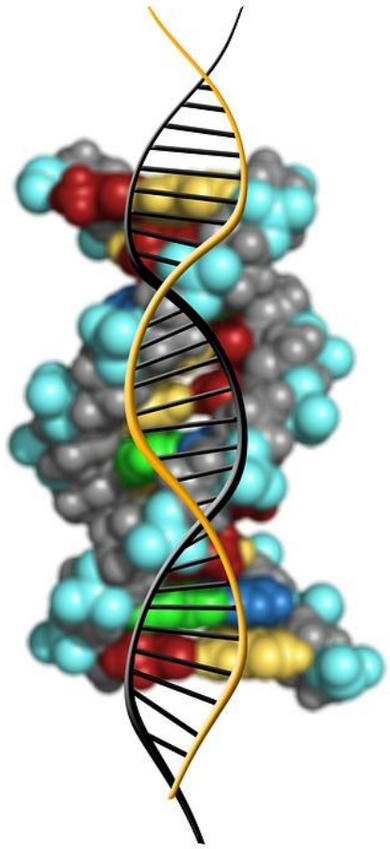
Let's Talk About **SEX!**



So, the mating game, judgments, genetic screening, it is still all about **S-E-X!**

And of course sex feels great, it's designed that way because if fornications were as interesting as cataloguing used tea-bags, we'd have died out aeons ago!

However, our DNA is NOT interested whether or not you are **happy** with your partner, moreover its priority is that you **stay together**; to protect any young thereby ensuring the cycle of life continues.

This goes some way to explain, especially in our more permissive society, why many people form an **attachment** to someone who they find they do not like as a person or is **not a compatible partner mentally or emotionally**.

Sometimes people rationalise their reasons for their attraction or attachment to incompatible partners for fear of losing face, financial support, a home…

It also further explains how unhealthy attachments can lead to negative relationships.

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Don’t let good sex confuse your heart and make you think you’re in love

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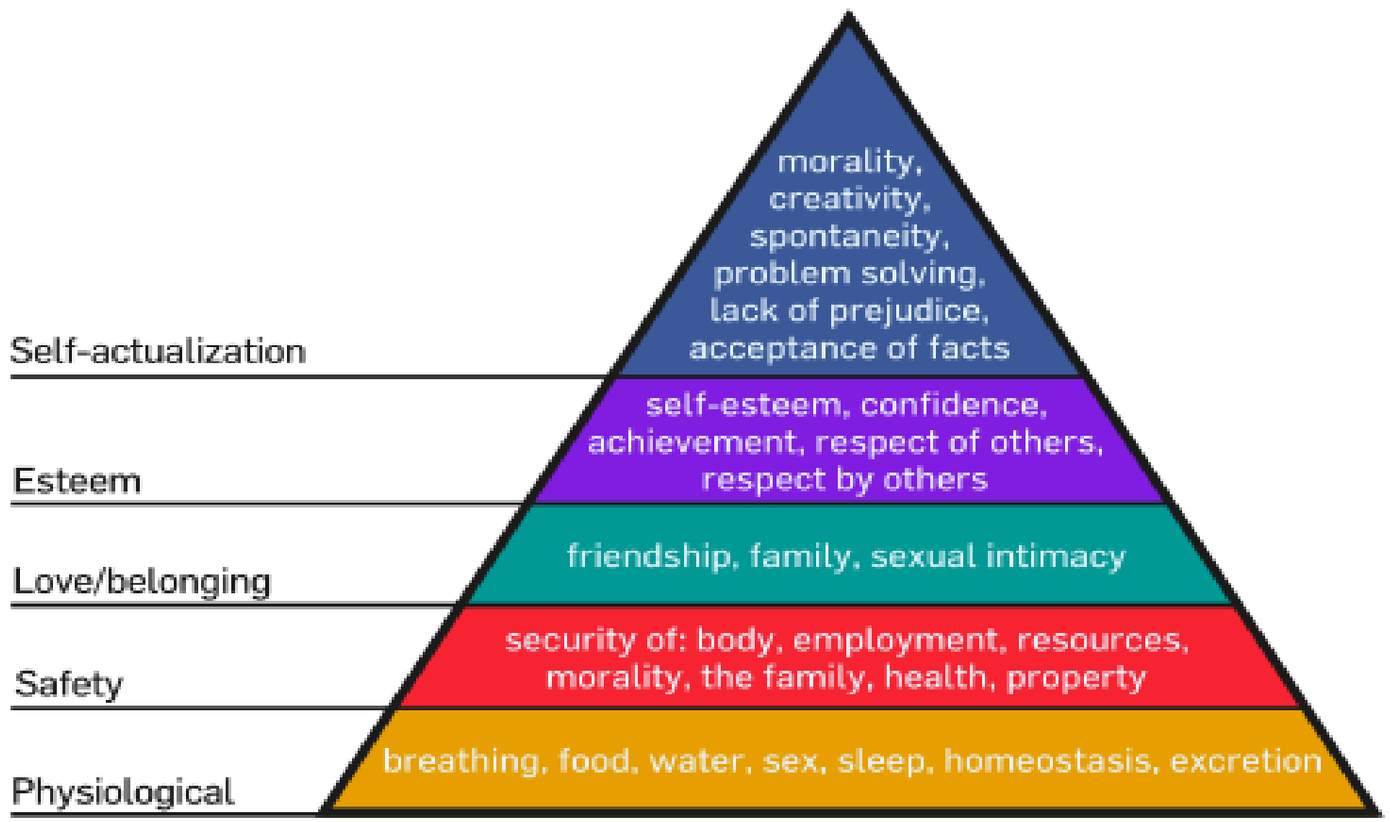
Abraham Maslow suggested in his 1943 paper "*A Theory of Human Motivation*" that human beings need to have their *basic* needs met before they feel motivated to move to the next level of needs. (See below).

Most humans feel the need 'to belong', to have a sense of acceptance within a social group be it at work, with friends or in a family and **to love and be loved** both platonically and sexually – remember those **feel-good hormones** and **bonding**.



en.wikipedia.org

"Sex", on the lower level of needs is stated as simply the act to maintain the human race otherwise it would die out.

