







Navigating attractions and starting relationships

The Brain Science of Romance





Falling in love...
How do you feel?

*We've got chemistry
or*

There's just no chemistry between us

We can't see it – but we **can** feel it





Through the use of MRIs and biological analyses scientists have been able to map some of the chemical changes that do occur with romantic attraction and love.

Each brain system (or stage) is driven by different hormones & neurochemicals

SEX DRIVE

- testosterone & estrogen in both females & males

ROMANTIC ATTRACTION

- Dopamine:
- Norepinephrine
- Serotonin

ATTACHMENT

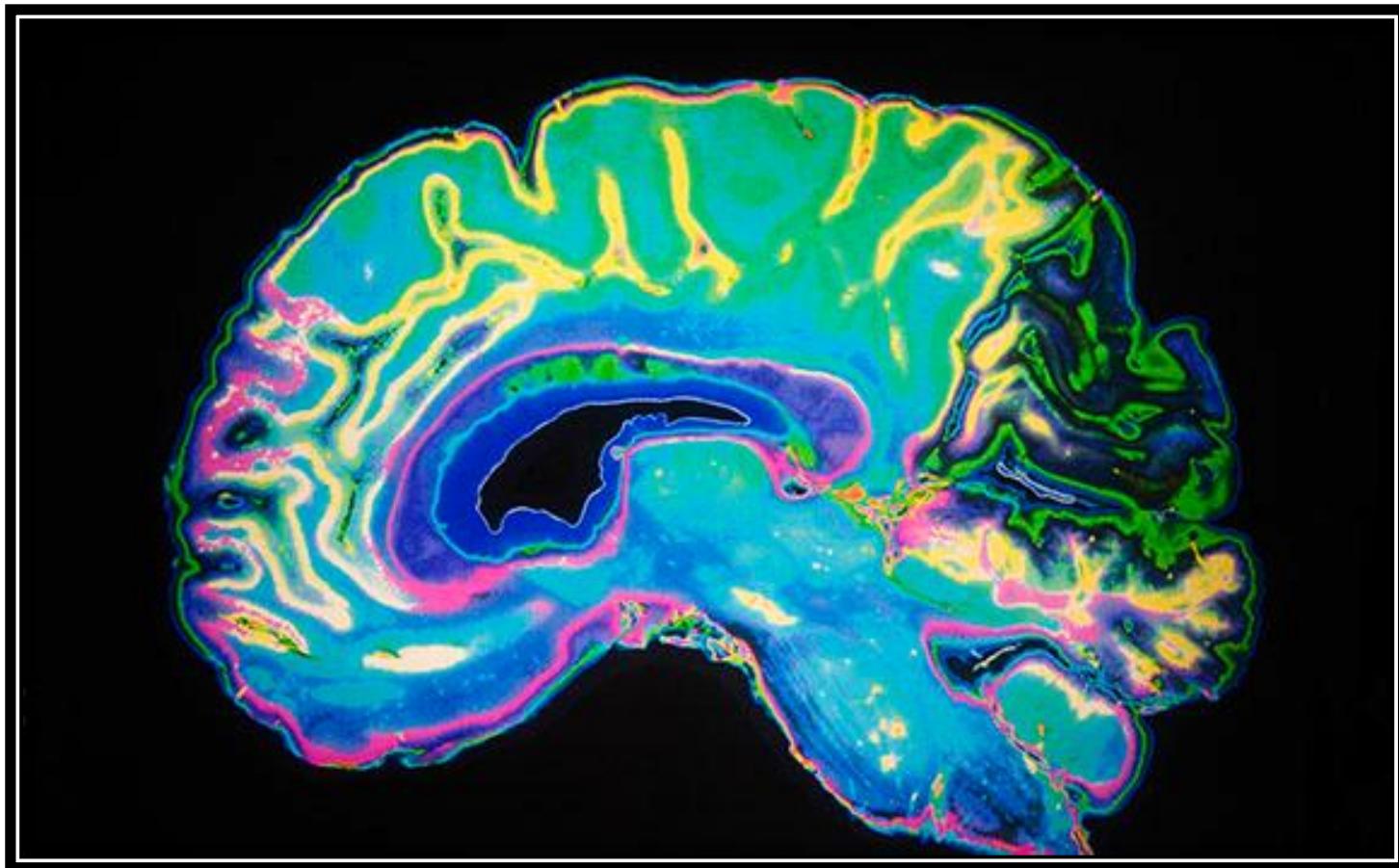
- Oxytocin & Vasopressin

Helen Fisher, biological anthropologist & human behavior researcher—Rutgers University.

