

OHSU Dept of Psychiatry
Grand Rounds
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TO LOVE WITHOUT (IN THE
PRESENCE OF) FEAR IN THE FACE OF
REAL OR VICARIOUS
TRAUMATIZATION

DISCLAIMER

- I have no financial conflicts of interest with the OHSU Dept of Psychiatry

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INTRODUCTION

- Idea for the topic
- Relevance to personal life and treatment cases
- Relationship between the topic and how I prefer to give talks, cognitive vs. experiential

- Where does love reside?
- What are feelings?
- Why do we have them?
- What are relationships?
- Why do we have them?
- What is intimacy?
- What causes emotional pain?
- How can it be mended?

Quotations about Love

- Emotion allows two people to receive the contents of each others minds
- Emotion is the messenger of love from one heart to another
- Feeling deeply is synonymous with being alive
- Love is the desire to care for and be cared for by another
- Love is the mutually synchronous attunement and modulation of each others limbic system
- Love derives from intimacy and the prolonged and detailed surveillance of a foreign soul
- To know stems from being known
- Love is the limbic tie that allows each to influence who the other becomes
- Satir “The heart has it’s own reasons that reason can’t understand”, also known as “Felt knowledge”
- Hemingway: When you love you wish to do for, you wish to sacrifice for, you wish to serve
- Dostoyevsky: Hell is the suffering of being unable to love
- Love is mutual limbic attunement, resonance, regulation, and realignment
- Love can heal the brain

Lead with your heart

- In this world it's hard to tell the shadows from the light
- What is real can find a way to hide behind the lies
- Don't be fooled or ruled by the voices around you
- Cause your road will always be revealed
- If you lead with your heart
- It's the one thing that you can trust to always come from love
- And it will shine right through the dark
- Like a Northern Star to show you what is true
- You'll never lose if only you will Lead with your heart
- You have been the truest friend that anyone could have
- And the love you always give I want you to get back
- Been knocked down and found not everyone is what they show you
- What is true will always be revealed

Lead with your heart (cont)

- If you lead with your heart
- It's the one thing that you can trust
- To always come from love
- And it will shine right through the dark
- Like a Northern Star to show you what is true
- You'll never lose if only you will
- Lead with your heart
- It takes the beautiful I've known
- And somehow makes you feel
- You're home again, finally home again
- And there's no longer any doubt
- What the mystery's about for you or what you should do

Lead with your heart (cont)

- Lead, Lead with your heart
- It's the one thing you can trust
- To always come from love
- And it will shine right through the dark
- Like a Northern Star
- To show you what is true
- You'll never lose if only you
- Lead with your heart

Heart and Love Quotations

- I love with you with all of my heart
- Heart felt
- Heart's desire
- Heart sick
- Heart broken
- Died of a broken heart

Love, Heart, Mind, Self

- Evolutionary and developmental perspective
- Neuronal anatomy and physiology of love: interplay between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex.
- The language of relationships
- 100 Billion Neurons and many more synapses.
- Where does the heart reside in the brain?
- Memory is in the Hippocampus: explicit(known) vs. implicit(unknown) memory
- Amygdala, emotion first in mammals, 100 million years; fear(the oldest), anger, sadness and happiness.
- Medial prefrontal cortex, the abstract ability to conceptualize, think in symbols and metaphors, communicate and organize feelings as well as applying experience using the concept of time.
- The developmental establishment of circuits between these areas.
- Fire, wire, thrive, survive

Attachment theory

- Language and the language of love, phenomenology.
- John Bowlby: English Psychoanalyst; instinctive bond between infants and their mothers, anxiety and distress when there is separation
- Mary Ainsworth: American Psychologist: Secure attachments; consistently attentive, responsive, and tender: Insecure ambivalent; distracted and/or erratic: Insecure avoidant; cold, resentful, rigid: Predicted adult personality adjustment
- Long before a child can speak the infant genetically is driven to make eye contact and smile with their mother. They instantly know their mother's voice due to hearing it in the uterus. The face is the only area of the body where muscles are attached to the skin. The competent and empathic mother learns to understand all of the intricacies of her child's verbalizations and expressions
- If a parent can sense her child well, if she can tune into his wordless inner states and know what he/she feels/needs, then they themselves will become skilled in reading their emotional world
- Limbic Memory: What does ideal mother-child love consist of? Needs are paramount, mistakes are forgiven, patience is plentiful and hurts are soothed.
- "Seen, safe, soothed, secure"
- Separation anxiety – Judith Viorst, "Necessary Losses"

