

**We've Got Chemistry**  
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Ah, young love. Do you remember first falling for your spouse? Those late nights talking on the phone? Surprising her with a dozen roses you picked up from the local flower stand? Skipping sleep to write him that epic love poem? Can you recall those countless hours when thoughts and images of your sweetheart seemed to constantly invade your mind? How your hands got sweaty when you thought of him? Your heart pounding moments before you went in for that goodnight kiss?

Love is so emotional, straight from the heart, right? Wrong. Although it's strong, it's powerful, it connects our souls and can take over our thoughts during the day and our dreams at night, there's a science behind love. It's chemical and comes straight from the brain.

The more we understand the science of love, the better we'll understand ourselves, and the better our chances at keeping romance alive, keeping our love fresh, and keeping our relationships strong.

**Remember When? (New Love)**

When we think of love, see it portrayed on TV and film, or read about it in a novel, it's usually exciting and passionate. The lovers can't get enough of each other. They can't sleep. Their hearts race. Their palms get sweaty. And, there's always incredible sex.

So, we think, "I wouldn't mind having some of that? Why isn't my relationship that exciting?"

The easy answer: because that's "new love". That's fresh love. That's the love we used to have.

Phenylethyla... huh?

Phenylethylamine (PEA) is one of the culprits for the excitement of "new love". PEA is a brain chemical that acts like an amphetamine (yes, the drug) during the early stages in a relationship. Your body reacts to it like it would an upper, but without the harmful side-effects and embarrassment of failing a urine test.

Think about falling in love with your current partner. Remember feeling like you were walking on air, the "Cloud Nine" affect, and tossing and turning in bed just thinking about your significant other? Those were the drug-like symptoms of PEA.

The Love Letter Culprit

Another affect of PEA is the release of the chemical dopamine. This little neurotransmitter boosts both our energy levels and our motivation. Why do you think men write love letters and wear cologne and take showers and such early on in relationships? They're being flooded with dopamine.

Can you ever get back these days, ladies? Three words: Ab-So-Lutely! A man's dopamine levels rise when he's challenged (like when he was first courting you), at risk (asking you out on that first date), or when he feels needed, appreciated and rewarded for his efforts.

So, bring him back to that dopamine-induced stupor. Get him motivated to romance you again. Start recognizing his efforts again, no matter how minor. Then, praise him: “The yard looks great, Honey,” or stroke his ego in bed, “Wow, you are still a wonderful lover.” Or, ask for help: “I’m having a problem at work. Think you can help me with it?” or, “Can you give me a hand with this crossword puzzle?” Let him feel successful, then be ready for him to reciprocate with a little deodorant and a few lines of “Roses are red...”

### The Hormone of Desire

That would have to be testosterone. Dopamine is the spigot to testosterone’s faucet, but it’s not a hormone just for men. Testosterone is present in both men and women. It’s released to prepare our bodies for intimacy. That would explain why we’re so sexually active during the early stages of our relationships.

### Jitter Bugs

When we fall in love our hearts race, our hands become sweaty messes and we can become more jittery than a bunny after a double mocha latte (It’s a wonder we’re still attracted to one another after all of that). Norepinephrine is one of the reasons. It’s a second cousin (on his mother’s side) to amphetamines and stimulates the production of adrenalin, which increases our blood pressure when we are in the presence of our love interest.

## **Here And Now (Romantic Love)**

Couples often strive to get back to the stage of “new love”. Although we can grab hold of some of the past, we need to be thankful that we’re forced to move on. How could we get through life with all of this constant heart-pounding, sweaty palms, sleep deprivation and obsessive craving? Scientists believe that somewhere between one and a half and four years, the body grows used to these natural stimulants that bombard our systems during “new love”.

When that happens, love changes. And, many couples find it difficult to accept the new phase of their relationship: “romantic love”. It’s why divorce rates climb around the fourth year of marriage.

But, there’s good news on the horizon. The brain rewards us for “romantic love”. That’s why successful, healthy people with a strong circle of friends, but without significant others strive to find “the loves of their lives”, for long-term committed relationships. We want the rewards of “romantic love”.

Instead of the heart-pumping excitement of PEA and its cronies, “romantic love” rewards us with loyalty, comfort, stability, intimacy, dependability, and a sense of long-term commitment. So, maybe our palms aren’t sweaty, but we feel comfortable and loved in this next phase, mainly due to endorphins.

### Built-In Rewards System

Endorphins are the neurotransmitters that our brains release to reward us for good behavior. When we win, laugh, exercise, have sex, or fall in love endorphins are released. They’re the reasons why we want to continue winning, laughing, exercising, having sex,

and falling in love. Endorphins motivate and energize us. They make us feel happy and alive and allow us to cope with stress easily.

### Sarah Tonan

Serotonin is not the girl you used to sit next to in your third grade class. It's a neurotransmitter that women produce during the "romantic love" phase. Serotonin eases women, relaxing them, allowing them to feel comfort, contentment and optimism, but only if their husbands give their wives the opportunity.

So, fellas, what's a guy need to do to get those serotonin juices flowing? Romance her. Meet her needs; find out what they are: an ear to listen to, help with the kids, a night on the town, sexual intimacy...whatever they may be. When you meet her needs, your wife's guard comes down, serotonin is allowed to increase and endorphins are released resulting in relaxation and an overall feeling of pleasure. Sounds kind of hammock-on-an-island nice, doesn't it?

### The Cuddle Chemical

A pleasant side-effect of increased serotonin is the release of oxytocin. Now, this little bugger is just phenomenal. It's been called "the hormone of love", "the foundation of romance," and even "the key to lasting relationships." And, get this, it affects both men and women. Not bad, eh?

Oxytocin lets us bond with the ones we love. Instead of insomniatic thoughts of our love interest, we feel peacefully warm, loving and affectionate toward them. The release of oxytocin is often triggered by touch: a hug, back massage, even a gentle brush on the neck. But, the hormone can also respond to other types of cues: a whisper in the ear, a song on the radio, or a pleasing fragrance.

When oxytocin is doing its job, we feel the need to romantically or intimately touch the one we love, which, in turn, releases the flow of the hormone in them. Suddenly, they feel the need to touch us. Before you know it, we've got a perpetual motion machine fueled by the cuddle chemical.

The hormone increases our passion and romance. It stimulates testosterone flow (which might temporarily make us feel like we're back in "new love"). But, most importantly, oxytocin releases more endorphins, our prize for staying in love so long.

When it comes down to it, "new love" is amphetamine- and adrenaline-based. It's fun and exciting. But to last ten, twenty, or even fifty years, we must embrace and enjoy the ride that "romantic love" offers us. This part of our relationship is endorphin-based.

During "new love" we love the way **we** feel, but during "romantic love" we love the way that **love** feels.

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