

Contrary to widely held beliefs, romance can last in long-term relationships, say researchers

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Romance does not have to fizzle out in long-term relationships and progress into a companionship/friendship-type love, a new study has found. Romantic love can last a lifetime and lead to happier, healthier relationships.

"Many believe that [romantic love](#) is the same as [passionate love](#)," said lead researcher Bianca P. Acevedo, PhD, then at Stony Brook University (currently at University of California, Santa Barbara). "It isn't. Romantic love has the intensity, engagement and [sexual chemistry](#) that passionate love has, minus the obsessive component. Passionate or [obsessive love](#) includes feelings of uncertainty and [anxiety](#). This kind of love helps drive the shorter relationships but not the longer ones."

These findings appear in the March issue of *Review of General Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association.

Acevedo and co-researcher Arthur Aron, PhD, reviewed 25 studies with 6,070 individuals in short- and long-term relationships to find out whether romantic love is associated with more satisfaction. To determine this, they classified the relationships in each of the studies as romantic, passionate (romantic with obsession) or friendship-like love and categorized them as long- or short-term.

The researchers looked at 17 short-term [relationship](#) studies, which

included 18- to 23-year-old college students who were single, dating or married, with the average relationship lasting less than four years. They also looked at 10 long-term relationship studies comprising middle-aged couples who were typically married 10 years or more. Two of the studies included both long- and short-term relationships in which it was possible to distinguish the two samples.

The review found that those who reported greater romantic love were more satisfied in both the short- and long-term relationships. Companion-like love was only moderately associated with satisfaction in both short- and long-term relationships. And those who reported greater passionate love in their relationships were more satisfied in the short term compared to the long term.

Couples who reported more satisfaction in their relationships also reported being happier and having higher self-esteem.

Feeling that a partner is "there for you" makes for a good relationship, Acevedo said, and facilitates feelings of romantic love. On the other hand, "feelings of insecurity are generally associated with lower satisfaction, and in some cases may spark conflict in the relationship. This can manifest into obsessive love," she said.

This discovery may change people's expectations of what they want in long-term relationships. According to the authors, companionship love, which is what many couples see as the natural progression of a successful relationship, may be an unnecessary compromise. "Couples should strive for love with all the trimmings," Acevedo said. "And couples who've been together a long time and wish to get back their romantic edge should know it is an attainable goal that, like most good things in life, requires energy and devotion."

More information: "Does a Long-Term Relationship Kill Romantic

Love?" Bianca P. Acevedo, PhD, and Arthur Aron, PhD, Stony Brook University; Review of General Psychology, Vol. 13, No. 1.

Source: American Psychological Association ([news](#) : [web](#))

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