CHAPTER 9
Attraction and Close Relationships

OUTLINE
I. Being with Others: A Fundamental Human Motive
   A. The Thrill of Affiliation
   B. The Agony of Loneliness
II. The Initial Attraction
   A. Familiarity: Being There
   B. Physical Attractiveness: Getting Drawn In
   C. First Encounters: Getting Acquainted
   D. Mate Selection: The Evolution of Desire
III. Close Relationships
   A. The Intimate Marketplace: Tracking the Gains and Losses
   B. Types of Relationships
   C. How Do I Love Thee? Counting the Ways
   D. Cultural Influences on Attraction and Close Relationships
   E. Relationship Issues: The Male-Female “Connection”
IV. Review
V. Key Terms

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: GUIDELINES FOR STUDY
You should be able to do each of the following by the conclusion of Chapter 9.
1. Describe social anxiety and the need for affiliation. Address the relationship between affiliation and stress. (pp. 301-303)
2. Summarize the social difficulties associated with shyness and loneliness. Discuss factors that predict loneliness (e.g., age, transitions) and coping strategies that can be employed to deal with loneliness. (pp. 304-305)
3. Describe the role of familiarity in attraction, including issues of proximity and mere exposure effects. (pp. 305-307)
4. Distinguish between objective and subjective perspectives on physical attractiveness, drawing on data and observations that support both ideas. (pp. 307-310)
5. Describe the what-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype and why it endures. Explain the benefits and costs of being someone who is perceived to be beautiful. (pp. 310-312)
6. Explain the influence of similarity on attractiveness, including the matching and complementarity hypotheses. Discuss the role of reciprocity in liking. (pp. 312-317)
7. Explain the differences between evolutionary and sociocultural perspectives on mate preference. (pp. 317-321)
8. Explain social exchange theory. Define the concepts of comparison level, comparison level for alternatives, and investment. Explain how equity theory differs from social exchange theory. (pp. 322-324)

9. Distinguish between exchange and communal relationships and consider the role of attachment style in studying intimate relationships. (pp. 324-326)

10. Summarize different approaches to classifying love such as Lee’s love styles, Sternberg’s triangular theory of love, and Hatfield’s distinction between passionate and companionate love. (pp. 326-331)

11. Explain the relationship between arousal and attraction, as well as the role that both play in passionate love. (pp. 327-329)

12. Define self-disclosure, and describe typical patterns of disclosure in relationships. (pp. 329-331)

13. Discuss cultural and gender differences with regard to issues of attraction, intimate relationships, and sexuality. Consider how social psychologists study sexual orientation. (pp. 331-336)

14. Discuss communication and attribution patterns that can lead to conflict in relationships. Describe patterns of marital satisfaction and issues regarding the end of intimate relationships. (pp. 336-340)

MAJOR CONCEPTS: THE BIG PICTURE

Below are three basic issues or principles that organize Chapter 9. You should know these issues and principles well.

1. Being with others appears to be a fundamental human motive. We are drawn to affiliate with others and are quite good at regulating the level of interactions with others that we desire. We are especially likely to seek affiliation when we experience stress and can affiliate with people who share our fate. But not everyone is able to gain the intimacy that they desire. Loneliness is a persistent problem for some.

2. There are many factors that lead us to be attracted to others. We are attracted to people who we live near and encounter frequently. We are also attracted to people we find physically attractive. Certain features tend to be seen as more attractive by most people – even babies appear to find these features more attractive. However, there also appear to be significant variations due to culture, time, and circumstances in what people find attractive. When getting acquainted with others, we tend to like those who are similar rather than those who are different or opposite. We also like people who like us; and this is especially true if they are somewhat selective in whom they like. Finally, evolutionary perspectives suggest that men and women have important differences in what they find attractive. Men focus more on physical attractiveness as a sign of fertility and become jealous when they believe their partner has become unfaithful. Women focus on a man’s ability to care for children and on his financial resources and become jealous when their partner forms an intimate relationship with someone else.

3. Social psychologists have devised several models to explain the development of intimate relationships. One model, social exchange theory, tries to explain relationship formation in terms of a marketplace. People develop intimate relationships if they provide more rewards and fewer costs than not being in the relationship or being in another relationship. Other researchers argue that in some relationships we are only initially concerned with exchange, while in other relationships we take a more communal approach and are concerned with meeting the needs of our partner. Still others note that our relationship styles may mirror the attachments that we had with our caregivers in early childhood. There are many different ways to classify love in relationships, but a common classification recognizes passionate love, an emotionally intense state
of absorption in the other person that is characteristic of early relationships, and companionate love, a secure, trusting, and stable partnership that is characteristic of later relationships. Cultural influences play an important role in the understanding of attraction and close relationships.