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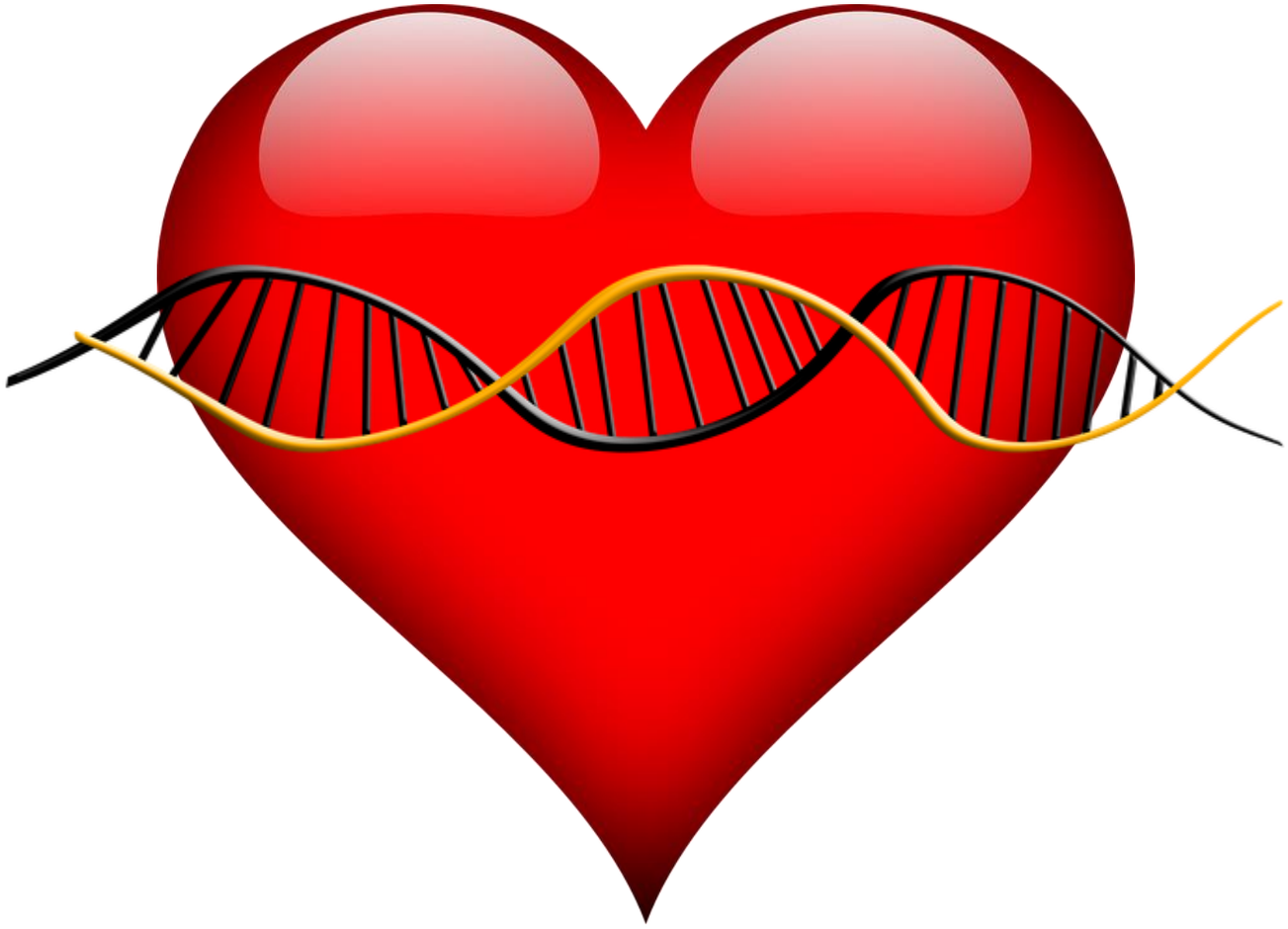
Whether we like it or not, **romance** or some variation of it; those feel-good, stimulating, trusting, calming, heart-fluttering, stress-busting, goal-motivated, happy-feeling, reward drugs – they are in our DNA!



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Chapter 8

Bonding

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Pair-bonding

But, if humans are planning on living together, what happens to all those euphoric, hormone-fuelled days (and nights) of the initial stages of a romance?

Jeffrey Kluger writes in his article "*The Science of Romance: Why We Love*":

> *"If partners are going to stay together for the years of care that children require, they need a love that bonds them to each other but without the passion that would be a distraction. Therefore it's necessary for committed couples to move from passion to "compassionate bonding," a higher kind of love."*

Even if children are NOT planned in a relationship, there are still those warm fuzzy feelings we get from being around someone who 'gets us', someone we know has our back, who we can turn to for advice or comfort or just plain companionship.
A friend - regardless of colour, creed, race, height, width, age, gender…

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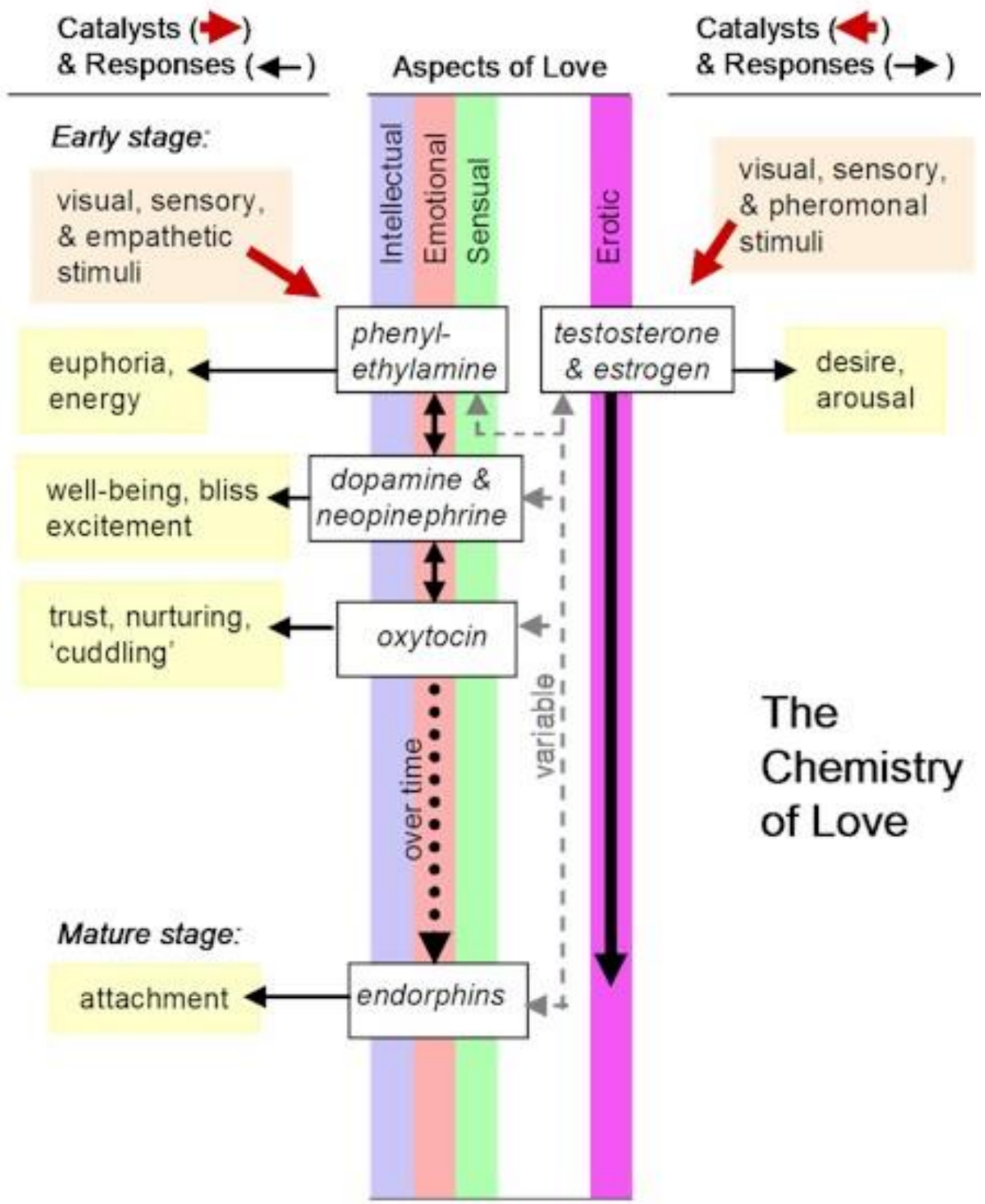

