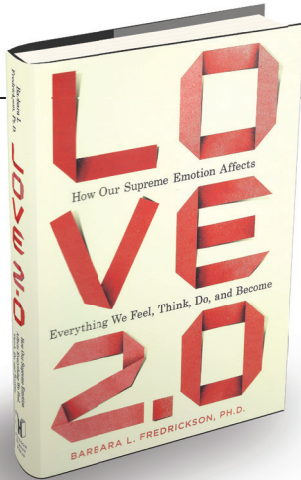


Love 2.0

How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything We Feel, Think, Do, and Become

by Barbara L. Fredrickson



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SUCCESS Points

A few things you'll learn from this book:

- Love influences how people grow and change
- Your body and mind experience love differently
- It's important to prioritize moments of shared positivity
- How to generate love anytime you want

Love

The Renewable Resource for Fueling a Better Life

QUICK OVERVIEW

You probably have a definite idea of what love is. Your neighbors, friends and co-workers are also likely very confident that they know what love is. But if you each recited your descriptions of this powerful emotion it's unlikely that any of those definitions would match. In *Love 2.0*, psychologist and researcher Barbara Fredrickson examines the science of love. In so doing, she asks you to set aside preconceived ideas and consider your body's perspective on love.

Fredrickson's book leans heavily on relationship and emotion science with an eye on the spiritual and practical aspects of love. After studying the physical effects and benefits of what she refers to as the supreme emotion, she concludes, "Its presence or absence in our lives influences everything we feel, think, do, and become."

The old notion was that "love makes the world go 'round.'" Fredrickson's upgraded Love 2.0 affects not just your mood, but your overall health and well-being—and every connection in your life as well. Readers will learn how to tap into this emotion—a renewable resource—to improve, well, everything.

APPLY AND ACHIEVE

The technology that makes life move at the speed of click may allow you to accomplish more in a day, but at the cost of real-life connections. In *Love 2.0*, Barbara Fredrickson explains that to experience the physical effects of love—the rush of oxytocin that promotes bonding, for example—face-to-face connection is essential. But if you hide out in your office all day, you have fewer opportunities to sync up with friends, family members, even strangers. To experience more of the kind of love Fredrickson describes, intentionally build time into your schedule to be around people every day. And when others share your physical space, remember to focus your attention on them—not your smartphone.

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Longing. You know the feeling. It's that ache of sensing that something vital is missing from your life; a deep thirst for more. More meaning, more connection, more energy—more *something*. Longing is that feeling that courses through your body just before you decide that you're restless, lonely, or unhappy.

Longing like this is not just another mental state. It's deeply physical. Your body craves some essential nutrient that it's not getting, yet you can't quite put your finger on what it is. Sometimes you can numb this ache with a deep dive into work, gossip, television, or gaming. More often than not, though, these and other attempts to fill the aching void are merely temporary distractions. The longing doesn't let up. It trails you like a shadow, insistent, making distractions all the more appealing. And distractions abound—that second or third glass of wine, that stream of texts and tweets, that couch and remote control.

Odds are, food is abundant in your life. And clean drinking water is as close as the nearest faucet and virtually limitless. You have access to reasonably clean air and adequate shelter. Those basic needs have long been met. What you long for now is far more intangible.

What you long for is love. Whether you're single or not, whether you spend your days largely in isolation or steadily surrounded by the buzz of conversation, love is the essential nutrient that your cells crave: true positivity-charged connection with other living beings.

Love, as it turns out, nourishes your body the way the right balance of sunlight, nutrient-rich soil, and water nourishes plants and allows them to flourish. The more you experience it, the more you open up and grow, becoming wiser and more attuned, more resilient and effective, happier and healthier. Just as your body was designed to extract oxygen from the earth's atmosphere, and nutrients from the foods you ingest, your body was designed to love. Love—like taking a deep breath or eating an orange when you're depleted and thirsty—not only feels great but is also life-giving, an indispensable source of energy, sustenance, and health.

When I compare love to oxygen and food, I'm not just taking poetic license. I'm drawing on science: new science that illuminates for the first time how love, and its absence, fundamentally alters the biochemicals in which your body is steeped. They, in turn, can alter the very ways your DNA gets expressed within your cells. The love you do or do not experience today may quite literally change key aspects of your cellular architecture next season and next year—cells that affect your physical health, your vitality, and your overall well-being. In these ways and more, just as your supplies of clean air and nutritious food

forecast how long you'll walk this earth—and whether you'll thrive or just get by—so does your supply of love.