KEY TERM EXERCISE: THE CONCEPTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Below are all of the key terms that appear in boldface in Chapter 9. To help you better understand these concepts, rather than just memorize them, write a definition for each term in your own words. After doing so, look at the next section where you’ll find a list of definitions from the textbook for each of the key terms presented in random order. For each of your definitions, find the corresponding textbook definition. Note how your definitions compare with those from the textbook.

Key Terms
1. intimate relationship
2. hard-to-get effect
3. passionate love
4. loneliness
5. matching hypothesis
6. mere exposure effect
7. equity theory
8. self-disclosure
9. need for affiliation
10. reciprocity
11. communal relationship
12. companionate love
13. social exchange theory
14. attachment style
15. excitation transfer
16. triangular theory of love
17. exchange relationship
18. what-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype
19. sexual orientation
**Textbook Definitions**

a. A relationship in which the participants expect and desire strict reciprocity in their interactions.

b. The theory that people are most satisfied with a relationship when the ratio between benefits and contributions is similar for both partners.

c. The belief that physically attractive individuals also possess desirable personality characteristics.

d. A quid-pro-quo mutual exchange – for example, liking those who like us.

e. The tendency to prefer people who are highly selective in their social choices over those who are more readily available.

f. The process whereby arousal caused by one stimulus is added to arousal from a second stimulus and the combined arousal is attributed to the second stimulus.

g. The proposition that people are attracted to and form relationships with those who are similar to them in particular characteristics, such as physical attractiveness.

h. A secure, trusting, stable partnership.

i. The desire to establish and maintain many rewarding interpersonal relationships.

j. A feeling of deprivation about existing social relations.

k. A theory proposing that love has three basic components – intimacy, passion, and commitment – which can be combined to produce eight subtypes.

l. Revelations about the self that a person makes to other people.

m. A perspective that views people as motivated to maximize benefits and minimize costs in their relationships with others.

n. The way a person typically interacts with significant others.

o. The phenomenon whereby the more often people are exposed to a stimulus, the more positively they evaluate that stimulus.

p. Romantic love characterized by high arousal, intense attraction, and fear of rejection.

q. A close relationship between two adults involving at least one of the following: emotional attachment, fulfillment of psychological needs, and interdependence.

r. A relationship in which the participants expect and desire mutual responsiveness to each other’s needs.

s. A person’s preference for members of the same sex (homosexuality), opposite sex (heterosexuality), or both sexes (bisexuality).
ANSWERS FOR KEY TERM EXERCISE
Answers for the key terms exercise are listed below.
1. q
2. e
3. p
4. j
5. g
6. o
7. b
8. l
9. i
10. d
11. r
12. h
13. m
14. n
15. f
16. k
17. a
18. c
19. s
PRACTICE QUIZ: TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHAPTER

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Muhammad does not like Joe. Howard does not like Joe. Muhammad and Howard like each other. Joe does not like either Muhammad or Howard. This pattern is consistent with
   a. balance theory.
   b. internal attributions.
   c. contrast effects.
   d. psychological reactance.

2. The kind of attachment in which people report that they desire attachment but are afraid of being hurt is called
   a. secure.
   b. avoidant.
   c. anxious/ambivalent.
   d. fearful.

3. When people like her, Jenny likes them. When people dislike her, Jenny dislikes them. Jenny’s likes and dislikes exemplify
   a. assimilation.
   b. reciprocity.
   c. resource exchange.
   d. complementarity.

4. All but one of the following have been suggested as explanations for the bias for beauty. Which is the exception?
   a. The aesthetic appeal of an individual affects others’ responses to him or her.
   b. Men are interested in physical appearance, whereas women are interested in interpersonal warmth.
   c. People believe in the what-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype.
   d. Interactions with physically attractive people are likely to be more rewarding because physically attractive people tend to have higher levels of social skills than do physically unattractive people.

5. Exchange relationships are characterized by
   a. deep affection and commitment.
   b. a high degree of self-disclosure.
   c. strict payment and repayment of benefits by one partner to the other.
   d. insecurity due to the nature of the interaction.

