

SELAH - PAUSE AND REFLECT

The Love-Hate relationship with Love

Why do we form relationships?

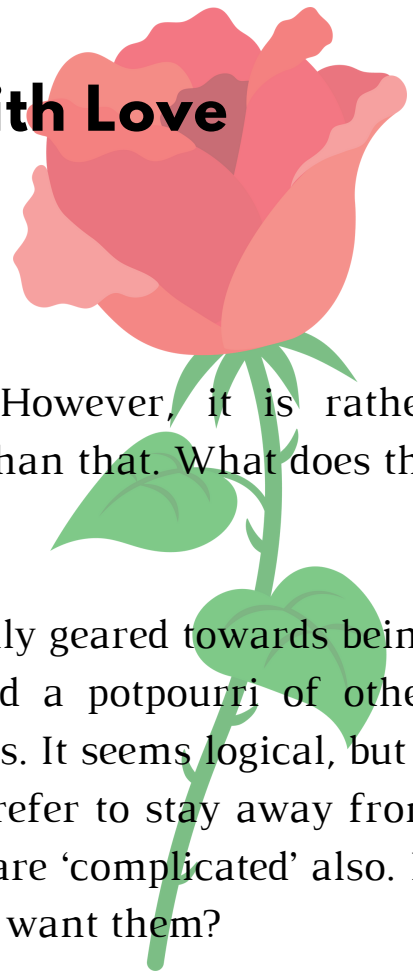
“Humans are social animals”.

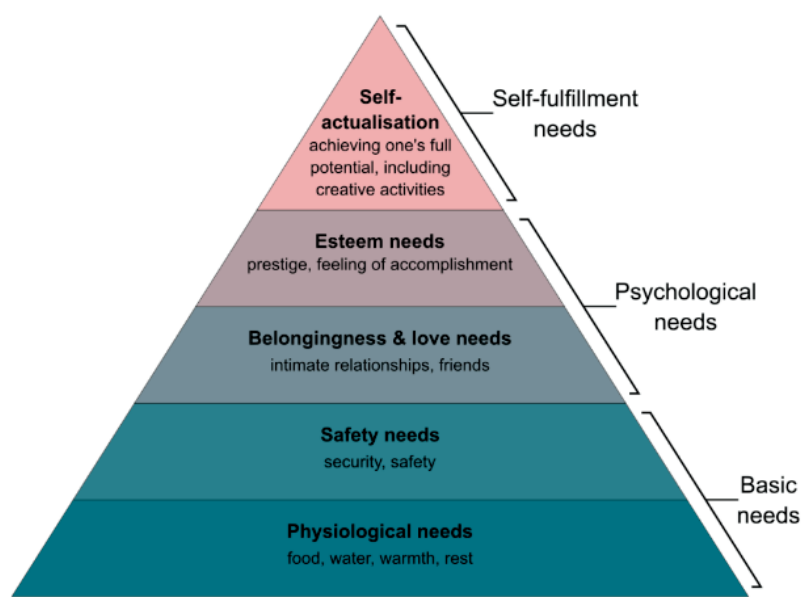
This phrase seems to answer the question. However, it is rather reductionistic. Humans are much more complex than that. What does the statement imply though?

One of the meanings is that humans are genetically geared towards being with people- it releases oxytocin, serotonin, and a potpourri of other chemicals to make us feel good when that happens. It seems logical, but a group of people is aversive to this- people who prefer to stay away from everyone, away from relationships because they are ‘complicated’ also. If relationships are so innate, how can someone not want them?

This Love-Hate relationship with Love is what we are going to explore

Relationships started to be formed several thousand years ago because they increased the chances of survival. As a part of a pack, hunting or fending off enemies was much easier. Over time, people who had the social skills to sustain bigger packs automatically survived more. In a way, all of the surviving humans evolved from “social butterflies” among our ancestors. It is therefore not surprising that we all have an innate need to be wanted, to belong, or to be approved.





Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a very famous humanistic theory from psychology essentially ranks different kinds of needs that people will have. The first need includes the physiological needs of the body- hunger, thirst, and sex. The second is the need for safety and security- a physically safe space. The third is Love and Belongingness. After the two concrete and body-based needs, the first important psychological need is that of love. One may even argue that feeling 'safe' comes with approval to 'be yourself' within relationships.

To think of it, we always yearn for love (romantic or otherwise) across our lives. As children, we actively want to be loved by our parents. As we grow and become adolescents, we seek the love and approval of our friends or people that we like. From the same age, we also strive to 'belong' and have a group of people with whom we can explore, learn and validate experiences. As we grow older, the number of friends will be replaced with a much deeper relationship with fewer people. Humans are more cognitive beings than our ancestors- and so while it may appear we are reducing social interactions, we are in fact being much more social.

The need is definitely there, why then, are there so many people isolating themselves, choosing to avoid people?

The need for love and belongingness is the first and most important psychological need- success would mean a rush of endorphins, but failure would mean equally intense feelings of hurt too. As with any high-stakes situation, the pressure is a lot. Evolution has given us one even more potent feeling other than love- fear.



Fear increases the chances of survival before love and relationships happened. It's older than the dawn of primates and for that reason, it's much more powerful. Psychological hurt is felt in the same part of the brain as physical pain. This means the pain of getting rejected or betrayed is as intense as burning your leg. If we learn once that fire hurts, we are very less likely to go near it again. On similar lines, if we learn that love can hurt, we'd rather sit it out than risk it.

This is why push and pull happen. Wanting to be loved is an innate need but it can hurt a lot. The biological longing and the fear of getting hurt will create a lot of distress inside of us. We employ a lot of defenses against this feeling- including convincing ourselves it is better to be alone and maintaining superficial contact to avoid deep burns.

Admitting that we want companionship, where our true authentic self is loved and accepted, is the first step. The second is to admit the fear that putting your authentic self out there, will only be met with rejection and hurt also exists. It may even be true that it has even happened before. The third step would be to look at it as a risk-based investment that may pay off. We can increase the chances of pay-off by looking for signs to be sure of the probability of success. However, the risk still remains- we can never know for 100%.

Looking out for yourself would look like pushing through that fear to get your own needs satisfied. It is like standing up to a bully who eats your food because you don't want to be hungry anymore.

We recommend you get real, put yourself out there while bracing to get hurt, and also be loved!

Monthly Takeaway

"How you love yourself is how you teach others to love you."

-Rupi Kaur



Things Happening at Room

The Elephant in the Room - Room's monthly thought circle is back this month on the 25th of February. This time we deep dive into relationships and how we recognise red flags and green flags in the relationship. Join us for this in-person event in Ahmedabad! Registration link on our website and on Instagram bio.

Internship and Training programs

Basic Counselling Skills - a month-long training program on basic counselling skills open for masters-level students. In this program, we understand how each counselling skill is implemented in the sessions, how to conduct initial sessions with your clients, and aiding in rapport building.

- **Humanistic approach** - 3 months long training and internship program open for masters-level students and recent graduates looking to upskill and learn to have a more person-centred approach towards psychotherapy. This internship program will also allow you to take clients and get supervision for the same.
- **Existential approach** - aiming at aiding the trainees with the incorporation of existential principles to psychotherapy, this introductory course to existential approach is open for practitioners who have completed 100+ hours of client sessions using the traditional psychotherapeutic approach, or trainees who have completed the training program on a humanistic approach.
- **Peer Supervision** - We understand how challenging and lost it can feel to work with clients when you are freshly graduated. To assist practitioners in providing the best care possible to their clients, we are starting individual peer supervision sessions for fresh practitioners in the humanistic and existential approaches to psychotherapy. To sign up and more details about the sessions, visit our website.

