

Micro Moments of Love by Barbara Frederickson

It's time to upgrade our view of love. First and foremost, love is an emotion, a momentary state that arises to infuse your mind and body alike.

Love, like all emotions, surfaces like a distinct and fast-moving weather pattern, a subtle and ever-shifting force. As for all positive emotions, the inner feeling love brings you is inherently and exquisitely pleasant -- it feels extraordinarily good, the way a long, cool drink of water feels when you're parched on a hot day. Yet far beyond feeling good, a micro-moment of love, like other positive emotions, literally changes your mind. It expands your awareness of your surroundings, even your sense of self. The boundaries between you and not-you -- what lies beyond your skin -- relax and become more permeable. While infused with love you see fewer distinctions between you and others. Indeed, your ability to see others -- really see them, wholeheartedly -- springs open. Love can even give you a palpable sense of oneness and connection, a transcendence that makes you feel part of something far larger than yourself. Love, like all emotions, surfaces like a distinct and fast-moving weather pattern, a subtle and ever-shifting force. And the new take on love that I want to share with you is this: Love blossoms virtually any time two or more people -- even strangers -- connect over a shared positive emotion, be it mild or strong.

Odds are, if you were raised in a Western culture, you think of emotions as largely private events. You locate them within a person's boundaries, confined within their mind and skin. When conversing about emotions, your use of singular possessive adjectives betrays this point of view. You refer to 'my anxiety,' 'his anger,' or 'her interest.' Following this logic, love would seem to belong to the person who feels it. Defining love as positivity resonance challenges this view. Love unfolds and reverberates between and among people -- within interpersonal transactions -- and thereby belong to all parties involved, and to the metaphorical connective tissue that binds them together, albeit temporarily. More than any other positive emotion, then, love belongs not to one person, but to pairs or groups of people. It resides within connections.

Perhaps most challenging of all, love is neither lasting nor unconditional. The radical shift we need to make is this: Love, as your body experiences it, is a micro-moment of connection shared with another. And decades of research now shows that love, seen as

these micro-moments of positive connection, fortifies the connection between your brain and your heart and makes you healthier. [...] It can seem surprising that an experience that lasts just a micro-moment can have any lasting effect on your health and longevity. Yet there's an important feedback loop at work here, an upward spiral between your social and your physical well-being. That is, your micro-moments of love not only make you healthier, but being healthier also builds your capacity for love. Little by little, love begets love by improving your health. And health begets health by improving your capacity for love.

--Barbara Frederickson, in Love 2.0