6. When Gene meets an attractive member of the other sex, his only thoughts concern how he can have a good time without making a commitment. Gene’s approach illustrates
   a. companionate love.
   b. social exchange theory.
   c. self-disclosure reciprocity.
   d. jealousy.
7. Jamal and Veronica have been married for ten years. While their marriage was exciting and wild in its early days, they have since settled into a routine of care, nurturance, and friendship with one another. The changes in Jamal and Veronica’s relationship illustrate the difference between
   a. passionate and companionate love.
   b. secure and insecure attachments.
   c. self-disclosure and social penetration.
   d. exchange and communal relationships.

8. Luis and Shelia consoled each other when their parents passed away, supported each other’s careers, and provided comfort for each other in times of loneliness. Research on ________ shows that these rewarding interactions are strongly associated with the couple’s satisfaction and commitment.
   a. self-disclosure reciprocity
   b. the triangular theory of love
   c. the social exchange framework
   d. the two-factor theory of emotion

9. Ruth thinks that people find her physically unattractive. Tina thinks that people find her physically attractive. Both Ruth and Tina received very favorable evaluations of their work on some task. Compared to Ruth, Tina should have felt better about the quality of her work if
   a. the evaluator was of the opposite sex.
   b. the task was social rather than cognitive.
   c. they both think that the evaluator was physically attractive.
   d. they both think that the evaluator was unaware of their physical appearance.

10. Bobby and Joan have been going out for some time. They began dating very casually, but then Bobby revealed that he was having trouble with his roommates and Joan revealed that she was still broken up by her father’s death two years ago. As they shared these experiences, Bobby and Joan became closer. Their actions illustrate
   a. self-disclosure reciprocity.
   b. the triangular theory of love.
   c. social rewards in their relationship.
   d. the two-factor theory of emotion.

11. Graciella tends to play “hard to get” and appears not to like most people. Social psychological research suggests that
   a. people will be attracted to Graciella to the extent that she shows no interest in them.
   b. Graciella will be seen as more attractive by people who think that she is committed to someone else.
   c. Graciella will be viewed as more attractive if she seems moderately selective rather than extremely selective in her social choices.
   d. people such as Graciella, who play hard to get, are extremely attractive to others.

12. David is a heterosexual 45-year-old man. Research suggests that he is most likely to be attracted to
   a. a woman whose needs are opposite his; for example, if David needs to control others, he should be most attracted to someone who likes to be controlled.
   b. a woman whose personality is opposite his.
   c. a financially successful 45-year-old woman.
   d. a woman whom he thinks has the same attitudes as he does.
13. Brenda and Chris have been having difficulty in their relationship. Brenda thinks that Chris puts less than his share of time into the relationship and doesn’t try to please her. Chris gets quiet and sulks when Brenda makes these accusations. Brenda and Chris’s relationship seems to display
   a. negative reciprocity.
   b. the demand/withdraw interaction pattern.
   c. lack of social support.
   d. anxious/ambivalent attachment.

14. In order to manage conflict in a relationship, each partner should try to
   a. self-disclose about the other partner’s problems.
   b. ignore the other partner’s problems.
   c. understand the other partner’s point of view.
   d. make his or her demands for the relationship known to the other partner.

15. Intimacy, passion, and commitment are three components of
   a. passionate love.
   b. companionate love.
   c. the triangular theory of love.
   d. communal relationships.

16. Jim often forgets to finish the chores he has agreed to do around the house and sometimes is insensitive toward Molly. Molly usually brushes off such instances, saying that it isn’t Jim’s fault he’s often too stressed out. Such attributions for Jim’s behavior are
   a. indications of trouble in Jim and Molly’s relationship.
   b. characteristic of happy couples.
   c. likely to create communication difficulties.
   d. are likely to cause trouble for Molly but not for Jim.

17. People who have an interdependent self-concept – that is, those who include others in their definition of themselves – are likely to
   a. make self-serving attributions.
   b. have enduring relationships.
   c. have low self-esteem.
   d. have high self-esteem.

18. Stanley will have an especially great desire to affiliate with other people if he
   a. is not under any stress.
   b. is somewhat worried about learning his test results and has the opportunity to be with similar others who are in the same situation.
   c. expects that he is going to be put in a situation that will be very embarrassing to him.
   d. is experiencing a great deal of fear about an upcoming situation and has the opportunity to be with others who are very dissimilar to him and who are not facing a similar situation.

