

Love, Romance and Relationships during Covid-19: A Journey Not Going Smooth

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Abstract

Relationships, specifically the romantic ones; are sources of support and comfort for every individual along with same being beneficial for their holistic health too. However, the opposite has also been observed when conflicts do arise in a relationship, which, though could origin out of multiple aetiologies, major stress or environmental factor can play major role into it. The current COVID 19 pandemic is witnessing the same worldwide; with variable level of distress, conflict even up to instances of domestic violence. Here, in this review, the possible reasons of such changed human behaviour and solutions of the same has been discussed briefly. Worries and tensions, which will stay long with us during this uncertain time, can definitely be better managed when faced in a psychological state of appropriate bonding and support from the significant others.

Keywords: Love; Romance; Relationships; Covid-19

Introduction

Relationships has always remained the pillar of support and place for comfort for every human being. Love, both in its non-romantic or romantic form, is majorly pivotal for a happy, healthy and productive life. It not only elevates one's mood and sense of well-being, but improves the productivity of oneself, causes more social integration with better health outcomes and even longevity [1]. On the other hand, absence of having romantic partner(s) has been linked with negative health behavior (like smoking) or negative health outcomes (like hypertension and obesity) as well [2].

The current ongoing pandemic of COVID 19 has largely affected human lives and its social living, mostly in the negative way. Romance or romantic partnership is no exception to this, as the strictly maintained social isolation, prolonged lockdown with nearly stopped public transportation have hit the couples quite strongly along with impact on their relationships too.

Objectives of the Study

1. To discuss about the psychology of love for a better understanding of how romantic love takes place between two individuals and what can maintain the same smoothly.
2. To understand the reasons of relationship conflicts during the current COVID 19 pandemic along with discussing the possible way outs for the same.

Love psychology

Love has always remained at top amongst the mysterious most emotions or experiences, beyond and often unexplainable by the logical world. Love, is irresistible when it comes, often giving the top of the world feel, till it goes well and smooth; only to feel the reverse when the situation or bonding between the couple changes otherwise. Relationship scientists have provided many theories among which attachment theory and interdependence theory has gained major prominence. Attachment theory, originally stemmed from Bowlby's legendary works on attachment, separation and loss on infant-caregiver relationship [3-5], Was adapted later by Hazan and Shaver [6,7] to explain the close relationships between the adults. Whereas interdependence theory (with original roots from game-theoretic model of dyadic interaction by Thibaut and Kelley's [8] on close relationship gained its proper shape in late 70's and early 80's [9-11]. Hazan and Shaver also later tried to integrate both the model to propose a dominant model of adult relationships in the 1990s [7]. Briefly, interdependence theory puts importance over various social situations and dimensions with its effect on relationship processes, where attachment theory explains romantic interest as the primary attachment figure, where one seeks comfort and shelter at the time of distress. As can be understood in an obvious manner, the current COVID crisis has put re emphasis on both the theories, where the majorly changed social situation has influenced the couple relationships severely; also every distressed person is finding some peace and solace with more attachment with their loved ones.

Though often starts unexpectedly or '... at first sight', Finkel., *et al.* [12] explained various factors which are responsible for a smooth, better and quality close relationship. The tendencies which bring people together can be considered as their individual predisposition, instrumentality and their individual standards; then relationships starts building on uniqueness what attracts the couple to each other; integration and trajectory afterwards; then operates on evaluation, responsiveness between the couple, resolution of conflicts and maintenance of a smooth course. Further, the context which can affect relationship in a severe manner are culture, stress and alternatives available.

Relationships in the COVID time

During this current pandemic, the world has changed a lot, and so has the human behaviors.

The COVID 19 phase has brought the world into a very novel condition where people can't meet each other or get intimate because of its high infectivity and rightly implemented physical distancing and lockdowns. Romantic relationships have been affected majorly also, and mostly in negative way. Social isolation, prolonged lockdown and maintaining distance from one's partner physically as a health measure has turned distressing for most of the couple. As a result, frustration, anger, despair and also desperate attempt to meet the partner has been noticed around the globe. The prolonged isolation and staying away from each other has also generated insecurities about the relationships, and getting the partner's phone busy or signed in (the green light on) at the middle of night can definitely cause a havoc and turmoil into any relationship.

On the other hand, prolonged stay of the couples (mostly married) within the four walls of home, that also continuously; have increased the conflict, altercation or even up to instances of domestic violence between the partners. Along with various attributing social factors (generated out of COVID 19 pandemic situations) like salary cut, actual or fear of job loss, economic downfall or compromised family security (both social and financial) these relationship factors and situations have resulted into massive toll on both individual and population psyche [13].

Some possible way outs

Love can happen anytime and often unexpected as well. But maintaining a relationship, that too a romantic one needs much care, commitment and passion:

1. Spend time together: You may have been kept apart physically, but still you can connect your souls, very much in the virtual world.

2. Do some joint activity: Watch a movie, play some game, cook together, discuss the recipe; engage yourselves into a joint work, where you can join both your souls. You can consider a 'double date'; where you can call a good couple friends of yours and engage yourselves into some fun activities to break the monotony, and also the monotony of 'just you two' feels.
3. Cherish some past memories: All we do have some good moments which we have spend together with our special ones, currently it could be a good time to revisit those memories and make the bond stronger between yourselves.
4. To use this time for self-improvement.
5. For a couple, who are staying mostly indoor during this period, spending 24 x 7 hours with each other, give space to each other, avoid minor conflicts, share the home responsibilities. Specially, for partners of working women, care and concern should be taken not to pile up all the works over a single person.

Conclusion

Tension, worry or mental health issues out of the current situation are increasing gradually, in a quite paced up manner. The burden is not only on the individual, but also on the family and caregivers, health professionals and health care system, and also on the society as a whole. In a time of global distress our resilience, coping and support system can turn extremely valuable and helpful to deal, bear and pass through this time. Love, romance or relationship can turn crucial as its supportive and constructive role can be immense both for any individual or for a couple as a unit. But a turmoil or imbalance there can equally turn detrimental or even source of further distress during this already distressed time. Understanding each other's situation, difficulties and stresses at the period of this lockdown, social isolation and distancing from each other while also being present as a psychological partner or support can alleviate the anxiety or distress to large extent making the situation better for everyone. Better bonding, valuing one's relationship more and coming out as a stronger unit should be the target to sail smoothly through this turbulent and never seen before time.

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