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The Experience of "Being In Love" Is Not The Same For Everyone

Not everyone experiences love in exactly the same manner.

Research has shown that love comes in several different forms or styles (see Lee & Regan). For the most part, people experience love as a blend of two or three of the styles listed below. Essentially, people have different notions of what it means to "be in love."

Styles of Love:

Eros – some people experience love with a lot of passion, intimacy and intensity. Love based on Eros has a strong sexual and emotional component. People who experience love this way want to be emotionally and physically close to their romantic partners and they tend to idealize love. Such love is marked by passion as well as compassion (kindness and consideration). Eros is best viewed as romantic, passionate love—the type of love that creates excitement at the beginning of a new relationship.

Ludus – some people experience love as a game to be played with other people's emotions. The goal or desire is to gain control over a partner through manipulation. People who experience love as Ludus like to have multiple love interests where they are in complete control. Lying, cheating and deception are common for people who experience love as Ludus—it's all part of the game. For people who experience love as Ludus, it is satisfying to outwit a partner and exploit his or her weak spots.

Storge – some people experience love as a gradual and slow process. When love is based on Storge, getting to know someone comes before having intense feelings for that person. Love based on Storge takes time, it requires genuine liking and understanding of a partner, and it develops slowly over time. Love based on Storge is often compared to the love that one has for a friend. In fact, people who experience love as Storge often fall in love with their friends.

Agape – some people experience love as caregiving. Love is the overwhelming

desire to want to take care of a partner—a parental or nurturing type of love. Love based on Agape is attentive, caring, compassionate and kind—a more altruistic or selfless type of love.

Mania – some people experience love as being out of control. Love is an overwhelming experience; it turns one's life upside down and it results in a complete loss of one's identity. Love based on Mania is crazy, impulsive and needy. People who experience love as Mania fall in love quickly, but their love tends to consume them. Love experienced as Mania also tends to burnout before it gets the chance to mature. Such love is often marked by extreme delusions, feelings of being out of control, rash decisions, and vulnerability. People who experience love as Mania are easily taken advantage of by people who experience love as Ludus.

Pragma – some people take a practical approach to love. Love is not crazy, intense, or out of control. Love is based on common sense and reason. People who experience love as Pragma tend to pick a suitable mate the way most other people make serious life decisions: picking a partner is based on careful consideration and reason. Practical concerns underlie this type of love.

The love styles listed above have also been linked to one's style of attachment (see Levy & Davis).

Eros and Agape are linked to Secure Attachment

Mania is linked to Anxious Attachment

Ludus is linked to Avoidant Attachment (originally termed dismissive attachment)

Overall, when thinking about love and relationships, sometimes it helps to keep in mind that love does not always mean the same thing to everyone.