

Love Triangle

By: Kevin J. McClure, LCPC, NCC



It's in the air... Epic stories have been told about it... It is all we need... Blockbuster movies have focused on it... Wars have been fought about it... "It" is LOVE.

Personally, we each have an individual approach to finding it, nurturing it, and keeping it. There is no single right definition, but couples can choose to have a joint approach to growing and keeping it as a continual focus in their relationship.

One of the most profound ideas about love was offered by Robert Sternberg in the 1980's. The following reflects summaries of his book *The Triangle of Love* which includes his research findings indicated only 3 components of consummate love:

INTIMACY + PASSION + COMMITMENT = LOVE

Intimacy refers to those feelings in a relationship that promote closeness. This component includes several expressions of intimacy such as: a) Desiring to promote the welfare of the loved one. b) Experiencing happiness with the loved one. c) Holding the loved one in high regard. d) Being able to count on the loved one in times of need. e) Having mutual understanding with the loved one. f) Sharing oneself and one's possessions with the loved one. g) Receiving emotional support from the loved one. h) Giving emotional support to the loved one. i) Communicating intimately with the loved one. j) Valuing the loved one.

Passion refers to those feelings in a relationship regarding desires and needs. Most of us hear the word "passion" and only think of sexual desires; however, the feeling of intense desire and need to bond with another may also include the aspects of nurturance, affiliation (belongingness), dominance (protection), submission

(safety), as well as sexual fulfillment. The moments of physical expression between two people is often just icing on the cake of one of these initial and much deeper aspects of passion.

Commitment has two types of expression, one short-term and one long-term. Dr. Sternberg described this as "The short-term aspect is the decision to love a certain other, whereas the long-term one is the commitment to maintain that love... A decision to love does not necessarily imply a commitment to that love." Note that commitment is not synonymous with marriage (that would assume that love is not present until after you are married).

Kind of Love	Intimacy	Passion	Commitment
Non-Love	-	-	-
Liking	+	-	-
Infatuated Love	-	+	-
Empty Love	-	-	+
Romantic Love	+	+	-
Companionate Love	+	-	+
Fatuous Love	-	+	+
Consummate Love	+	+	+

(+) indicates that this component is present. (-) indicates the absence of this component.

While each of these 3 components may seem desirable, it is actually their combined presence or absence which defines our love for someone else. In the table, Dr. Sternberg's 8 kinds of love are depicted.

These differing kinds of love can also be used as a continuum – or a process by which couples can evaluate the strength and challenges of their relationship and work towards a consummate loving attachment (i.e. Liking then Romance then Consummate – and perhaps back and forth throughout the relationship). Remember that individual preferences along with life events (i.e. sudden or long term illness, tragedy, grief, even geography) affect the process of developing love between one another.

To evaluate your current partnership relationship, visit the following web site www.familydynamics.net/lovequiz.htm and utilize Dr. Sternberg's on-line love assessment which will include some helpful hints to strengthen each of the 3 components on your way to consummate love. Should you and your partner find yourselves stuck in the process, look to your support system, positive role models, or interview a few marriage counselors to find some assistance in your journey of love.

For more information you may contact Kevin at Chapin & Russell Associates, 3020 W Willow Knolls Road, Peoria, IL, 61614, or call 309.681.5850.



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