The Chemistry of Love

So you see, it's normal for those euphoric feelings change over time.

howtosavetheworld.ca

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Most of the time, and for many people, the intensity of those chemical-cocktail fuelled days will wane eventually. The body simply can't maintain those elevated levels of hormones for very prolonged periods.

Even a space shuttle, with 526,126 gallons of fuel[2] at its disposal and a potentially limitless journey, will run out of fuel eventually.

But, if what you have with someone is more than lust, if it's respect, friendship and a genuine appreciation and enjoyment of each other that isn't based or fuelled on sex, you probably stand a pretty good chance of staying the distance.

[2] *NASA*

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The Decline of Passion

Studies have shown, and you may be able to correlate this to your own or a friend's romantic history, that as you approach or reach your 3 month anniversary with your new partner, the rose-tinted glasses, worn permanently so far, can begin to magically lose their pink tint!

Maybe you start to see the other person as if through new eyes, and it's not all good. Perhaps one partner wants out and the other thinks they're **The One**.

Remember your DNA.

Those intense feel-good sensations around your mate will usually, if there is no pregnancy, begin to wane around 9-12 weeks or so – along with the pink specs.

But there's more to it than the chemicals described earlier. The next few pages explain a lot about the 'Honeymoon Period' of new relationships…

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THE NEUROCHEMISTRY OF SEX - By Walter Last

*"The stimulant **phenyl ethylamine** (PEA) which is also present in **cocoa** and **chocolate**, elevates energy, mood and attention. PEA is produced in greater amounts when one is in love; conversely a **deficiency** causes unhappy feelings.*

*When we first fall in love we become **bonded** by **rising PEA, oxytocin** and **dopamine** levels. When we are sexually aroused by close contact our dopamine level rises further and at the time of orgasm we have a dopamine brainstorm which can be compared to the effects of heroin on the brain.*

*After orgasm, dopamine levels fall sharply with the usual withdrawal symptoms. This reaction tends to be immediate in males and delayed in females. Also **prolactin** levels rise, and **androgen receptors**[1] fall after orgasm. Low testosterone is associated with irritability and anger.*

[1]Androgens, steroid hormones, mainly testosterone and 5alpha-dihydrotestosterone (DHT) play significant role in the growth and development of the male reproductive organs.

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*"In addition to serving as a sexual brake, **prolactin** also affects our moods and behavior somewhat like a hormone inducing feelings of resignation.*

Oxytocin levels fall after conventional orgasm but remaining in close contact may help to counter this drop and sustain oxytocin levels."

Behavioral changes from this disturbed hormone equilibrium have been noticed for up to two weeks. During this time we may be more irritable, dissatisfied, anxious or depressed, and instead of seeing the good side of our mate, we may now be painfully aware of his or her shortcomings.

*This is exactly the same process and length of time **prolactin** levels need to recover during withdrawal from **cocaine**.*

Initially, during the honeymoon period of our relationship, we remain strongly bonded by high oxytocin levels, and quickly overcome our hormonal blues by having more sex and sex stimulates us to crave for more sex. This leads to rapid rises and falls in dopamine levels and corresponding rapid emotional fluctuations in our relationship.

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Later we become less and less interested in sex with our partner (perhaps because we subconsciously begin to associate him or her with the "lows" of the cycle, or perhaps because we grow tired of being used as a fix, and therefore feel less attraction), and now we try to prop up our dopamine level by becoming addicted to some kind of food or drug, or by becoming interested in a new sexual partner."

The research goes a long way to explain why some people commit adultery. Quite often one partner blames the other for the decline of passion and respect in the relationship when in some cases, it's the drop in hormones and, as many people experience, the change in relationship dynamics after children are born.

If you're too tired for sex (not to mention romance) or only have time for the odd 'quickie' which does not allow enough time for oxytocin to work its 'cuddle magic' and bonding sensations, then resentment and boredom can set in. It's easy to blame each other in this situation.

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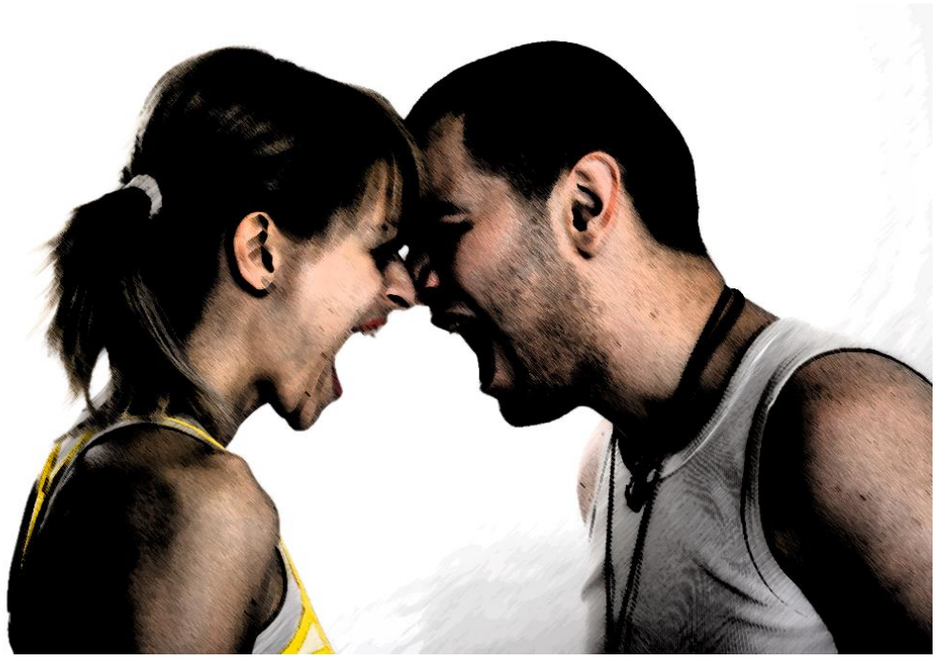
Always looking for **The One** who induces and maintains the initial '**in love'** feelings in us forever more, puts us in danger of creating an unhealthy pattern of behaviour.



