

A General Theory of Love

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Drawing on new scientific discoveries and seventy years of collective clinical experience, three psychiatrists unravel life's most elemental mystery: the nature of love.

A primordial area of the brain, far older than reason or thinking, creates both the capacity and the need for emotional intimacy that all humans share. *A General Theory of Love* describes the workings of this ancient, pivotal urge and reveals that our nervous systems are not self-contained. Instead, our brains link with those of the people close to us, in a silent rhythm that makes up the very life force of the body. These wordless and powerful ties determine our moods, stabilize and maintain our health and well-being, and change the structure of our brains. In consequence, who we are and who we become depend, in great part, on whom we love.

A General Theory of Love applies these and other extraordinary insights to some of the most crucial issues we face in our lives. Its authors explain how relationships function and where love goes wrong, how parents shape a child's developing self, how psychotherapy really works, what curbs and what fosters violent aggression in our children, and how modern society regularly courts disaster by flouting emotional laws it does not yet recognize.

A work of rare originality, passion, and eloquence, *A General Theory of Love* will forever change the way you think about human intimacy.

Poor, poor science--it gets blamed for everything. While it might be true that some of our alienation and unhappiness stem from a too-rational misunderstanding of emotion, it's also true that science is its own remedy. *A General Theory of Love*, by San Francisco psychiatrists Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, is a powerfully humanistic look at the natural history of our deepest feelings, and why a simple hug is often more important than a portfolio full of stock options. Their grasp of neural science is topnotch, but the book is more about humans as social animals and how we relate to others--for once, the brain plays second fiddle to the heart.

Though some of their social analysis is less than fully thought out--surely e-mail isn't a truly unique form of communication, as they suggest--the work as a whole is strong and merits attention. Science, it turns out, does have much to say about our messy feelings and relationships. While much of it could be filed under "common sense," it's nice to know that common sense is replicable. Hard-science types will probably be exasperated with the constant shifts between data and appeals to emotional truths, but the rest of us will see in *A General Theory of Love* a new synthesis of research and poetry. --Rob Lightner

"A revolutionary book. In the tradition of Lewis Thomas, its authors transform hard science into page-turning lyricism. Every page provokes a shock of recognition as we see why the sources of our happiness lie far deeper in our brains than material goods, traditional psychotherapy, or self-help books have the power to reach. A reference book on life, this work deserves to be read and reread. It goes to the heart of what it means to be human." --Madeline Levine, Ph.D., author of *See No Evil: A Guide to Protecting Our Children from Media Violence*

"Advancing a thesis as exciting in its way as Einstein's general theory of relativity, *A General Theory of Love* forges a wealth of fresh scientific research into a coherent thesis

about the role of intimacy in our lives that is as eloquent as it is persuasive."

--Leonard Shlain, M.D., author of *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess* and *Art & Physics*
"A new and exciting integration of insights from many fields. *A General Theory of Love* provides an original understanding of human behavior. Clearly written, it is must reading for psychotherapists, patients, parents, teachers, and anyone who wants to better understand him- or herself."

--Paul Ekman, Ph.D., professor of psychology,
University of California, San Francisco, author of *Telling Lies*,
editor of Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*
"A *General Theory of Love* is a charmingly written, intriguing look at what the new frontiers of science tell us about the seemingly unscientific vagaries of human love. The authors explain the biological reasons behind what we already know in our hearts: Our need for love is wired deeply within us, and from infancy to old age our happiness depends upon receiving it. *A General Theory of Love* is both a revelation and a guide."

--Danielle Crittenden, author of *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us*

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Man`s Search for Meaning.

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