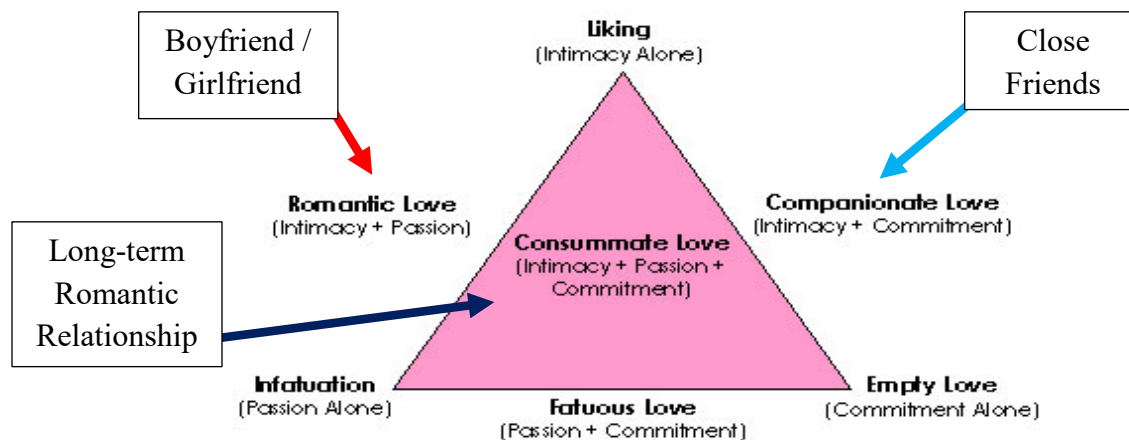


# STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

*Valentine's Day* is coming, and love is in the air...or is it?

Not everyone gets that warm and gooey feeling around Valentine's Day. In fact, for some of us, can be downright depressing! So why is that?

Sometimes, the real issue comes down to a discrepancy in our desired versus our actual level of emotional intimacy in our current relationships. *Emotional intimacy* is our sense of connection, trust, and support within our relationships, which is crucial to our wellbeing. Believe it or not, we are neurologically wired to want to develop a sense of closeness with others; thanks to a little hormone called oxytocin. When we invest ourselves in others, allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and offer others support, we're developing emotional intimacy. And this is essential for the long-term success of ANY relationship, whether with friends, family members, or romantic partners. But emotional intimacy isn't all that's required for successful relationships; depending on the type of relationship you're trying to foster, other components may be needed for it to *really* thrive, including *commitment* and *passion*.



Whether you're in a committed romantic relationship or not, take the time this week to focus on your relationships, and work on improving emotional intimacy. You might try:

- Identifying what you need (or want) from others in the relationship. You can be direct in asking for what you need.
- Sharing a personal story with someone you trust.
- Asking another person about their hopes (and fears), passions (and dislikes), and dreams (and past failures). Be ready to share yours, too!
- Turning off the TV, putting away the phones, and minimizing distractions; make good eye contact and be open and vulnerable...***just talk.***