Its not the person, remember, it's those neurons.

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Of course, if all you want is a 'quick fix' then, well you know the obvious risks. And ladies, you know I'm talking to YOU especially about this next issue:

If you want a longer relationship, a loving, fulfilling, respectful one, you can try going along with the 'quick fix' or the 'Friends With Benefits' set-up but, exercise caution, you may be heading for disappointment because…

NEWSFLASH - Men and Women ARE different!

There are psychological differences, physical differences, hormonal differences and neurological differences.

We're wired differently, there's clinical evidence to support this.

Why keep INSISTING on RESISTING?

The primitive female human was selective by nature, the primitive male human was collective. Females needed to choose the healthiest male for the survival of her offspring, males needed to compete with other males to pass on their genes as far and wide as possible.

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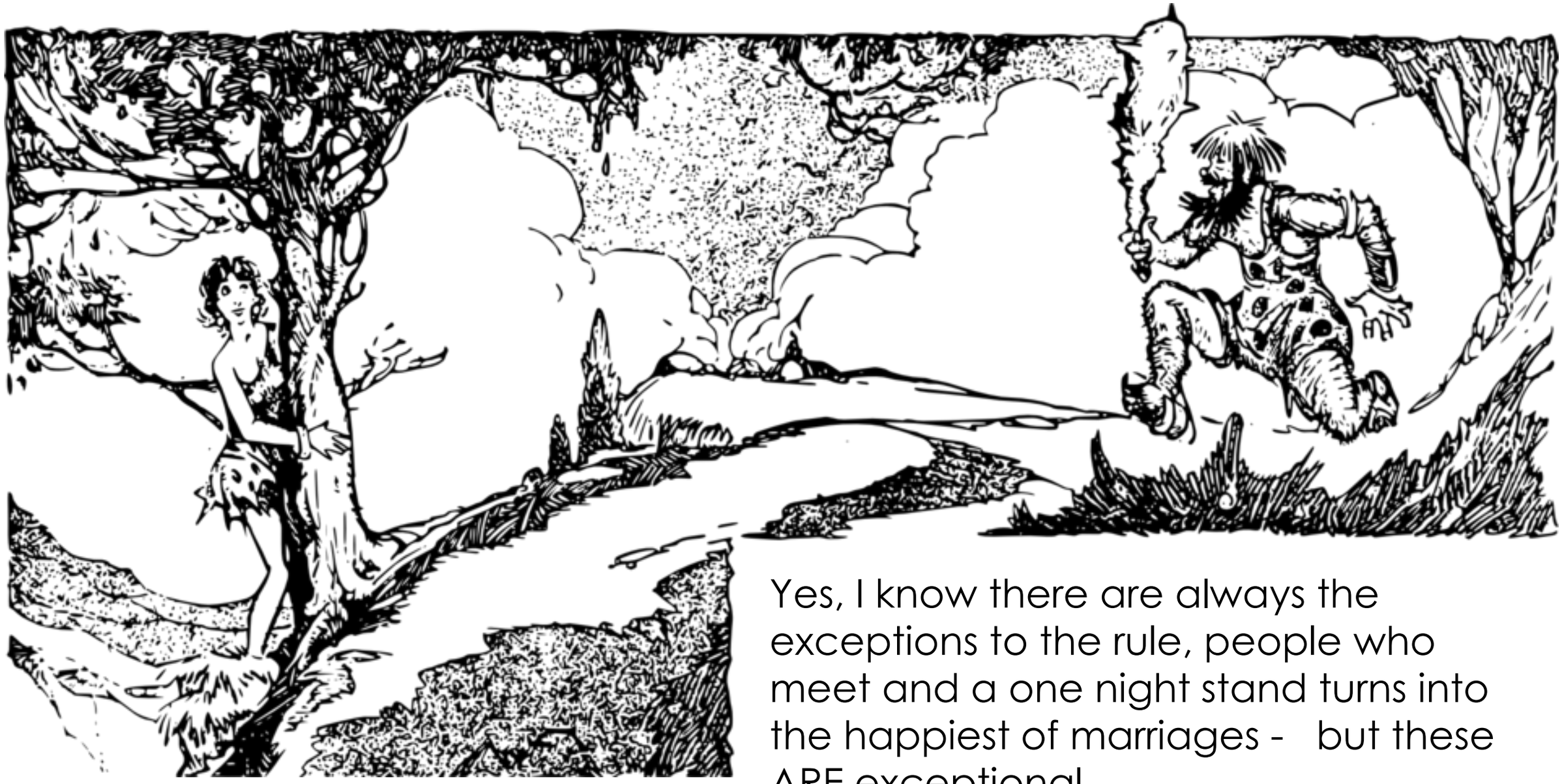

Yes, I know there are always the exceptions to the rule, people who meet and a one night stand turns into the happiest of marriages - but these ARE exceptional.

Bottom line…be honest about your relationship wants and needs from the start.

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Chapter 9

Anchoring and Attachment

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Emotions: Hook, Line and Anchor.

Is it any wonder then, when we meet someone who stirs up our hormones and puts our DNA into overdrive, that we become **attached** to them.

We **anchor** these feelings and sensations to the person or sometimes the situation or experience. For example, having sex with someone you don't really know. We can feel 'in love' with a person without actually knowing anything about them.

Has this ever happened to you?

Problems can arise when we anchor these 'good' feelings to the 'wrong' person, the chemicals and the hormones give us inaccurate indications.

The anchoring of the feel-good, dopamine-fuelled feelings to inappropriate partners can also be the result of attachments formed in childhood.

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A Brief Introduction: Attachment Theory

As infants, we typically form an attachment to our primary caregiver, usually to one or both of our parents, through close **physical** and **emotional** contact, that bonding stuff again.

And adults do the same when it comes to forming a romantic attachment. Adults form a **deep emotional** attachment based on intimate physical contact – kissing, cuddling and sex.

When intimate contact with another person is repeated, it often results in the forming of a deep attachment to that person , this can be more common in women. Remember those synaptic pathways in your brain, they become embedded, they become habits.

This can lead to frustration when trying to form a relationship, for instance, in a 'Friends with Benefits' type of situation. The intimacy creates **bonding** feelings which may not be reciprocated.

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Examples of Attachment Styles

A balanced parenting approach usually results in a **secure** approach to adult relationships: healthy attitude and respect for ourselves and our partners.

An imbalance in parenting/caregiving can result in dysfunctional types of attachment which range from **dismissing**, **anxious** and **preoccupied** to **fearful-avoidant**.

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Attachments and Romantic Relationships

People who formed an **anxious** or **preoccupied** attachment as an infant, can tend to be preoccupied with their romantic adult relationship; constantly checking their own value in a relationship.