Romantic Attraction

- **Dopamine** increases—a chemical neurotransmitter that stimulates desire & reward. It triggers an intense rush of pleasure
- At the same time, **norepinephrine** elevates
- When the **dopamine system is active** we are more positive, excited, eager to go after goals.
- More energetic, more focused attention, and less need for sleep/food.





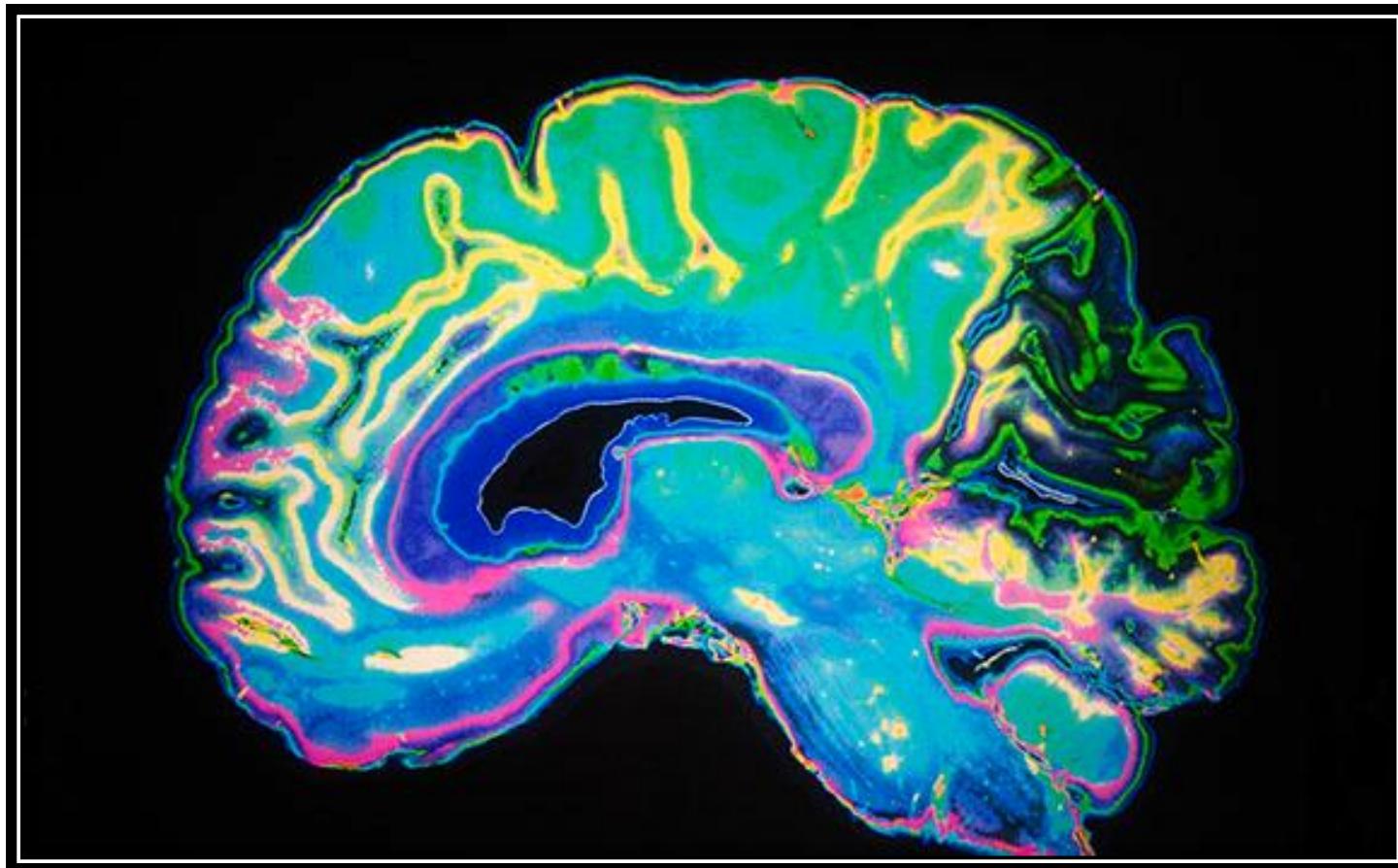
Brain scans show increase blood flow to the areas with high concentrations of receptors for dopamine—areas associated with euphoria, craving and addiction.