To absorb what the new science of love has to offer, you'll need to step back from "love" as you may now know it. Forget about the love that you typically hear

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on the radio, the one that's centered on desire and yearns for touch from a new squeeze. Set aside the take on love your family might have offered you, one that requires that you love your relatives unconditionally, regardless of whether their actions disturb you, or their aloofness leaves you cold. I'm even asking you to set aside your view of love as a special bond or relationship, be it with your spouse, partner, or soul mate. And if you've come to view love as a commitment, promise, or pledge, through marriage or any other loyalty ritual, prepare for an about-face. I need you to step back from all of your preconceptions and consider an upgrade. *Love 2.0* offers a different perspective—your body's perspective.

WHAT LOVE IS

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.

Emotionally Immerse Yourself in the Moment

Our firstborn needed to be in our arms while he drifted off to sleep. He also needed a particular motion, one that we couldn't achieve in the comfort of a rocking chair, but only by walking. For at least the first year of his life, then, my husband or I would slowly pace across the tiny nursery, holding him in our arms, for up to thirty minutes or more.

With so many things to juggle as new parents, not to mention our own sleep deprivation, my husband and I began to dread the time-sink of this bedtime ritual. We'd yearn to be released from the shadowy nursery so that we could tackle the mounting dishes and laundry, make headway on a few more work projects by e-mail, or collapse into our own bed. Then, my husband discovered a radical shift that changed everything. He gave up thinking about where else he could be and immersed himself in this parenting experience. He tuned in to our son's heartbeat and breath. He appreciated his warmth, his weight in his arms, and the sweet smell of his skin. By doing so, he transformed a parental chore into a string of loving moments. When my husband shared his secret with me, we each not only enjoyed this bedtime ritual all the more, but our son also fell more swiftly into his deep sleep.

Looking back, I now recognize that even though we were physically present with our son as we had walked him to sleep, at first we were not also emotionally present. I have no doubts that infants can pick up on mismatches between their parents' outward actions and inner experiences. In our case, this mismatch had initially prevented the joys and benefits of cross-generational positivity resonance from emerging.

The love I speak of here is also far from exclusive. It's not just that unique feeling you reserve for your spouse or your romantic partner. It even extends beyond your warm feelings for your children, parents, or close friends. Love can reach so much further than we typically allow. In fact, no one—young or old, passionate or reserved, single or married—need be excluded. It is love, after all, that energizes that unspoken bond of sameness you sense between you and the person by chance seated next to you on the plane, to whom you've opened up and listened attentively, in that moment when you glance at each other and really see each other, with true respect and appreciation. I'm reminded here of the lyrics that Louis Armstrong's gravelly voice made famous in the late 1960s in "What a Wonderful World": "I see friends shaking hands... sayin' 'how do you do?' / They're really sayin'... 'I love you.'"

To put it in a nutshell, love is the momentary upwelling of three tightly interwoven events: first, a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you and another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person's biochemistry and behaviors; and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other's well-being that brings mutual care.

My shorthand for this trio is *positivity resonance*. Within those moments of interpersonal connection that are characterized by this amplifying symphony—of shared positive emotions, biobehavioral synchrony, and mutual care—life-giving positivity resonates between and among people. This back-and-forth reverberation of positive energy sustains itself—and can even grow stronger—until the momentary connection wanes, which is of course inevitable, because that's how emotions work.

Ordinary positive emotions don't resonate like this at all. They are not mirrored back to you. Although the warmth of any positive emotion stretches your mind and spurs you to grow in ways that leave you more resourceful and resilient than before, only love creates such a deep interpersonal resonance. That's because within micro-moments of love, your own positivity, your own warmth and openness, evoke—and is simultaneously evoked by—the warmth and openness emanating from the other person. This shared positivity gets further amplified by the synchronized changes in biochemistry that course through your bodies and the attention you each show the other—the smiles, the leaning in, your verbal and nonverbal expressions of care and concern for each other. These are powerful, energizing moments. Your body was designed to harness this power—to live off it. Your ability to understand and empathize with others depends mightily on having a steady diet of positivity resonance, as do your potentials for wisdom, spirituality, and health.

Love can reach so much further than we typically allow.

