

Triangular theory of love

Psychology



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Triangular Theory of Love Love is such a fundamental part of the lives of many people. For many adults, love is one of the main elements that bring them happiness. Different types of people develop different types of love relationships and at different stages of life as determined by the circumstance binding them together. For example, the type of love relationship between friends is different from that between a child and parents or between two marriage partners. This means there are some dimensions of love that interrelate to different degrees to bring about the difference in the various types of relationships. This paper explores the three dimensions/major components of love as identified by a Psychologist named Robert Stenberg and how they interrelate to identify a specific type of love relationship. Dimensions of love Stenberg (1988) developed a model of love that recognises three vertices or dimensions of love. These are passion, intimacy and commitment. According to his Triangular Theory of Love, the three dimensions or vertices of love are the major components of love. Passion is the motivational dimension of love and reflects sexual desire, romance and attraction. This indicates mutual attraction between two people. In other words, they are in love and this greatly interrelates with sexual attraction between them. This indicates that there is deep bonding between the love partners. Passion is critical in a marriage relationship because the chemistry between marriage partners is its future. This means that passion is a key aspect in a romantic love hence marriage partners lacking passion between them have to undergo bonding exercises. Intimacy is the component of love that involves trust, feelings of closeness and the sharing of innermost thoughts between people. According to Stenberg (1988), intimacy is the process in which a person makes efforts to get close

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to another person and this is achieved by exploring the similarities and differences in the way they behave, feel and think. Intimacy develops more and more as partners reveal more about themselves to each other. This increases their knowledge about each other and in this way, trust build and this makes the two people feel accepted. Sternberg (1988) states that removing our masks and revealing our true selves nurtures love. In the triangle of love, commitment is the decision and efforts to maintain a long-lasting caring relationship. It involves dedication to make a relationship as fulfilling as it can be and a complete devotion to one's partner. These reflect personal commitment. Moral commitment involves protecting marriage at all costs and holding to the belief that marriage is a lifelong relationship no matter the circumstances faced. Constraint commitment makes people to continue with a relationship because they fear the emotional, social and financial costs of ending the relationship. Personal commitments make relationships more satisfying while moral commitments makes them last longer. How passion, intimacy and commitment interrelate to identify a specific type of love relationship According to Sternberg (1988) the type of a love relationship is determined by the degree to which a relationship demonstrates the three components of love. Sternberg states that the various combinations of the three components of love creates seven subtypes of love namely liking, romantic love, infatuated love, empty love, fatuous love, compassionate love and consummate love. Romantic love is developed where there are high levels of passion and intimacy but lower levels of commitment. Initially, physical sprouts quickly and dominates the relationship but a healthy love relationship is characterized by a steady increase in intimacy. When this passion cools, the intimacy in this

relationship fosters a companionate type of love between the two people. In companionate love, there are love is an affection for the people we are bound to. Liking involves low levels of passion and commitment but high levels of intimacy. People in empty love relationships are bound by high levels of commitment between each other. However, the levels of passion and intimacy between them is low. Fatuous love is a type of love relationship characterized by high levels of passion and commitment but low levels of intimacy. Infatuated love develops through the interaction of high levels of passion but low levels of intimacy and commitment. Consummate love is an all round love in that it the levels of intimacy, passion and commitment are high between the partners. However, it is a challenge to maintain all of them. Conclusion The scores obtained from Sternberg's triangular love scale describes the type of love relationship between various people. In his model of love Sternberg identifies seven types of love relationships that develop depending on the degree to which intimacy, passion and commitment is evident between the partners. Differences in the answers given to the various statements in Sternberg's scale are instrumental in identifying where change in a relationship is required in order to preserve and strengthen the relationship. References Sternberg, R. (1988). *The Triangle of Love: Intimacy, Passion, Commitment*. New York: Basic Books.