Serotonin—a happiness neurotransmitter

- Serotonin is Zen-like. It is linked to tranquility, reason and calm. Levels are **lower** when fall in love.
- Explains our lower levels of reason and calm
- New lovers are obsessed just like those with OCD.



Activated & de-activated parts



- Areas that control judgment, fear, negative emotions are substantially de-activated.



Oxytocin—Attachment



- Promotes emotional bonding, trust, devotion.
- Triggered by supportive touch (hug, kiss, massage, caress and sex and orgasm)
- Also calms us down, reduces stress, lowers blood pressure

Oxytocin & vasopressin interfere with the dopamine and norepinephrine pathways

May explain why couples move from a *dopamine-drenched state* of excited passionate attraction

to

the *relative calm of an oxytocin-induced* sense of attachment.

The behaviors of romantic love

We'd all do well to remember them.
They are important for maintaining
good relationships over time.



And, also be smart about
the *love chemicals*.

Enjoy the feelings.
Remember the
behaviors you engage
in now.



Love Notes

What do you like about him or her?
What does he/she like about you?





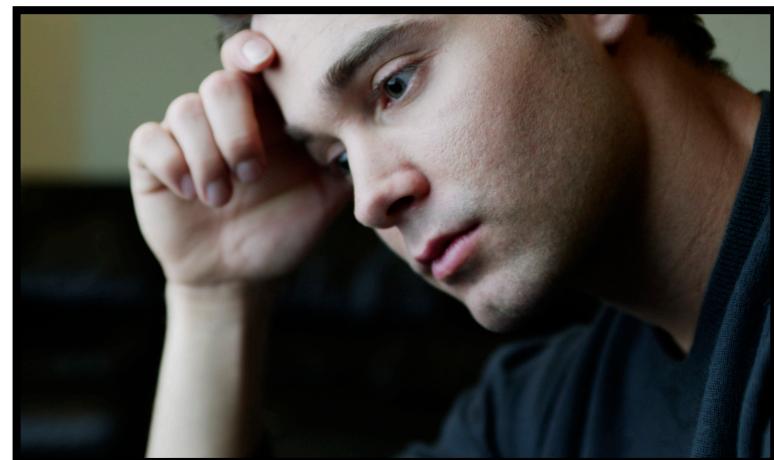


The 3-6-9 Rule

ENJOY the good feelings...have fun!

Wait on big decisions until the chemicals
settle down a bit.





An Opportunity



Paying more attention to attractions, romance and emotions. The promise of relationship education.

7 Principles for Smart Relationships

1. Seek a good match
2. Pay attention to values
3. Expect good communication
4. Don't go into a relationship thinking you can do a “make-over”
5. Don't change yourself just to keep someone's love or friendship
6. Don't play games, pressure or use someone
7. Expect respect—have standards

