The Real Power of Love

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**Love is a feeling that keeps the world turning. Why are we able to love? Often, we do not know what to do with this feeling. It can trigger fears and social anxiety, but we need it to continue on our path and get to the places where we want to be. Love is very powerful because it keeps us in a relationship, in an interaction, with another human being. To be able to love someone else, we need to know more about ourselves, especially about our needs, wants and the things we value. We also need to be able to communicate openly, which requires communicating with oneself more openly.**

Keywords: love, relationship, self-discovery, values, Communication-Focused Therapy, CFT, communication, psychotherapy, psychiatry

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# The Drive for Connection

Love is an emotion. It means relating to others emotionally and having the sense of being connected. This connection is an important part of life. We survive and prosper through connections. Much of our life is directed at building and maintain connections along which meaningful messages can travel. Being alive means communicating (Haverkampf, 2010), and this communication can come in many different forms. But it all has in common that meaning is constructed which brings about changes in the real world.

## A Relationship

We define ourselves also through the relationships we have. Since love is an intense feeling of relating to another person, it has immense power in shaping how we think about ourselves. Relationships are vehicles for meaningful communication between human beings, and love aspires to attain a relationship at its closest. Even if love is unrequited by the other, it can be an intense feeling that helps define oneself as a person. The ability to feel love is a prerequisite to developing a sense of wholeness as a person.

A relationship is the expectation of further communication in the future (Haverkampf, 2017b, 2017a), and it probably requires meaningful communication. It usually involves reciprocity, self-disclosure, interest in the relationship and the other, and the means to communicate with another (Haverkampf, 2010). One may then ask what makes a loving relationship different from other kinds of relationships. Love is usually associated with an emotional bond. Depending on the distance to the other person or information that triggers thoughts about the other person, various emotions of positive or negative valence can be triggered.

Emotions are more than what they appear to be. They integrate a vast amount of information. From external perceptions to thoughts, an emotion is the end product of a massive amount of information processing. One of the most potent aspects of love is thus in the information that goes into it. If one has a loving bond with someone else, it tells us a lot about how they experience the world, their needs, values and aspirations. The latter make up what the author has called the ‘basic parameters’ (Haverkampf, 2018b), which are fundamental to a person’s behaviours, interactions and perspectives. Love thus gives us an insight into what is truly important to a human being, and what they feel they need and values. Love as a feeling is always right, but there may be many situations where there is only an illusion of love.

## A Person

Connecting with another human being means connecting with someone specific and the wider world at the same time. There is an evolutionary program for connecting with others; we exchange information, learn and become better equipped to reach and fulfil our aspirations. When two people connect, and when they reflect on their connection, they will note even more clearly, that there are still two distinct people who decide to connect. With love, this is different. While one still acknowledges oneself and the other, the connection moves more into the foreground and does not feel like a choice, but more as a given. Love goes beyond dualities, beyond recreation, beyond Jung’s archetypes of animus and anima, as it is fundamentally about connection and feeling connected. Experiencing love raises the importance of connectedness. It is not dependence. The need to be connected with someone is very different from feeling a connection, love, which does not even depend on the other person.

## Communication

Love means an intense form of communication that resonates with oneself deeply. If there is an openness to this resonance emotionally and cognitively, love can bring about change. The reason is that resonance provides rapid feedback, and openness to feedback means instant learning and quickly understanding the other person. The adoption of new perspectives increases one’s insight into the world and oneself.

One does not have to communicate externally to feel love. Although love is often about a bond with a specific person, one can also experience love and a heightened feeling of connectedness, without a particular target. It is then a feeling of ‘generalised love’.

Since every feeling and thought can influence which communication patterns one uses, and how one uses them (Haverkampf, 2010, 2018a, 2019), love finds expression in how one communicates with others. Changes in the exchange of meaningful information with others reflect the feelings of love.

## Closeness

A loving relationship can potentially become closer than any other relationship. It means greater transparency, feedback closer to one’s personality, and even an insight into the core of the self through mirroring and other mechanisms. All this may be scary and, also depending on one’s own life experiences, it may lead to fears and the uneasiness about a loss of control. Assuming control, however, foremost means the ability to yield it. The kind of love that strengthens an interpersonal bond can make it easier to do so. Love provides enormous strength, but it only does so, if one accepts its existences. For love to lead to greater freedom and influences over one’s destiny means embracing it fully.

Love allows for a form of communication that is quite powerful, as it affirms the foundations of a connection. It is directly about the quality and strength of a bond between people. It reaches in the past and in the future through its affirmation of connectedness.