19. José and Lucinda have a happy marriage. They spend a lot of time together and see themselves as being interdependent. If José were to pass away, Lucinda is likely to
   a. be able to handle it well.
   b. be more broken up than the typical spouse.
   c. never recover.
   d. form other relationships quickly.

20. Americans are lonelier today than ever before; this is partially due to
   a. Americans being disconnected from their families.
   b. Americans being disconnected from their neighbors.
   c. Americans being disconnected from their coworkers.
   d. All of the above are correct.
21. In a recent study of Internet ratings of professors’ teaching ability, high ratings were associated with
   a. being “Hot.”
   b. being “Cool.”
   c. being smart.
   d. being funny.
22. When it comes to close relationships, research has shown that __________ love is a widespread and universal emotion.
   a. passionate
   b. romantic
   c. companionate
   d. equity

**Essay Questions**

23. Compare and contrast companionate and passionate love.
24. Describe two communication patterns that may lead to conflict in relationships.
25. Discuss the positive and negative consequences of having an interdependent relationship.
26. Discuss how people’s attachment styles influence their physiological reactions to relationship conflict.
ANSWERS TO THE PRACTICE QUIZ

Multiple-Choice Questions: Correct Answers and Explanations

1. a. balance theory. Balance theory proposes that people desire consistency in their thoughts, feelings, and social relationships. A balanced pattern of attraction requires that we like someone whose relationships with others parallel our own. Usually, we like those who are friends of our friends and enemies of our enemies. Consistent with this, Muhammad and Howard see each other as enemies of their enemy, Joe, and therefore like each other. Joe’s dislike of the other two men reciprocates their dislike of him, and so this pattern, too, is balanced. Internal attributions locate the cause of a condition or event in the person rather than in external circumstances, but attributions are not described in this question. Contrast effects concern the tendency to perceive stimuli that differ from expectations or other stimuli as even more different than they really are, but, again, there is no evidence of this phenomenon in this question. Psychological reactance refers to the theory that people react against threats to specific behavioral freedoms by perceiving a threatened freedom as more attractive and trying to re-establish it; in this question, however, no freedom was threatened.

2. c. anxious/ambivalent. Anxious/ambivalent attachments are characterized by a strong desire for a relationship, together with a fear that the relationship will not work out properly. Secure attachments are characterized by warmth and affection, together with a sense of independence and self-worth. And avoidant attachments are characterized by a reluctance to develop relationships. Although people may be fearful in a relationship, this trait is not usually called an attachment style.

3. b. reciprocity. Reciprocity is a quid-pro-quo mutual exchange between what we give and what we receive – for example, liking those who like us. Consistent with this idea, Jenny likes those who like her and dislikes those who dislike her. Assimilation in the context of attraction often refers to the phenomenon in which people of average physical attractiveness are judged as more attractive when they are observed together with very attractive-looking people and as less attractive when they are observed together with unattractive-looking people, but this phenomenon is not relevant to this question. Resource exchange involves the resources that people possess, but this question does not give any information about the resources Jenny possesses or is seeking. Complementarity refers to a fit between opposites; it is consistent with the idea that “opposites attract.” However, this question gives no indication that Jenny is attracted to people who have needs or personality traits opposite, or complementary, to hers.

4. b. Men are interested in physical appearance, whereas women are interested in interpersonal warmth. Both men and women are attracted to and react more favorably toward people who are physically attractive. Therefore, the difference between men and women alleged in this question could not explain the general bias for beauty. The other three alternatives have been offered as explanations for this bias. (A fourth explanation is that people desire to increase their own perceived attractiveness through association with attractive others.)

5. c. strict payment and repayment of benefits by one partner to the other. Exchange relationships are defined by the strict equity in exchanges between partners. They are usually casual or business-type relationships and, as such, they are not characterized by deep affection and commitment or a high degree of self-disclosure. These relationships can be quite stable and are not typically characterized by insecurity.

6. b. social exchange theory. Social exchange theory suggests that people try to maximize their rewards and minimize their costs in a relationship. Therefore, when Gene tries to maximize his
fun while minimizing his commitment, his approach illustrates social exchange theory. Companionate love emphasizes a concern for the other person that has developed into a deep friendship, so this characteristic does not fit Gene. Likewise, self-disclosure reciprocity and jealousy do not emphasize maximizing rewards and minimizing costs in a relationship.