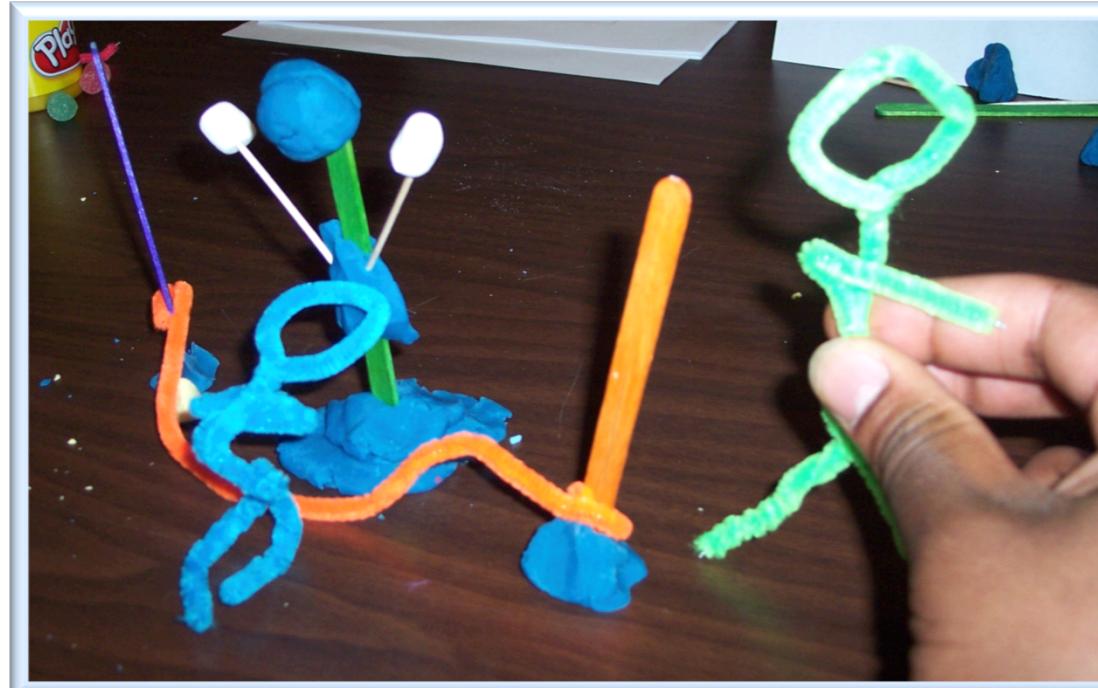
Is It a Healthy Relationship?



1. Is it Controlling? Disrespectful?	OR	Equal & Supportive?
2. Is it Conditional?	OR	Unconditional?
3. Is it mostly about sex or money?	OR	Is the attraction on many levels?

Controlling & Disrespectful

- The girl is bowing down to the guy.
- The orange line represents that he feels she is not even worthy to step on his side.
- She has to answer to him. She has to beg for permission to see her friend (green figure on the side), or to do anything.



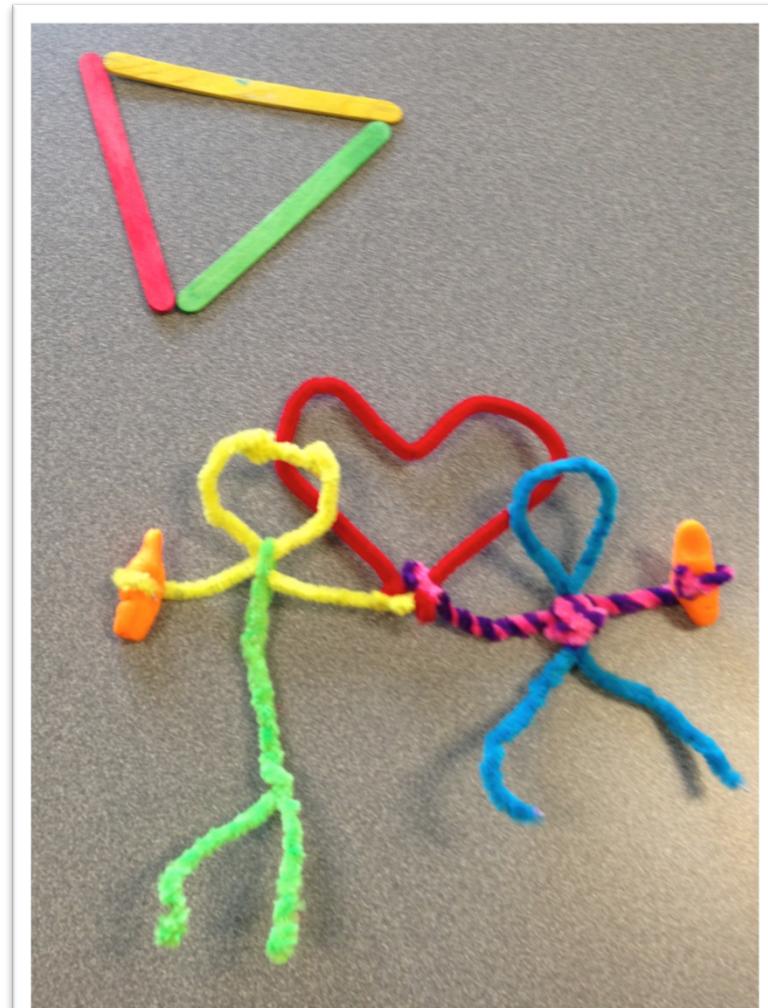
Unconditional – Friendship Bracelet

- **Heart:** symbolizes love
- **Basketball:** a symbol of encouragement of each other's hobbies
- **Ring:** symbol of the desire to be a giving person on every level
- **Flower:** a symbol of beauty and love of nature
- **Pink Ribbon** to symbolize encouragement through difficult times



