

## **Teenagers in Love: Parents' reactions to teen romance. By Nancy Kalish, Ph.D.**

Friends from our childhood or adolescence are special, no matter how much time has elapsed between visits. These compelling connections are the result of shared roots during the formative years. Our childhood friends and teenage sweethearts experienced with us all the wonderful, horrible, boring, and embarrassing moments that helped to make us who we are today.

Yet, when children are young, parents may regard these relationships as insignificant. If the family must move to a new community and the children's close friends must be left behind, so what? They will make new friends, the parents assure them. But, is a friend as interchangeable as a new toy for an old one, or is there more to friendship than that? Why are we so elated to rediscover long lost friends in our adult years if, as some parents believe, they were so dispensable to us as children?

Even more belittled by many parents is a teenager's (or preteen's) love for a boyfriend or girlfriend. Adults refer to these relationships with demeaning language, calling them "just puppy love," and these romantic bonds are not taken seriously. Parents question the ability of teenagers to know what love is, yet they accept their teenagers' statements, "I love you, Mom & Dad," with full appreciation and at face value. If adults accept that teenagers can love parents truly, then shouldn't they also accept that teen romances are "real" love?

Recreational dating is relatively new. Teenagers many years ago married their first sweethearts right out of high school. These men and women of the World War II Generation married at younger ages than their Baby Boomer children or their Generation X or Millennial grandchildren. But education has become prolonged, so marriage is later.

The age of puberty, however, has dropped. Whatever the reasons for this, reaching puberty influences the age of first love and first sexual experience. It is rare now to marry a first love. Today's teenagers date not for mate selection but for fun. However, the first love experience is no less powerful than it was in the 1940's.

Adults who underestimate the strength of the bond-- or the impact of the loss -- of a first love may have forgotten what a blow it was when they lost their own first loves. They may even try to comfort teenagers with lighthearted lessons: a surprising number of men and women wrote to me to bitterly complain about parents who joked years ago, "Don't worry! Boyfriends/girlfriends are like buses... a new one comes along every ten minutes!" This was not helpful, and it was not funny. The loss of a first love can be so crushing to some teenagers that they become suicidal.

The pain of the breakup will subside with time, but the love may stay buried and dormant for decades. While most men and women find satisfying partners after first love breakups, there are adults who spend their married years aware that "something is missing." They continue to think about their lost first loves. Perhaps if they had married their first loves when they were younger, they tell me, they could have formed lasting and fulfilling marriages, but they will never know. These romances were interrupted - often by their parents' interference.

In my recent survey of 1600 people who volunteered at Syracuse University's SurveyResponse.com (because they like to fill out surveys), ages 18 to 92, 56% of the participants said they would not want to go back to their first loves, 19% were not sure -- but 25% said they would!

Even the adults who had no current interest in their first loves, including those who had only bitter memories, revealed that these early romances influenced their life-long attitudes about love, and even about themselves.

The longer I study lost loves and lost love reunions, the clearer it becomes to me how important young love really is. First love, young love, is indeed real love. This intense love does not come along every ten minutes. For some people, it may come only once in a lifetime.

## Theories of Love by Kendra Cherry

Psychologists and researchers have proposed a number of different theories of love. The following are four of the major theories proposed to explain liking, love, and emotional attachment.

### Components of Love

Psychologist Zick Rubin proposed that romantic love is made up of three elements: attachment, caring, and intimacy. Attachment is the need to receive care, approval, and physical contact with the other person. Caring involves valuing the other person's needs and happiness as much as your own. Intimacy refers to the sharing of thoughts, desires, and feelings with the other person.

### Compassionate vs. Passionate Love

According to psychologist Elaine Hatfield and her colleagues, there are two basic types of love: compassionate love and passionate love. Compassionate love is characterized by mutual respect, attachment, affection, and trust. Compassionate love usually develops out of feelings of mutual understanding and shared respect for each other.

Passionate love is characterized by intense emotions, sexual attraction, anxiety, and affection. When these intense emotions are reciprocated, people feel elated and fulfilled. Unreciprocated love leads to feelings of despondence and despair. Hatfield suggests that passionate love is transitory, usually lasting between 6 and 30 months.

According to Hatfield, passionate love arises when cultural expectations encourage falling in love, when the person meets your preconceived ideas of an ideal lover, and when you experience heightened physiological arousal in the presence of the other person.

Ideally passionate love then leads to compassionate love, which is far more enduring. While most people desire relationships that combine the security and stability of compassionate with the intensity of passionate love, Hatfield suggests that this is rare.

### The Color Wheel Model of Love

In his 1973 book *The Colors of Love*, John Lee compared styles of love to the color wheel. Just as there are three primary colors, Lee suggested that there are three primary styles of love. These three styles of love are: (1) Eros, (2) Ludos, and (3) Storge.

Continuing the color wheel analogy, Lee proposed that just as the primary colors can be combined to create complementary colors, these three primary styles of love could be combined to create nine different secondary love styles. For example, a combination of Eros and Ludos results in Mania, or obsessive love.