7. a. **passionate and companionate love.** Passionate love often characterizes the early days of a relationship and contains a strong emotional component, much like the exciting and wild days of Jamal and Veronica. Companionate love is usually seen later in a relationship and is characterized by a deep loving friendship, much like the routine of care, nurturance, and friendship in Jamal and Veronica’s relationship. There is no evidence that Jamal and Veronica have insecure attachments; and while their strong relationship might indicate a secure attachment, there is no illustration of the difference between these kinds of attachments. Likewise, Jamal and Veronica’s description can tell us little about self-disclosure and social penetration or about exchange and communal relationships.

8. c. **the social exchange framework.** Luis and Shelia have given each other comfort, support, and companionship – clear rewards that they receive from their relationship. Rewards, along with costs and comparison level, are one of the building blocks of social exchange. It seems likely that Luis and Shelia have self-disclosed to each other, but this is not stated in the question. Similarly, there is no evidence of the triangular theory of love or the two-factor theory of emotion.

9. d. **they both think that the evaluator was unaware of their physical appearance.** People who think that they are judged as physically attractive often discount the praise they receive for their work because they suspect that the evaluation they received was influenced by their physical appearance. If these people think that the evaluator was unaware of their physical appearance, however, then they have no reason to suspect that the favorable evaluation was due to their looks, and so they feel better about their work. People who think of themselves as physically unattractive, in contrast, often feel better about the quality of their work after getting a favorable evaluation from someone who they think was aware, rather than unaware, of their physical appearance. Neither the sex of the evaluator nor the evaluator’s physical attractiveness is as important as Ruth’s and Tina’s thoughts about whether the evaluator was aware of their physical appearance. Tina would probably feel worse than Ruth about a favorable evaluation if the task was social rather than cognitive.

10. a. **self-disclosure reciprocity.** When Bobby revealed something important about himself (that he was having fights with his roommates), Joan responded by revealing something even more personal about herself (her feelings about the loss of her father). This back-and-forth exchange of personal, meaningful information, which gradually gets more personal and more meaningful, is self-disclosure reciprocity. The triangular theory of love and the two-factor theory of emotion do not entail information exchange in a relationship. One of the social rewards in a relationship is having someone who listens, but this concept also does not explain the exchange of information between Bobby and Joan.

11. c. **Graciella will be viewed as more attractive if she seems moderately selective rather than extremely selective in her social choices.** As the main text indicates, the hard-to-get effect – the tendency to prefer people who are highly selective in their social choices over those who are more readily available – has been very hard to get in social psychological research. People are especially unlikely to be attracted to someone who plays hard to get if the person has shown no interest in them or if the person is fully committed to someone else. In contrast, someone who appears to be moderately selective tends to be viewed as more attractive than someone who appears to be extremely selective.

12. d. **a woman whom he thinks has the same attitudes as he does.** Perceived (though not necessarily actual) similarity in attitudes is associated with attraction. Because complementarity,
which is a fit between opposites, does not tend to affect attraction, there is no reason to assume that David will like someone whose needs or personality are opposite his. Cross-cultural research has found that men prefer mates who are younger than they are, and that they rate the financial status or potential of a mate as less important than women do. Thus, there is little reason to assume that David will be especially attracted to a woman who is 45 years old and is financially successful.

13. b. **the demand/withdraw interaction pattern.** Brenda seems to be making demands in this relationship that Chris feels he cannot meet. In turn, Chris seems to be withdrawing. This demand/withdraw pattern of interaction has been associated with conflict in relationships. There is no evidence of negative reciprocity, or the escalation of the perception of negative affect in the partner, in Brenda and Chris’s relationship. Likewise, we might guess that Chris and Brenda offer each other little social support or have an anxious/ambivalent attachment, but there is no clear evidence for either of these conclusions in the question.

14. c. **Understand the other partner’s point of view.** When partners make an effort to understand each other’s point of view, conflict in a relationship can be diminished. It is unclear whether self-disclosing about a partner’s problems, ignoring the partner’s problems, or making demands known to the partner will diminish conflict. Making demands known to the partner could be particularly troublesome if it leads to the demand/withdraw pattern of behavior.

15. c. **The triangular theory of love.** The three components of love according to the triangular theory of love are intimacy, passion, and commitment. This theory does not discuss passionate love, companionate love, or communal relationships.

16. b. **Characteristic of happy couples.** Happy couples usually make relationship-enhancing attributions for each other’s actions. In other words, they tend to minimize the negative actions and weaknesses of their partners and maximize the positive actions and strengths of their partners.