Attraction on many levels

- **Red heart** = Two people joined by heart
- **Perfect triangle** = they have a balanced amount of love and happiness. Same sex couple.
- **Color & Size differences** = enjoy their differences
- Each of them is holding a beer bottle to *symbolize* “drunk on each other’s love”



EQUAL, RESPECTFUL AND SUPPORTIVE

- Red Canoe symbolizes:
 - Our couple is together
 - Bring their child along-little purple
- Red Heart symbolizes:
 - They enjoy romantic canoe rides
- Water symbolizes:
 - Waves and rocks are challenges just like in relationships
- Oars symbolize:
 - Both work on the relationship just like you'd work hard to make it down the river
 - It's worth the effort
- Their relationship is like a team rowing together



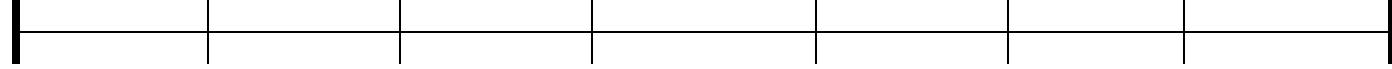


Dating Violence Awareness

Red Flags?



Love Notes



DISRESPECT

Dangerous
relationship

Draw the Line of Respect

Love Notes



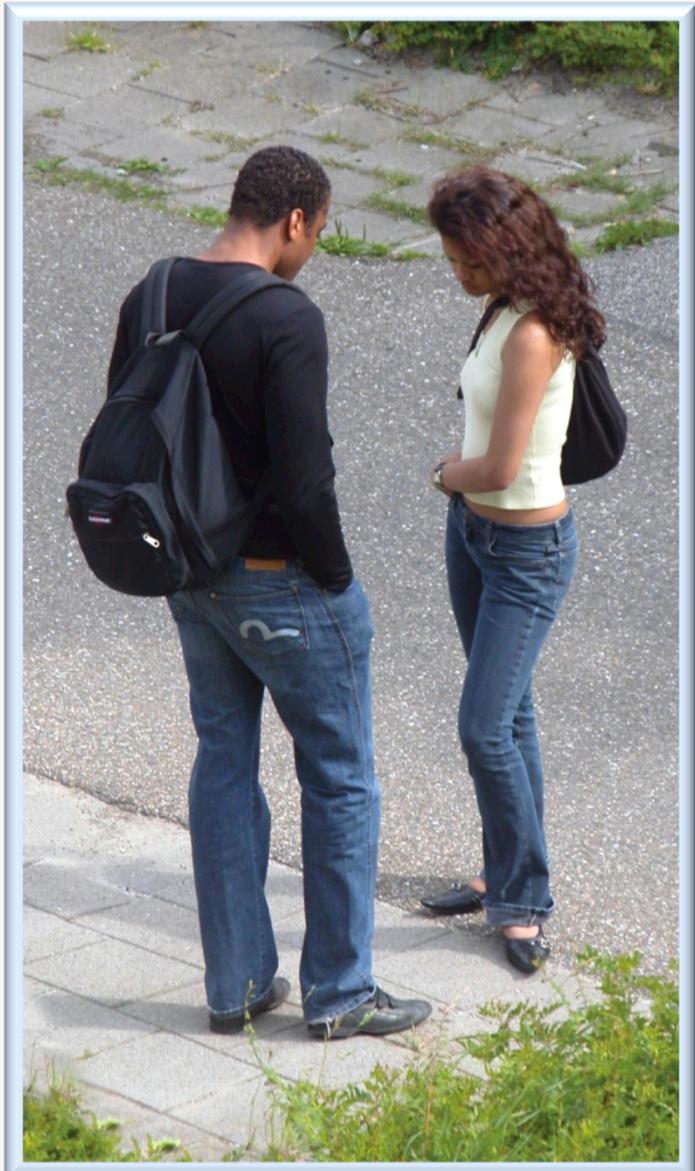
Communication & Healthy Relationships

Making Decisions



Decisions You Can Make...

