

Why Do Fools Fall in Love?
Understanding the Magic, Mystery and Meaning of Successful Relationships

INTRODUCTION

"You're not sick, you're just in love", explains Irving Berlin. "Lord, what fools we mortals be", decides Shakespeare's Puck. Are we fools to want to fall in love, or just fools for having fallen? Or is it perhaps not foolish at all to fall in love? We may never fully understand what accounts for this universal and elusive condition, but like moths to a flame, we can be certain that we will fall: again, and again, and again.

Why are we so compelled to fall in love? What is this mysterious life force that most all of us desire, even knowing full well the pain, loss, fear and angst that often accompanies it? How do we explain an energy so subjective that it strikes only the eyes of the beholders; so transformative that mind and body can only but surrender; so powerful that it can bind two people together for a lifetime, and so magical that it defies rational explanation? How, we wonder, are we to understand the nature of this tender beast that breathes life into our most cherished relationships?

Social scientists know well that our survival and cultural livelihood depend on understanding the kinds of feelings and behaviors that allow relationships to thrive. Indeed, we have amassed a wealth of data that can prescribe what to do more of and less of, that suggest verbal formulas for better communication, and that identify actual mathematical ratios of good to bad interactions to predict who will stay happily married. Curiously, however, these scientific inquiries tend to avoid studying the one, powerfully invisible, central phenomenon without which none of the other variables hold meaning or utility: *love*.

And with good reason. Love, as we all know, is neither a singular nor objective phenomenon, and as such it defies our ability to define or study it precisely. To try to do so would also be to undermine love's more magical and mysterious qualities; the very qualities our book wishes to explore. Yet, perhaps if we *could* understand love's method,

that flame like moths we seek could be fanned into warmth and longevity rather than threaten to burn us --and then burn out.

Hoping to learn more about how love fuels and sustains relationships, we invited 30 of our most thoughtful colleagues and relationship experts to share their personal views about the nature of love. We decided to probe the minds of various authors, academics, mediators, counselors, marriage therapists and educators who have impressed us over the years with their wisdom and ability to express a deeper meaning beyond mere technique or problem-solving. Specifically, we invited them to write an essay that would “go beyond the more coolly mechanical aspects of this field to create a deeper, more complete vision of what constitutes truly happy long-term relationships” --in 1000 words!

The responses were positively inspiring. These essays stretch beyond the limits of scientific research to reveal a kind of magic that lives between lovers. They describe an energy so basic to intimate relationships that without it none of the skills we teach could take root.

For example, Steven Pinker suggests that we must rely on an irrational, self-negating emotion to sustain marriage. Henry Grunebaum thinks love is wise. Dee Watts-Jones sees it as a process of “opening”; Janice Levine as one of “beholding”. Wayne and Mary Sotile believe love is about heroism. Pat Love and Sunny Shulkin suggest that we are rendered virtually helpless when struck by Cupid’s chemical cocktail. Frank Pittman and Jessica Bethoney caution us that to follow our passion is a death wish, while Peggy and James Vaughan suggest that we haven't lived fully unless we risk going for "the Full Monty." For Shirley Glass, "The Harder We Fall, the Farther We Fall" whereas Charles Verge argues that love and devotion can bring us to the highest level of spiritual awakening. Harville Hendrix unravels love's underlying psychological knot while Peter Fraenkel believes that quite simply, we "get a kick" out of the people we love. Stephen Gilligan thinks we die multiple deaths in marriage for the same reasons that James Hollis directs us to relinquish our search for a Magical Other: to grow up. Steven Stosny welcomes the mirror marriage affords yet Amy Gerson cautions us against seeking our

own "psychological mirage" in soulmates. Karen Blaisure pinpoints the power of gratitude, Rita DeMaria the bond, Scott Stanley the sacrifice. And these represent but a sampling.

To further tantalize you, you will find a variety of short quotes or exercises accompanying each essay in the margins alongside the text. These "sidebars", drawn from a variety of sources including the authors, poets, and even some well-known celebrities, highlight each essay's key ideas and provide a kind of "sneak preview" into what they are about.

While all of the essays are indeed varied and unique, we have arranged them into four broad subsections or themes. The first section looks at love's *Magic*, in which we explore how love miraculously transforms us. These essays consider whether love's magic is to be trusted and cherished above all else, or instead renders us chemically altered, "foolish mortals" in pursuit of a mere fantasy. We then consider love's *Meaning*—from a broad personal and spiritual perspective, as well as in terms of what love means more specifically. In *Marriage* we are given a view into the interiors of various long-term relationships, and discover what successful marriages entail. Finally, the section on *Mastery* clarifies many of love's mysteries, and helps us learn important lessons about how to love well.

We present you with this unabridged volume of essays about love, with no commentary, and no attempt to propose a unifying theory or bottom line. Instead, we offer an array of perspectives from which we hope you will find what's most meaningful to you, and that we hope will give you a key to unlocking your own capacity to love. We may agree or disagree with what these authors have to say, but like you we are all students, open to learning, and amazed at the range of insights from which we can choose. Read this book as if each sidebar were a sweet flirtation; each essay a warm embrace. We hope you enjoy the magic within.

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