### Lee's 6 Styles of Loving

- Three primary styles:
  1. Eros – Loving an ideal person
  2. Ludos – Love as a game
  3. Storge – Love as friendship
  
- Three secondary styles:
  1. Mania (Eros + Ludos) – Obsessive love
  2. Pragma (Ludos + Storge) – Realistic and practical love
  3. Agape (Eros + Storge) – Selfless love

## The Romantic Evolution of True Love by Meredith F. Small

True love is all about finding that one certain someone, and anthropologists have led us to believe that the quest for the perfect mate is evolutionarily based. Humans are, the researchers contend, a naturally pair-bonded species.

The standard scenario goes like this: Human babies are born about three months too soon because upright walking changed the female pelvis and babies have to get out before their heads grow too big. As a result, human babies are born neurologically unfinished; they can't sit up or grasp or do much of anything. By necessity, adult humans are designed to respond to the cries and babbles of infants; we rush to feed them and pick them up. The burden of this kind of child care is so intense, they say, that it takes two parents to bring up even one baby.

Women are prone to care for babies because they give birth to this packet of half their genes. But males will only help if the female pledges to be monogamous and the male is assured of paternity; the baby is only worth a man's investment of time and energy if the baby is indeed his.

Thus is born the non-Darwinian evolution of romance, hearts, flowers and chocolates, and the vow to be a pair-bonded for life.

But are humans really pair-bonded?

Anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy of the University of California, Davis, maintains that this pair-bonded scenario is old-fashioned and probably biased by what Western culture thinks is "right." Instead, Hrdy thinks, there are other, even better, ways to bring up babies. In her book "Mother Nature" (Ballantine Books, 2000), Hrdy claims that humans are really a cooperative breeding species, meaning that in the ancient and not so ancient past, groups of people took care of kids. Only recently has parenting been relegated to only Mom and Dad. But in modern times, there really wasn't any need for that male-female bond.

It may have been that groups of sisters were the best caretakers. They share genes in common, and therefore would be compelled to take good care of their nieces and nephews. Grandparents would also be likely candidates since they should be very interested in making sure their grandchildren, with whom they share so many genes, make it to sexual maturity.

Beyond Western culture where we favor idea of a monogamous pair-bond as the ideal caretakers of children, there's lots of evidence that even today cooperative breeding is still around. In many cultures, children are brought up by extended families that live together or across the compound. Studies of non-Western cultures also show that older siblings are also routinely involved in baby and child care. Even in Western culture today, daycare is a form of cooperative breeding even if those caring for our kids are not relatives but employees. It's still communal care of children.

If Hrdy is correct and our species has a long history of cooperative breeding, then there is no real reason for a lasting pair-bond between adults. In fact, many romantic bonds don't last long enough to insure that a child will make it to adulthood maturity, let alone past grammar school. One look at the divorce rate and it's clear that even if our species has a hint of pair-bondedness in us, it's obviously ebbing away.

Does this mean we should forgo the flowers and candy and chocolate this time of year? Of course not. In the absence of lots of help to bring up the kids, we should take all we can get.

## Love at First Sight Might Be Genetic by Clara Moskowitz

Love at first sight could be real, at least when it comes to genetics, a new study suggests.

In research done with fruit flies (but which may have implications for humans) scientists found that females are biologically primed to sense which males are more genetically compatible with them, and to make more eggs after mating with good matches than they do with less compatible matches. The findings suggest that females can somehow judge a potential mate upon first meeting and biologically react to boost the chances of producing successful offspring.

The researchers mated female fruit flies with males from the same strain, and from a different strain, and noted differences in reproductive attributes and behavior soon after mating. When females mated with males that were not of the same strain, they seemed to be able to tell that they were more genetically compatible, perhaps because their progeny would be less inbred, and produced more eggs and more offspring.

It appears the females can sense which males are closely related to them — a factor that can lead to genetic defects — and respond better to males that are expected to produce healthier offspring.

"You could call it love at first encounter. That might be the most accurate, because we don't really know what about this encounter is driving this response," said study co-author Andrew Clark of Cornell University, explaining that it wasn't just sight, but perhaps smell or sound or some other sense that alerted a female her biological match was near.

The scientists discovered that the females seemed to be in a primed state even before meeting the males, with the chemicals and proteins needed for their response already in place, without the need for new genes to be activated, as the researchers expected.

"The idea of priming is that even when the female is in the absence of males, that's her way, her status is this configuration of proteins," Clark told *LiveScience*. "She's wired for love. That's who she is. And then the response to different males might be different because of that primed state."

The researchers say that the mating practices of fruit flies and humans are different enough that it's tough to directly extend their findings to humans, though it's possible that human females can also sense which males are genetically best suited to them, and their bodies may respond in ways that boost the chances of mating success.

"In mammals, including humans, the answer seems to be 'yes,' there is some differential pregnancy success deepening on the female's sensing of the male, and as a result of the genetic quality of males," Clark said.

He described a famous T-shirt experiment in humans, in which people tended to prefer the scent of T-shirts belonging to individuals that were a greater genetic mismatch for them, again perhaps the body's way of trying to prevent inbreeding.