- But, what do I need to find out or do first?



DECISION #1:

In order to make this decision, I would need:

- to talk to a school counselor to establish a plan to finish school (high school equivalency).
- to make educational/career plans; visit, apply or enroll or re-enroll in college.
- to get more serious about my studies and/or employment goals.
- to discover if we are compatible in ways that are important to us—interests, goals, ambition and energy levels.
- to be together for 6 to 9 months—until the “love chemicals” settle and I’m seeing more clearly.
- to know my partner respects my sexual values and will also take responsibility.
- to have a discussion about my sexual values, boundaries, and how I want to pace my involvement.
- evidence partner is responsible—holds job, can handle money, is bettering self with school/training.
- to trust my partner to be faithful.
- to brainstorm ideas for having fun with my partner.
- to know my partner will take responsibility with me to prevent a pregnancy.
- to discuss the “good and bad baggage” we’ve brought along.
- to meet each other’s families.
- to have a conversation about our expectations and core values—on family, work, and basic beliefs.
- to know if my partner will take a parenting workshop with me or watch parenting skill DVDs.
- to have an honest discussion about our level of commitment to each other.
- to be engaged or married.
- to be settled with a stable job, a place to live, and to be in a healthy marriage for at least a year.
- to know we are both willing to work on communication.
- to know that my partner agrees on waiting for a second child.
- to attend a relationship or marriage skills workshop together.
- my partner to complete anger management classes.
- to know my partner is drug-free or working a recovery program.
- to know if my partner has been abusive in past relationships.
- to talk to a health professional.
- to know if my partner would use a condom.
- to use/agree on a method of birth control.
- both of us to get tested for STDs.
- to feel respected.
- to feel emotionally and physically safe.
- to have a conversation about future plans for marriage.

Why are the things I checked important for making this decision?

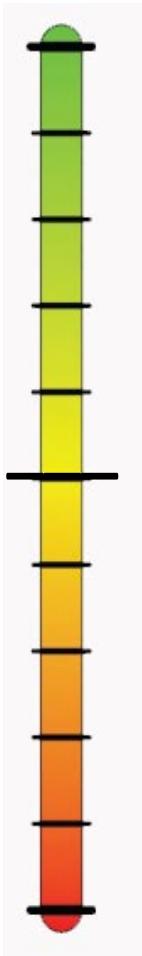
What would help you make that decision?

Love Notes

Let's Talk about Sex

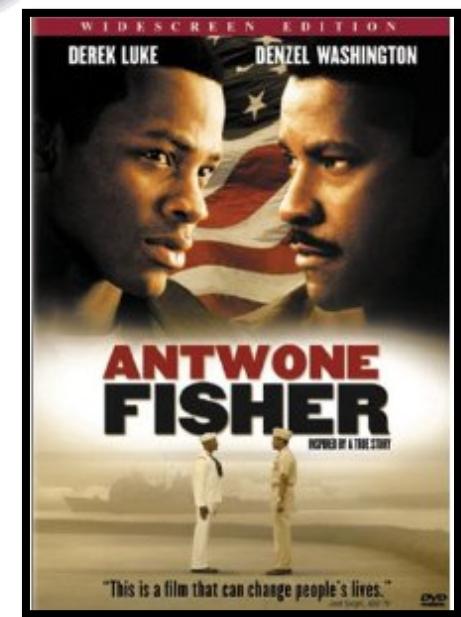


Deepening Levels of Physical Intimacy



- Hug, holding hands
- Simple kiss on cheek or lips
- Cuddling
- French kissing/making out
- Touching sexually over the clothes
- Touching sexually under the clothes
- Any type of genital stimulation to orgasm
- Oral Sex
- Sexual Intercourse

Poetry, films, music, real stories



Love Notes

Pacing – an idea worth spreading

Don't just slide, make a real decision

Use your relationship skills

Define a context & pace for sex that is meaningful