If a **dismissing** attachment style was formed during infancy then adults can often develop a dismissing attachment to their romantic partners; they actually fear intimacy and are uncomfortable with it.

With adults who formed a **fearful-avoidant** attachment style it is often difficult to predict their romantic relationship behaviour; the need to be close to a partner while simultaneously wanting to push a partner away is because it is based on mixed emotions.

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If you think your behaviour is linked to or based on an unhelpful form of attachment formed in childhood, its possible to see where, why and how problems occur in adult romantic relationships.

A client identified he had formed an anxious, pre-occupied attachment to his primary caregiver who often rejected him and "put him down all the time". He felt he could "do no right".

His adult relationships often found him trying to placate his partners, to put their needs before his own and worry constantly if they loved him or not, he felt that he was un-lovable.

Identifying the root cause of his concerns, a dysfunctional relationship with primary care-giver, enabled him to work towards a more secure relationship style.

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Unhealthy Relationship Styles: co-dependency

Wikipedia 4 Sept 2013

> *"**Co-dependency** is defined as a psychological condition or a relationship in which a person is controlled or manipulated by another who is affected with a pathological condition (typically narcissism or drug addiction); and in broader terms, it refers to the dependence on the needs of, or control of, another"*

Some co-dependent people tend to put the need of others above their own, sometimes the needs of the partner above their own. Not in an altruistic way - the idea of a parent running into a burning building to rescue their children - but, in a way that ensures the manipulator has what they need to maintain the status quo of the relationship.

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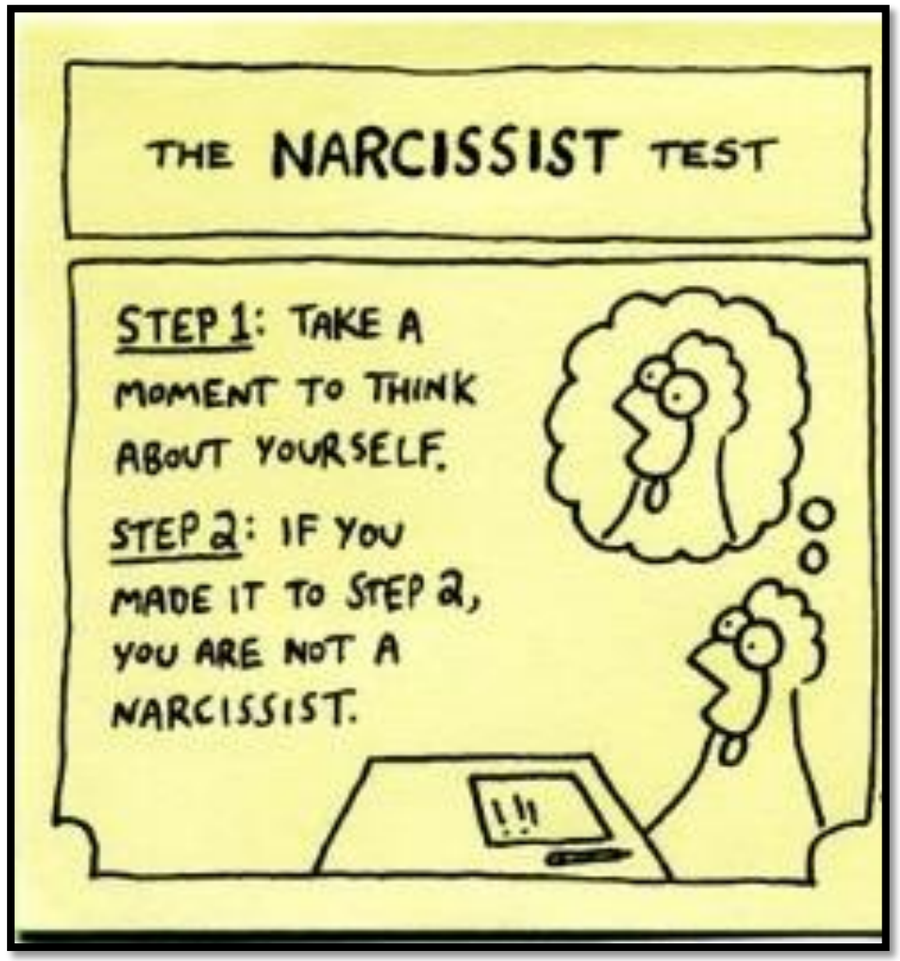
Narcissism

Narcissistic people have a tendency to use negative behaviour against others, which causes problems in sustaining satisfying relationships, due to their sense of superiority over others.

People with Narcissism often have difficulty with empathy and use other people for their own needs with little or no consideration of the consequences. They lack the ability to see other people's point of view.



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They are very flattering to people who look up to them as it confirms their feelings of self-importance. In the early stages of a new relationship, a narcissistic person will 'love-bomb' their partner. They can be utterly charming, generous, loving – but, they have an agenda only they will know about.

They often purport to be more important than they really are, bragging to exaggerate their achievements and consider themselves to be 'expert' at lots of things.

They are often in denial of feelings of gratitude or remorse as they think that the world revolves around them and their needs anyway.

Sound dreadful…or familiar?

Maybe you think "I would never end up like this" or "I would never end up with someone like this".