"We also saw that males from one fly strain were more successful in garnering progeny with females [of both strains]," said study lead author Mariana Wolfner, professor of developmental biology at Cornell. "One could imagine that sort of thing happening in any species, if a particular male made more sperm, or sperm that were better at reaching or fertilizing eggs, or if he made versions of seminal proteins that better interacted with the physiology of his mate. But I don't know of any direct evidence of this in humans."

The study was detailed in the April 2009 issue of the journal *GENETICS*.

## **The Most Tragic Love Stories in History by Heather Whipps**

Nothing celebrates Valentine's Day quite like a good love story. And by good, we mean tragic, of course.

Though Shakespeare's plays are littered with doomed lovers — unrequited passion and death makes for good reading, apparently — couples equally as star-crossed can be found in the world's history books. These five tragic historical tales from the ancient to more recent past are as sad as anything that has ever been conjured up in fiction:

### **Cleopatra and Mark Antony**

It's a love story so epic that Shakespeare saw it fit to be the subject of one of his tragedies. They met in 41 B.C. at the height of turmoil in the Roman Republic; she, an Egyptian queen, seduced him, a powerful (and already married) general, into a romantic and tenuous political alliance between their territories. The alliance would prove sour when future emperor Octavian convinced the Roman senate that Antony was power-hungry and bewitched by Cleopatra, declaring war on his former partner in 31 B.C. Both Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide during the war rather than be captured.

### **Heloise and Abelard**

British poet Alexander Pope turned their story into a piece of classic literature, but Heloise and Abelard were in fact real, ridiculously in love, and doomed to a tragic end in mid 12th century France. Abelard was the girl's live-in tutor, 20 years her senior, and the romance so enraged her disapproving uncle that he had Abelard castrated shortly after they were discovered. Distraught, the lovers entered the monastery and wrote a set of now-famous letters to each other until their death, though they never met again.

### **Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal**

Ever heard of the Taj Mahal? The famous palace in India is actually the ultimate declaration of love, built in the 17th century by Shah Jahan as a stunning final resting place for his beloved wife. Mumtaz Mahal — or "Jewel of the Palace," as he named her — was the ruler's third wife, but he clearly favored her and was so grief-stricken when she died during childbirth that he immediately began work on the Taj Mahal. It took 23 years to complete the homage, where he joined her at his own death in 1666.

### **Ines de Castro and King Pedro**

Ines de Castro became a lady-in-waiting for Princess Constance of Portugal in 1340 and quickly stole the heart of her prince Pedro, the heir to the Portuguese throne. When Constance died in 1349, Pedro tried to make Ines his lawful queen — they already had three children together — but his father the king intervened, banishing Ines and ultimately having her murdered when geographical distance couldn't keep Pedro away. The act sparked a civil war between father and son and, when the latter claimed victory, Pedro exhumed his lover, built her a royal tomb, and had all of Portugal swear allegiance to Ines as their queen.

### **Queen Victoria and Prince Albert**

Our most modern of tragic love stories is just over a hundred years old and from an unlikely source — the British royal family. The love that Queen Victoria felt for her husband Prince Albert was as genuine as her 63-year reign was long, say historians, and his untimely death in 1861, 40 years before hers, devastated the otherwise powerful monarch. Victoria favored the color black for the rest of her life and spent much of the last decades of her reign in relative seclusion. When she finally passed away in 1901, she was interred in their common mausoleum and had these words inscribed over the door: "Farewell best beloved, here at last I shall rest with thee, with thee in Christ I shall rise again."

Non-Fiction Correlated Reading – *Romeo and Juliet*

1. State the main idea of the article in one sentence.
2. Summarize the entire article. (4-6 Sentences).
3. State one fact or idea from your article that you found particularly interesting. Tell why you found it so interesting.
4. State one fact or idea from your article that you did not entirely agree with or found to be confusing, difficult, or uninteresting. Again, tell why.
5. Apply or relate your article to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. (4-6 Sentences).

## Works Cited

Cherry, Kendra. "Love Theories - Major Theories of Love." *Psychology - Student Resources - Psychology Articles*. Web. 13 May 2010.

<<http://psychology.about.com/od/loveandattraction/a/theoriesoflove.htm>>.

Kalish, Nancy. "Teenagers in Love | Psychology Today." *Psychology Today: Health, Help, Happiness + Find a Therapist*. 2 June 2009. Web. 13 May

2010. <<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sticky-bonds/200906/teenagers-in-love>>.

Moskowitz, Clara. "Love at First Sight Might Be Genetic | LiveScience."

*LiveScience | Science, Technology, Health & Environmental News*. Web.

16 May 2010. <<http://www.livescience.com/culture/090408-genetic-love.html>>.

Small, Meredith F. "The Romantic Evolution of True Love | LiveScience."

*LiveScience | Science, Technology, Health & Environmental News*. Web.

13 May 2010. <<http://www.livescience.com/culture/090213-hn-pair-bonding.html>>.

Whipps, Heather. "The Most Tragic Love Stories in History | LiveScience."

*LiveScience | Science, Technology, Health & Environmental News*. Web.

13 May 2010. <<http://www.livescience.com/history/090212-tragic-love-stories.html>>.