Positivity resonance doesn't spring up at random. It emerges within certain circumstances, stemming from particular patterns of thought and action. These are love's bedrock prerequisites. The first precondition is a perception of safety. If you assess your current circumstances as threatening or dangerous in any way, love is not at that moment a possibility for you. Indeed, your brain has been shaped by the forces of natural selection to be exquisitely attuned to threats. Your innate threat detection system even operates outside your conscious awareness. You could be engrossed in conversation, or enjoying a blissful run in the woods, for instance, and still instantaneously spot that writhing snake on your path. Although true threats are rare, not everyone can see the world this way. People who suffer from anxiety, depression, even loneliness or low self-esteem perceive threats far more often than circumstances warrant. Sadly, this over-alert state thwarts both positivity and positivity resonance. Feeling unsafe, then, is the first obstacle to love.

TRUE CONNECTION MATTERS

Love's second precondition is connection, true sensory and temporal connection with another living being. You no doubt try to "stay connected" when physical distance keeps you and your loved ones apart. You use the phone, e-mail, and increasingly texts or Facebook, and it's important to do so. Yet your body, sculpted by the forces of natural selection over millennia, was not designed for the abstractions of long-distance love, the XOXs and LOLs. Your body hungers for more. It hungers for moments of oneness.

Feelings of oneness surface when two or more people "sync up" and literally come to act as one, moving to the same hidden beat. You can sync up like this with a stranger just as you can with a lifelong companion. When positivity resonance moves between you and another, for instance, the two of you begin to mirror each other's postures and gestures, and even finish each other's sentences. You feel united, connected, of a piece. When you especially resonate with someone else—even if you've just met—the two of you are quite literally on the same wavelength, biologically. A synchrony also unfolds internally, as your physiological responses—in both body and brain—mirror each other as well.

True connection is one of love's bedrock prerequisites, a prime reason that love is not unconditional, but instead requires a particular stance. Neither abstract nor mediated, true connection is physical and unfolds in real time. It

requires a sensory and temporal co-presence of bodies.

The main mode of sensory connection, scientists contend, is eye contact. Other forms of real-time sensory contact—through touch, voice, or mirrored body postures and gestures—no doubt connect people as well and at times can substitute for eye contact. Nevertheless, eye contact may well be the most potent trigger for connection and oneness.

To be clear, the sensory and temporal connections you establish through eye contact, touch, conversation, or other forms of behavioral synchrony are not, in and of themselves, love. Even holding hands, after all, can become a loveless habit. Yet in the right contexts, these gestures become springboards for love. The right contexts are those infused with the emotional presence of positivity.

The scientific understanding of love and its benefits offers you a completely fresh set of lenses through which to see your world and your prospects for health, happiness, and spiritual wisdom. Through these new lenses you see things that you were literally blind to before. Ordinary, everyday exchanges with colleagues and strangers now light up and call out to you as opportunities—life-giving opportunities for connection, growth, and health, your own and theirs. You can also see for the first time how micro-moments of love carry irrepressible ripple effects across whole social networks, helping each person who experiences positivity resonance to grow and in turn touch and uplift the lives of countless others. These new lenses even change the way you see your more intimate relationships with family and friends. You now also see the rivers of missed opportunities for the true love of positivity resonance. You now know how to connect to and love these cherished people in your life more and better. Viewing love distinct from long-standing relationships is especially vital as people increasingly face repeated geographical relocations that distance family and friends. Falling in love within smaller moments and with a greater variety of people gives new hope to the lonely and isolated among us. Love, I hope you see, bears upgrading.

LOVING KINDNESS

Your potential for love is virtually unbounded. I see at least two reasons for this. First, positive emotions are ubiquitous. Despite the hardwired

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human habit of scanning current circumstances for sources of danger and negativity, positive emotions are what most people feel most frequently. This tendency toward positivity reflects the reassuring fact that most moments are indeed benign. Right in this moment, for instance, as you are reading this sentence, I suspect that you're sitting fairly comfortably and that no one is inserting pins into your eyes. So what's not to like about the present moment? Relax and enjoy it. Look around and you'll come to realize that you can increase your ratio of positive to negative emotions even further by becoming more attuned to the sources of positive emotion in your midst, be they a welcomed sense of safety, a shimmer of beauty, or a small gesture of kindness.