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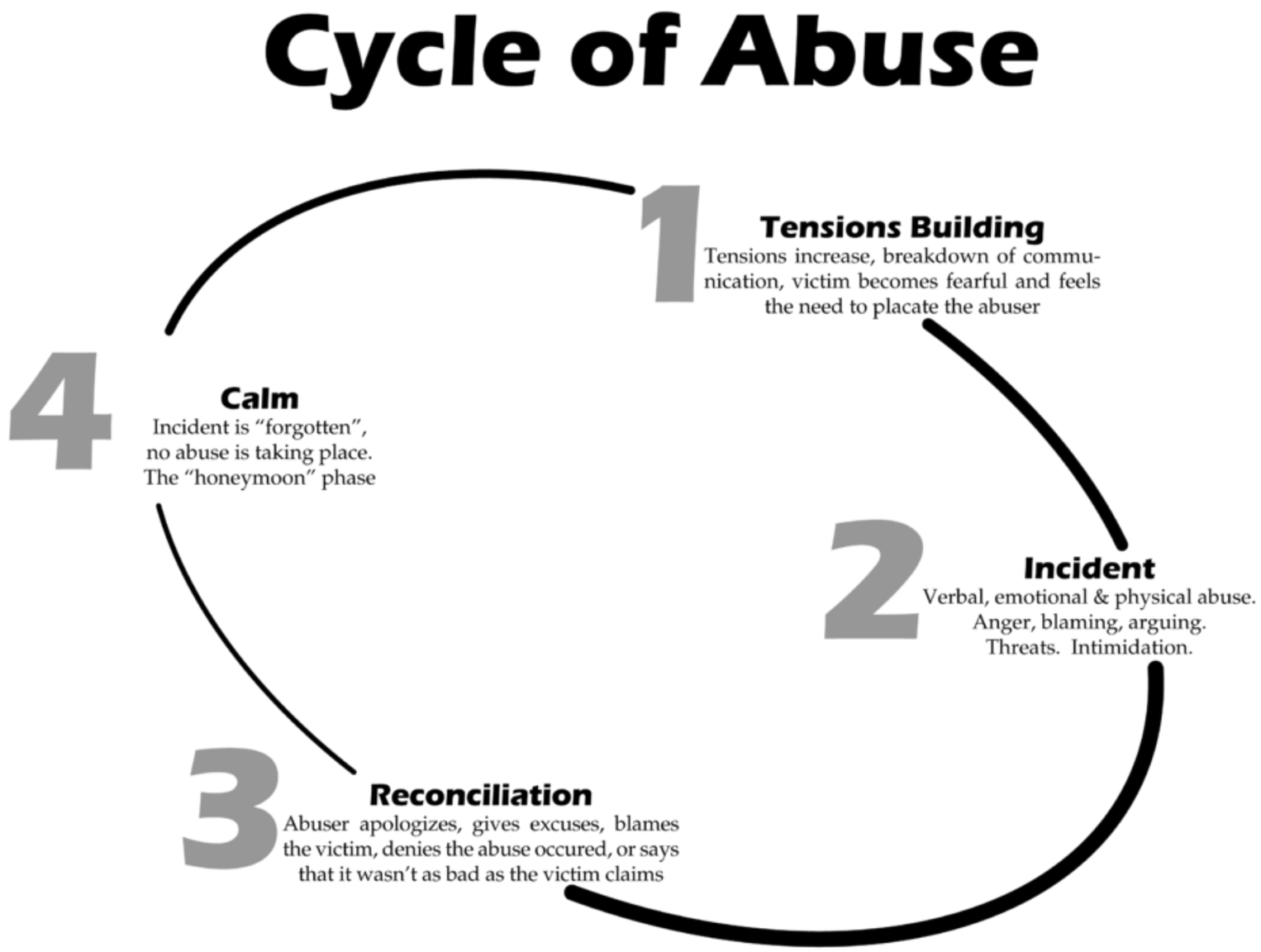
But, add this type of personality (remember, they can appear very charming) to a dollop of repeated intimacy mixed with a cocktail of love hormones and a serving of appropriate language – it's easy to see how people slip into an unsatisfactory, unhealthy or abusive relationship.



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"Is it me?"

Quite often, another person's behaviour towards you, is usually a reflection of something going on inside **them**.

Likewise, our behaviour towards others is a reflection of something going on inside **us.**

This is great when everything in the garden is rosy and we're nice to people and they're nice back.

Not so great when people have deep-rooted issues that manifest themselves in negative thoughts and behaviours such as co-dependency and narcissism.

Or when people try to make **you** change into something **THEY** want you to be.

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Chapter 10

Setting the Standard

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New Goals

Making better choices starts with setting better standards which should reflect your self-respect and respect for others.

They should guide you to what you REALLY want and give you the courage and strength to maintain them.

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream..."
- C.S. Lewis

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When you identify your own thought and behaviour patterns and **your** relationship and dating patterns, you can change the negative into the positive and make **better**, more **informed** choices in your future.

Release the Past.

Move forward

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Remember, changing a habit, even for the good stuff can take a little time and effort, usually around 3 weeks.

Talk to a trusted friend about your new goals, if you have moments of weakness, you could do with some support.

And be prepared for wobbles in your willpower...

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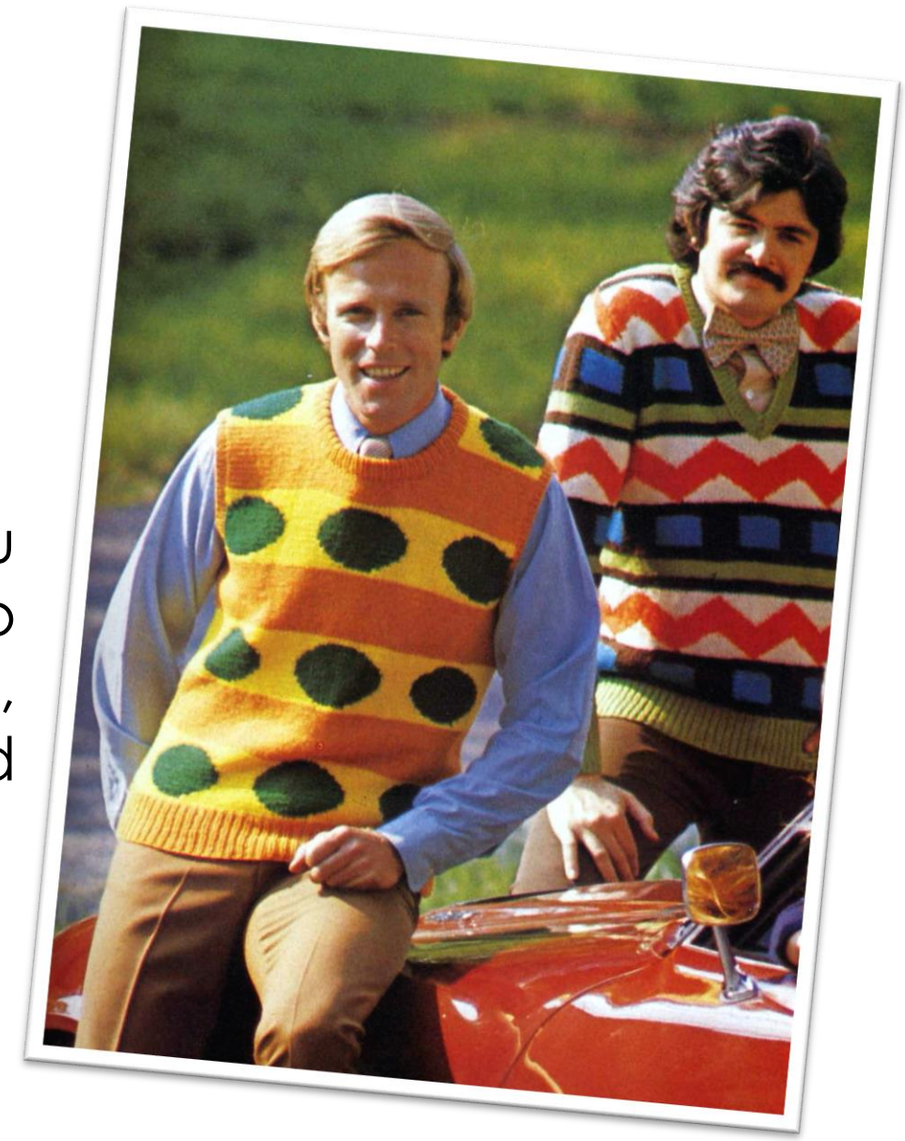
…because no matter how pretty/buxom/leggy she is, if she loves your cash more than your conversation, the girl's gotta go!