17. b. **Have enduring relationships.** People who are interdependent and include others in their definition of themselves have particularly strong attachments to others. These attachments make it more likely that these people will have enduring relationships. There is no evidence that people who include others in their definition of themselves have higher or lower self-esteem, or are more likely to engage in self-serving biases.

18. b. **Is somewhat worried about learning his test results and has the opportunity to be with similar others who are in the same situation.** Stress increases a person’s desire to affiliate with others if he or she believes that being with others is likely to reduce the stress. This is particularly true when the stress is manageable and not related to embarrassment or other social anxieties, and if the individual believes that the other people are similar to him or her and can help him or her assess the situation.

19. b. **Be more broken up than the typical spouse.** Interdependent relationships are more likely to endure, but when such relationships end, either in death or in a breakup, the partners are more likely to have difficulty coping with the loss. These people do seem to recover eventually, even though they are unlikely to form other relationships quickly.

20. d. **All of the Above are Correct.** In some parts of the world, human beings are lonelier today than ever before. In *Bowling Alone*, Harvard Professor of Public Policy Robert Putnam (2001) argued that Americans are more disconnected from their families, neighbors, coworkers, and communities than in the past. Not too long ago, he wrote, thousands of people belonged to bowling leagues. Today they are more likely to bowl alone. Lamenting the adverse effects, Putnam (2006) preaches: “You gotta have friends.”
21. a. being “Hot.” An analysis of ratings of student evaluations posted on www.ratemyprofessor.com, a popular web site, reveals that both male and female professors who were rated highly for their teaching were also more likely to be described as “hot” (Riniolo et al., 2006).

22. a. passionate. When it comes to close relationships, research has shown that passionate love is a widespread and universal emotion. In surveys conducted throughout the world, William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer (1992) detected indications of passionate love in 147 out of 166 cultures as varied as Indonesia, China, Turkey, Nigeria, Trinidad, Morocco, Australia, and Micronesia. Drawing on this universality, some researchers have begun to explore the underlying neuroscience. For example, anthropologist Helen Fisher (2004) believes that romantic love is hard-wired in the neurochemistry of the brain. In particular, Fisher argues that the neurotransmitter dopamine—which drives animals to seek rewards, such as food and sex—is essential to the pleasure that is felt when these drives are satisfied. Hence, she argues, dopamine levels are associated with both the highs of romantic passion and the lows of rejection.

Answers to Essay Questions: Sample Essays

23. Passionate love is more typical of the early stages of a relationship. It is characterized by high states of arousal and strong emotions. Being passionately loved is joyous; being rejected is heartbreaking. Companionate love, on the other hand, is more typical of the later stages of a relationship. It is comfortable and warm, characterized by stability, security, trust, and deep friendship. Most people admire both kinds of love. They enjoy the intense emotion of passionate love and the stable trust of companionate love.

24. One communication pattern that may lead to conflict is negative affect reciprocity. In this pattern, one partner notices a small negative reaction in the other partner and follows it with a negative reaction of his or her own. This back-and-forth exchange continues. One version of this pattern, where there is more reciprocity of the man’s negative affect by the woman and less reciprocity of the woman’s negative affect by the man, seems to be particularly damaging. A second communication pattern that can lead to conflict is the demand/withdraw interaction pattern. In this interaction pattern, one partner initiates and demands discussion, while the other partner seeks to avoid discussion. The demanding partner nags and criticizes; the withdrawing partner remains silent and defensive. This pattern can lead to a regular pattern of conflict with little or no resolution.

25. When two people are involved in an interdependent relationship, such that they include their partner in their definition of themselves, their commitment is likely to be stronger and more enduring. They are more likely to spend time together, to engage in shared activities, and to influence each other. However, when such a relationship ends, either in a breakup or at death, they tend to have more difficulty coping with the loss of the relationship. Perhaps it is because these individuals have lost a more significant part of themselves – relative to others not involved in an interdependent relationship – that they have greater difficulty dealing with this outcome.

26. There is reason to believe that people’s attachment styles influence their physiological reactions to relationship conflict. In one study, Power (2006) brought 124 college-aged dating couples into the laboratory to discuss a heated conflict they’d been having. Before and after this “conflict negotiation task,” the researchers took saliva samples from all participants to measure levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. The results showed that boyfriends and girlfriends who were insecurely attached exhibited more physiological stress in response to the conflict task than did those who were securely attached.