Developmental refinement and modifications

- Latency, adolescence, early adulthood and beyond
- Different compartments of our ego structure
- When do these compartments come into play
- How does this relate to ourselves and our patients
- The capacity for emotional intimacy

Trauma: Old and New

Remembered or Repressed

- Definition: The psychological damage that occurs in a person when exposed to an extraordinarily shocking singular or continual event(s) or loss that leaves a person with a recurring emotional injury that persists and disrupts their pre-existing level of emotional and operational functioning for extensive time periods.
- The presence of a shadow, an echo or an avoidance either at a conscious or unconscious(instinctive)) level
- Physical, Verbal, Emotional, Sexual and/or Neglect/Abandonment
- Historical vs. contemporary
- Limbic memory and circuitry
- Autonomic arousal while awake or dreaming

Examples of the Conflict

- “I may not be smart but I know what love is” Forest Gump
- “I’m still angry with him/her and we are divorced but I still love him/her”
- “I’ll never fall in love for the first time again”
- “We were like geese that mate for life”
- “He/she’s not the person that I fell in love with”
- “I don’t trust my judgment anymore, I seem to choose the same type of person that is unavailable, abusive or unfaithful”
- “The very reason that attracts us is the reason we shouldn’t be together”

Conflict between Need and Fear

- The need for attachment, intimacy, socialization and affiliation
- Defenses against re-injury or repetition of dysfunctional attachments
- Presentation in patients in their lives and/or in therapy
- Presentation in ourselves in our lives and/or in our work relationships

Vicarious Traumatization

- Definition: The emotional injury and/or avoidance within a person as a consequence of singular or more likely ongoing exposure to the traumatic experiences, injuries and defense mechanisms of our patients that we are asked to contain, witness or help process in a therapeutic relationship
- Known and within our awareness
- Possibly used in an empathic way
- Suppressed, defended against and/or enacted in a way that interferes with the healthy therapeutic interaction with our patients
- Interferes with empathic operations with the patient

Healing the Mind, Heart and Soul of our Patients and Ourselves

- Cognitive vs. emotional/experiential
- The power of telling the story and being heard empathically and without judgment.
- Reliving in a safe, reorganizing, and validating therapeutic environment
- Empathic and Limbic attunement
- The therapeutic relationship and environment can offer an important healing contrast to previous traumatic relationships and/or situations
- History does not predicate destiny
- Learning to recognize healthy love
- Trusting love to heal the heart and the mind.
- Freud and McWilliams
- Neuroplasticity and rewiring the brain.
- Borrowing ego strength from other healthy compartments of the ego structure.
- Encouragement, support and hope
- The magic of time
- Doing our own work so that we know and believe that this is true

Individual and/or Group Therapy

- Psychodynamic contributions of each
- It is not so much what you say to patients as how you are.
- The Real Relationship in Psychotherapy
- Dyadic communication
- The Limbic tie allows each to influence who the other person can become

Refuse to Fall Down by Clarrissa

Pinkora Estes Ph.D

- Refuse to fall down
- If you cannot refuse to fall down,
- Refuse to stay down,
- If you cannot refuse to stay down,
- Lift your heart toward heaven
- And like a hungry beggar,
- Ask that it be filled,
- and it will be filled.
- You may be pushed down,
- You may be kept from rising,
- But no one can keep you
- From lifting your heart
- Toward heaven-
- Only you.
- It is only in the middle of misery
- That so much becomes clear.
- The one who says nothing good
- Came from this,
- Is not yet listening.

Case and Personal Examples