# Values, Needs, Wants, Interests, Aspirations

To be in a romantic relationship, and to love, one needs to have a sense for oneself, one’s values, fundamental interests and true aspirations, among others. At the same time, this will reveal itself more in a romantic relationship, as both partners learn from the interactions, the communication, in it. The enormous flow of information that is more intimate and closer to one’s core sense of self leads to learning that is closer to how we conceive of ourselves than any other relationship. The reason lies in the evolutionary ancestry of the romantic relationship. The survival of humankind is an important objective, so romantic relationships allow an information transfer between the partners that goes in its depth beyond any other interaction there is. This does not mean that procreation is necessary for this degree of informational intimacy; it is instead a reason why it exists.

The needs, values and aspirations of a person have been described by the author as the ‘basic parameters’ (Haverkampf, 2018b). They are relatively stable and constant over time. Love is closely connected with them in that a feeling of love is more likely to be present if there is an alignment in the basic parameters. However, at the same time, love is not bound to a specific set of basic parameters. As a feeling that reinforces connectedness in itself, it is rather independent of where it exactly came from.

# The Information Content of Feelings

The information content of feelings seems less specific than that of thoughts or behaviours. However, feelings can be a complex aggregate of information that may be intimidating to decode. Looking at something as complex as love, asking why someone is in love is usually impossible to say. Feelings are mainly the result of the subconscious processing of large amounts of information. Love as a feeling is thus the result of the processing of vast information flows that reaches us through the senses, cognitive thinking processes or other channels.

# Love as an Enigma

What makes love such an enigma is that we are not aware of all the information that goes into its making. Often, what makes us more likely to love someone is something we do not process consciously. And, even if we knew in the present what we love in someone else, it often is the result of past experiences and information which we were not aware of at that time either. The mystery of love is thus a reflection of the large quantity of information that goes into it.

# Communication and Personality

Love requires the communication of messages between people, but also within the components that make up our sense of personality. It is not just the little gesture we find so endearing in the other person, but also how we react to it, that has significance and meaning. Without communication, there can be no love. Communication is not only necessary for an expression of love, but it is also for us to realize who we are in love with. Uncertainty is usually a consequence of a lack of communication and meaningful information.

# Meaning

Meaningful messages, the communication of something relevant and novel, provide us with the information that goes into feelings, such as love. The feeling can then lead to new communication and new behavior that shares the feeling with others. Love thus requires the freedom to exchange meaningful messages, which may not be possible for intrapersonal or situational reasons. Often people who come into psychotherapy have difficulties in sharing with how they feel. Reasons may be various experiences in the past, believes they have adopted from their family or friends, and being overwhelmed by difficult circumstances in the present.

# The Broader Sense of Love

Love does not have to be romantic, but can also be the deep sense of connection one feels with people in general. A therapeutic relationship should also be built on a special connection towards the client and an attitude of caring that goes beyond a purely contractual relationship. Sometimes it is important for the client to feel something that may be missing in everyday life, but the real reason is that change requires an exchange of many meaningful messages, the novel information that is only communicated in a relatively safe setting. It is the deep interest in the other and an appreciation for the individual that is so fundamental to any therapeutic work.

# A Deep Interest in the Other

Love means having a deep interest in the other, that is tied to emotions and to one’s values, to who one is as a person. Love thus requires stripping away one’s blind spots, because where we feel real love is the core of one’s self, which then establishes contact and resonates with the other self. Very young children already attach to others, while later they conceive the other person as separate and then internalize him or her into themselves, if doing so seems to be of a psychological benefit to us. The more we know about ourselves the more stable and longer lasting are the meaningful relationships we enter with others. Openness in interactions with other people helps one to get there.

# Enduring Love

Truly felt love is very enduring, regardless of whether we are able to live it or not. The reason is that there is so much information that goes into the feeling, from our personality to the information we receive through our senses. Our ability to feel love, and any other feeling, says a lot about who we are, because all the parts of our personality take a part in processing information from the world outside and inside ourselves. In the end, this information so leads to the feeling of love or being in love. Since our personality and who we are in our core self, such as our values, true interests and preferences, changes little, love can be enduring, if our love is in sync with these values and preferences. This, in turn, requires being open with oneself to the same degree as one is open to the world around. Real love is stable because it rests on these sets of values, interests and aspirations that are central to one’s personality and unlikely to change quickly.

# The Past and the Environment

Love requires work because our environment and our past experiences have an influence on how we perceive ourselves. This can lead to a distorted image, if what we are told does not agree with our true values, interests and aspirations. On the other hand, being open to oneself and having a sense for what issues are one’s own and which belong to the partner, can lessen the grip of past experiences on the present. Reflecting on what one truly self

# Communication in the Beginning and the End

So, communication is the process where love begins and ends, but also which maintains is. As children, we attach ourselves to others and develop trust in others. Over time we develop more mature mutual relationships. If something disturbs this process, in which we develop more complex communication and interaction patterns, it can also interfere with our ability to love.



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