And no matter how handsome/stylish/rich you find him, if he tries to manipulate you into casting aside your self-respect, inhibitions, cash or your underwear when you've said "no", then the dude ain't no good.

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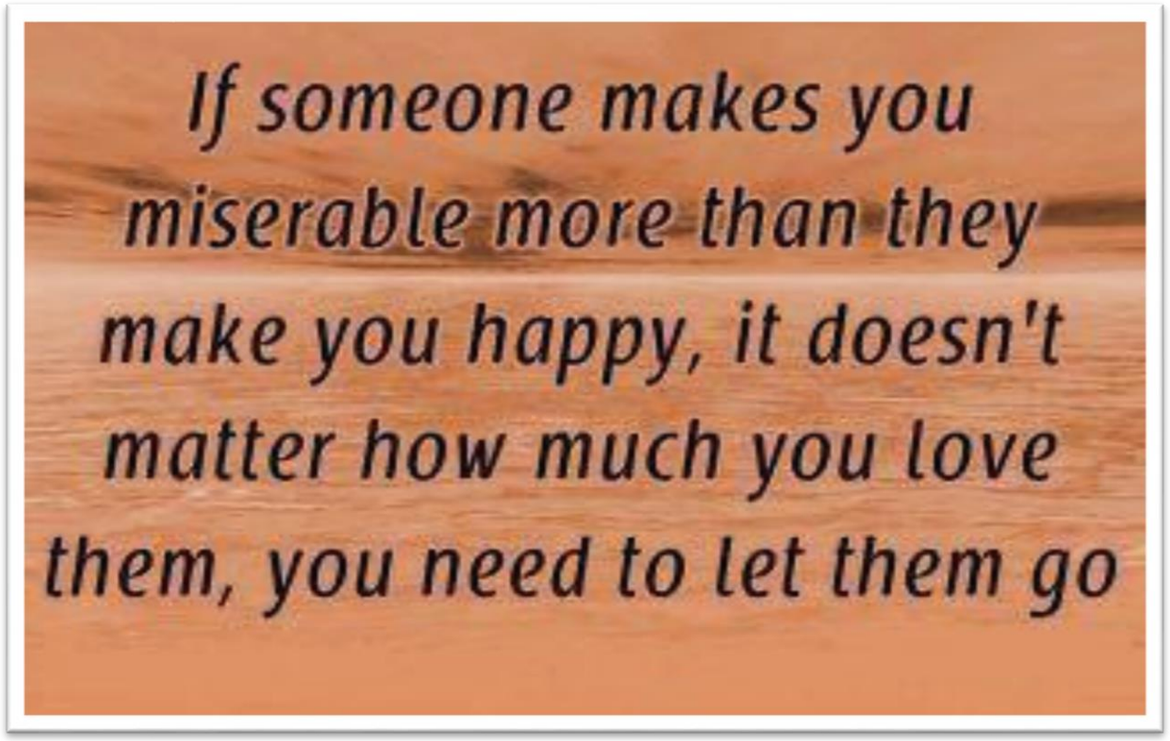
Your happiness is YOUR *responsibility.*

Nobody is in charge of it except YOU.



YOU and only you are responsible for the choices you make and there are always**, ALWAYS** *options.*

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I know, I know, I really DO know that sometimes the options are uncomfortable, unpalatable or *seemingly* impossible.

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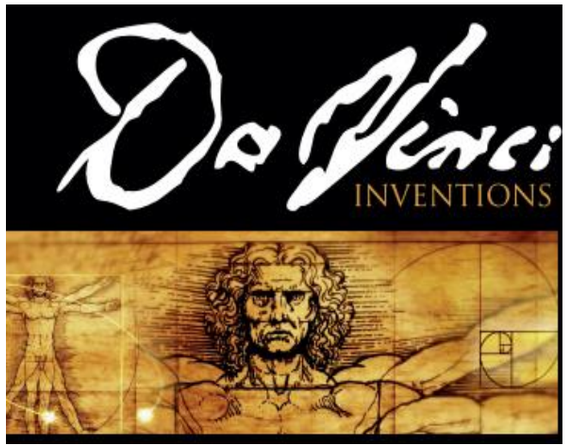
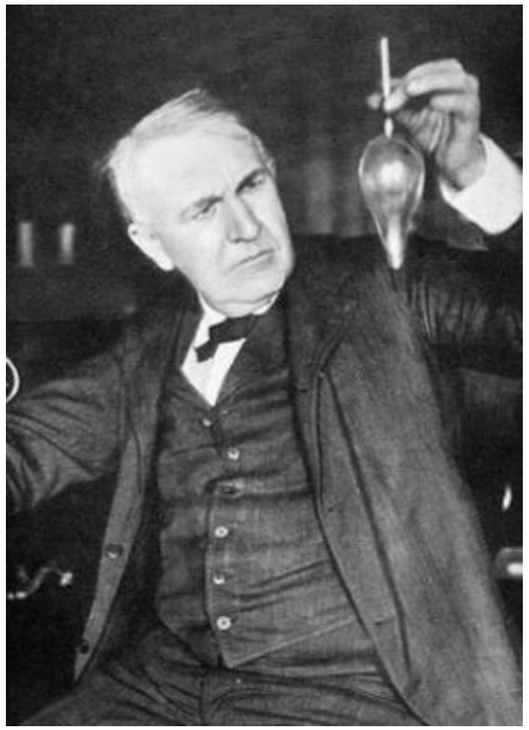
But there are many, many people who, when they were told their ideas were impossible, they said:

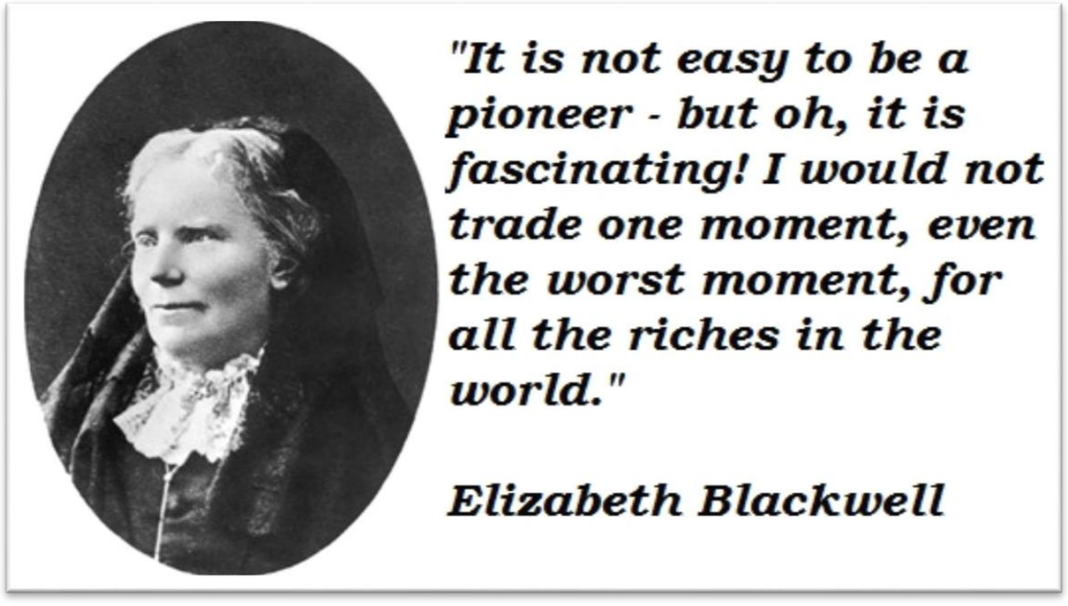
"WATCH ME!"