The second reason your potential for love is nearly limitless is that social interactions are also ubiquitous. Like bees and ants, we humans are ultra-social creatures. Your life is embedded within increasingly vast networks of relationships, social ties, and broader communities. Love can infuse and nourish all of these connections—even whole networks of people—just as it infuses and nourishes your own body and mind.

At the heart of love is a feeling—a feeling with both physical as well as mental components. Physically, your whole body feels relaxed, with a

warmth and openness in your chest, as if your heart were stretching open to let in or embrace another being. This is the feeling that makes you want to move in closer, to listen and observe more carefully. Mentally, you yearn for good fortune for others. [See the sidebar, "Meditation Practice: Loving-Kindness."] You wish them well with great sincerity. You also wish to show how much you care, to enact tenderness and concern. We've all experienced love like this at one time or another. It's that warm and tender feeling you have when you first hold a newborn, or greet a cherished friend after many months, or even years, apart. Some of this tenderness, along with its associated impulse to show care and concern, is even released when you come across a kitten, puppy, or other baby animal. Think here of a time when some small creature drew a slow "Awww..." out of you. If you're like many people, you recognize this tender feeling rolling through you mostly when you're with loved ones. Indeed, scientists from Darwin to Ekman suggest tenderness like this honors familial bonds. Yet by now I hope you're recognizing that your potential for micro-moments of love is far greater. Each time you encounter another—or yourself—you've the opportunity to do so with tenderness and warmth, and with relaxed openness and goodwill.

Meditation Practice: Loving-Kindness

Find a quiet place where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Find a position that makes you feel both alert and relaxed and that allows your chest to expand. Once you are physically comfortable, let your eyes drift closed.

Now, in this quiet moment, visualize someone for whom you already feel warm, tender, and compassionate feelings. This could be your child, your spouse, even a pet—someone whom the mere thought of makes you smile. Let his or her smiling face surface in your mind's eye. As you take in that image, with the lightest mental touch, briefly call to mind this loved one's good qualities. Your goal is to rouse warm and tender feelings naturally, by visualizing how connecting with this loved one makes you feel.

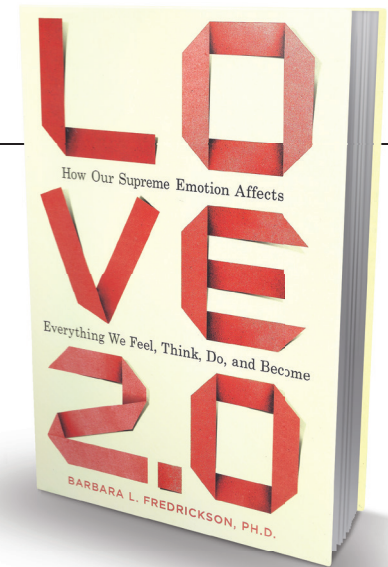
Once these tender feelings have taken root, creating genuine warmth and kindness in you, gently repeat the traditional phrases of LKM, silently to yourself. The traditional phrases go something like this:

May this one (or I, we, he, she, or they) feel safe.
May this one feel happy.
May this one feel healthy.
May this one live with ease.

The words themselves are not as critical as the sentiments and emotions they evoke. You can rephrase the statements in ways that serve to stir your heart the most.

About the Author

Barbara L. Fredrickson is a Kenan Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Director of the Positive Emotions and Psychophysiology Laboratory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of *Positivity* and has twice been invited to present her findings to the Dalai Lama.



Action Steps

Get more out of this SUCCESS Book Summary by applying what you've learned. Here are a few questions, thoughts and activities to get you started.

1. Share good news and/or celebrate your spouse or friend's good news. Doing so allows positivity to resonate between you.
2. Before offering important advice to a friend in crisis, discuss the problem face to face with a trusted mentor or friend. Positivity resonance makes it easier to solve difficult problems.
3. Connect with people daily—face to face. Intently focus on the person in front of you.
4. Practice acts of kindness and compassion toward others and yourself.
5. Rather than thinking about what you have to do next, focus your attention on the moment.
6. How can you increase the moments of connection in your day?
7. Try the Loving-Kindness meditation described in the sidebar of this summary.

Recommended Reading

If you enjoyed the summary of *Love 2.0*, you may also want to check out:

Positivity by Barbara Fredrickson

Flourish by Martin E. P. Seligman

Daring Greatly by Brené Brown

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