



Disarming Cupid: Love, Sex and Science

Scientific American Editors

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Disarming Cupid: Love, Sex and Science by the Editors of Scientific American

Sometimes All You Need Is Love; sometimes Love Is a Battlefield. Whether Love Hurts, Bites, Will Keep Us Together, Will Tear Us Apart or Is a Four-Letter Word, it seems we Want To Know What Love Is. Love – in both the abstract and the up-close-and-personal – has always provided limitless inspiration for artists, writers and musicians, but scientists are just as fascinated by these affairs of the heart, though they seldom sing about it. In this eBook, *Disarming Cupid: Love, Sex and Science*, our editors take a step back, analyzing romance using tools like fMRI studies instead of a paint brush or guitar. The writers examine a variety of topics, starting with the perceived sex differences between men and women discussed in Section 1 – are we really as different as Mars and Venus? As our opening story shows, few other questions can get at the heart of this debate like "Can heterosexual men and women ever be 'just friends'?" (Spoiler alert: new research suggests that the answer is no.)

Subsequent sections tackle other facets of love, including the implications of the drastic rise in online dating, how we choose our romantic partners and what happens in our brains when we're in love. In particular "All You Need Is Love" finds – or, perhaps for some, verifies – that romantic love stimulates the same pathways as an addictive drug. Section 5 focuses on issues of gender and sexuality. "Do Gays Have a Choice?" analyzes a wealth of scientific evidence and shows that sexual orientation is determined more by both genes and environment, rather than being a choice. We also don't shy away from darker aspects of love, such as the psychology of prostitution and sex appeal of narcissists, because to ignore these aspects of love is to trivialize it. Besides, love's paradoxes are one of the reasons why it is The Topic for cultural discourse. As Pascal said, "The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing." Hopefully this eBook will change the "nothing" to "at least something."

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