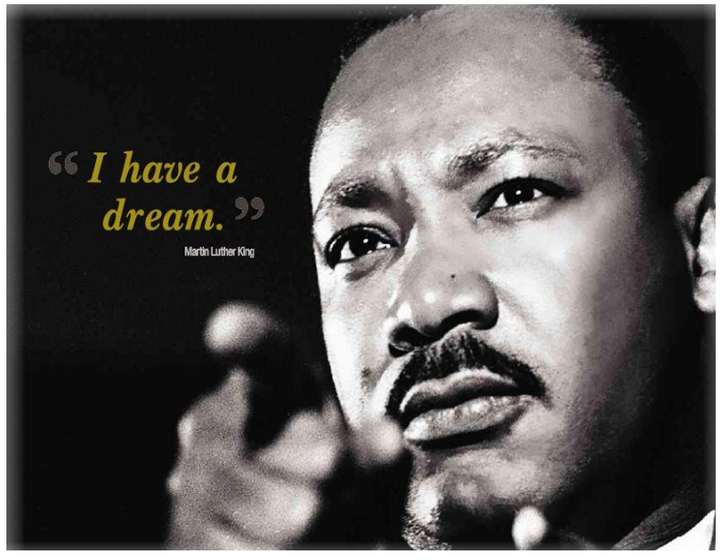

Da Vinci
INVENTIONS

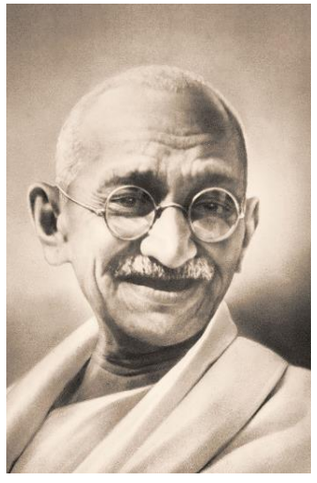
AMELIA
EARHART

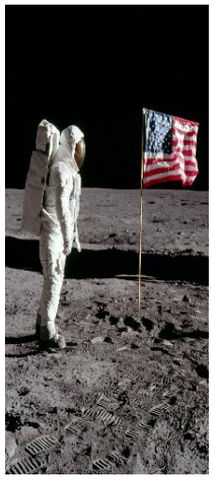


"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart."
:- Helen Keller


"It is not easy to be a pioneer - but oh, it is fascinating! I would not trade one moment, even the worst moment, for all the riches in the world."
Elizabeth Blackwell


"I have a dream."
Martin Luther King





New Tools?

Sometimes, it's just about finding somewhere to start and getting the right people around you. So here is a toolbox full of really useful tools for you to use to start you on your way. Let's take a peek inside…

Clear the Cr*p!

OK, first thing is to clear out the things which are not working for you. People, things, thoughts, emotions. If you think you need help with this, go for it, life's busy and sometimes we need a little hand with some things, a doctor, therapist, friend…

Cut the Ties

We often have 'ties' which hold us back from moving forward and what's really needed is to cut them. Are you in the blame game, are you holding onto old grudges if so, the best gift you can give yourself is to forgive, forget and go forward.

Jar of Joy

You know what, when you've done a lot of clearing and cutting, you need to replace that bad stuff with the good stuff. Put your affirmations, ticket stubs, Champagne corks, pebbles, shells…whatever makes you feel the love, put it in your Jar of Joy.

Create your own mantra!

A beautiful frame to use for your own mantra. Decide who you want to be and… just BE. Change it when you feel like it, set a new mantra and live to it. There's a full size version on the next page for you to print out and write on.

Write your L.I.F.E *list*

L.I.F.E: **L**ovely, **I**nteresting, **F**un **E**xperiences*! Fill your life with things you enjoy and…use the word 'Interesting' to take some sting out of negative or 'bad' experiences. Look at them as opportunities to learn from…"well that was 'interesting'!" It can honestly help you to see things from a whole different perspective

And here's a pot of love from me to you. This stuff is AMAZING and works especially well with all the other tools. Help yourself to big dollops of it every day.

It's a magical jar, it never empties and you can keep topping it up because you can never overfill it.
You can give love to others and still have lots left!

* © "LIFE: Lovely Interesting Fun Experiences" created by Stephanie Priest, founder of The Romance Revolution

So you see, romance is FAR from dead. But, it does need your help to keep it fit and healthy.

- Plenty of exercise. Romance enjoys being out and about. Romance likes interacting and really loves YOU.

- Romance also benefits from a good healthy diet of self-respect, love, a few treats, positive vibes and a regular clear out of negative, harmful things.

- Stress is a quite harmful to Romance but, using the tools in your toolbox can help manage and even eliminate any stress contamination.

- Remember: Romance loves LIFE and LIFE loves Romance.

About Stephanie

The *romance research* seed was planted on 7th July 2012 during a conversation with a friend about dating sites and the frustrations of finding romance in the 21st century (sigh).

She was also fed up of being nice, understanding, supportive and subsequently crapped on, by people who abused her good nature!

Not wanting to turn into a modern-day Miss Havisham, she used her life experiences, psychotherapy training and the Jedi Code to stay away from the Dark Side

Having overcome a few obstacles before – childhood trauma, depression, cancer, single-parenting and towing a 23 foot caravan around the UK - she wasn't going to let a little thing like completely redefining pre-established, deep-rooted concepts of what romance looks like, stop her!

She now practices Reiki and NLP and fully embraces being an HSP. Stephanie has worked as a butcher, cleaner, dog-walker, a PA, nanny, film producer, a lecturer and currently works to help students with learning difficulties realise their dreams and go to university.

After being an informal romance coach to friends for many years, she thought it was high time to spread the love further so, The Romance Revolution was born, L**oose Knickers.com is it's voice**!

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Images of Stephanie courtesy of Miss D J, Stephanie's long-suffering BFF and some taken by Stephanie's extremely patient son! Thank you both so much.

Also, huge thanks go to Colin Priest. This eBook simply would not have been born without your words "put it in a book"!

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