

THE BIG IDEAS

Love 2.0

Time for an upgrade.

Vagus

Time for a fun trip!

Desire

What is your prevailing desire?

3 Loving Moments

Your mission.

Cocoon of Self-Absorption

Exit via loving-kindness meditation.

Love 2.0 x 2

Compassionate + celebratory love.

Love 2.0

Finding Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection

BY BARBARA L. FREDRICKSON PH.D. · PLUME © 2013 · 256 PAGES

“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 you typically hear 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. ...

Love is our supreme emotion: Its presence or absence in our lives influences everything we feel, think, do, and become. It’s that recurrent state that ties you in—your body and brain alike—to the social fabric, to the bodies and brains of those in your midst. When you experience love—true heart/mind/soul-expanding love—you not only become better able to see the larger tapestry of life and better able to breathe life into the connections that matter to you, but you also set yourself on a pathway that leads to more health, happiness, and wisdom.”

~ Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D. from *Love 2.0*

“The eskimos had fifty-two names for snow because it was important to them: there ought to be as many for love.”

~ Margaret Atwood

Ready to upgrade your vision of love?

Then you’re in for a treat with this fantastic book by [Barbara Fredrickson](#). Barbara is one of the world’s leading positive psychologists. For the last two decades she has been exploring the science of positive emotions like joy, gratitude, amusement, and hope. She also must have the coolest lab name ever: the “Positive Emotions and Psychophysiology Lab (aka PEP Lab)” at the University of North Carolina. :)

In her great book *Positivity* she walks us through how those positive emotions create upward spirals of flourishing in our lives via her “broaden-and-build” framework. In this book, she connects that science of emotions with the science of relationships to bring us this upgraded science of our supreme emotion: love.

The last Note we created was on [The Myths of Happiness](#) by another leading positive psychologist, [Sonja Lyubomirsky](#). She says, “Read this book and you’ll never think about love in the same way again!” ← I agree.

The book is incredibly well-written, deeply inspiring and incredibly practical as well. In fact, I just told Alexandra that this book might be the one that most positively impacts my life. Needless to say, I *highly* recommend it. (Get a copy [here](#).)

I’m excited to share some of my favorite Ideas so let’s jump straight in!

LOVE 2.0: TIME FOR AN UPGRADE

"Love is that micro-moment of warmth and connection that you share with another living being."

~ Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D.

"Perhaps counterintuitively, love is far more ubiquitous than you ever thought possible for the simple fact that *love is connection*. It's that poignant stretching of your heart that you feel when you gaze into a newborn's eyes for the first time or share a farewell hug with a dear friend. It's even the fondness and sense of shared purpose you might unexpectedly feel with a group of strangers who've come together to marvel at a hatching of sea turtles or cheer at a football game. The new take on love that I want to share with you is this: Love blossoms virtually anytime two or more people—even strangers—connect over a shared positive emotion, be it mild or strong.

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."

Ready for our new, upgraded definition of love?

Love 1.0 = The emotion you feel for your "soul mate" or kids or family; what we hear about on the radio, etc.

Love 2.0? Love 2.0 is ubiquitous. It's that "*micro-moment of warmth and connection that you share with another living being*."

It's what Barbara describes as "positivity resonance."

As you know, when I read these books, I'm always underlining the gems (this book is nearly entirely underlined/asterisked/marked all up with "wow!"s). I particularly focus on the key words and phrases the author comes back to most often to get a feel for the heart of the book.

Obviously, "love" was one of the key words. As were these two: "positivity resonance" and "micro-moments."

Love is found in those TINY moments—the *micro-moments*—in which we are truly present, sharing a positive experience with someone. When that happens, our brains and bodies synchronize in truly stunning ways. Sprinkle in some mutual care for the others' well being and you have *positivity resonance*—aka Love.

What's exciting about this upgraded version of love is that it's not limited to our most intimate relationships (yet, very importantly, can be practiced most frequently within them—something I've done a bunch of times since picking up the book yesterday). When we allow ourselves to open up to this possibility, we can create more of this positivity resonance with others and experience the extraordinary gains in health and happiness that go with practicing this supreme emotion.

How do we go about doing that? Glad you asked. Part I of the book walks us through the science. Part II walks us through the practice—combining beautiful loving-kindness meditations with informal micro-moment practices. More on that after we take a trip to Vagus.

TIME TO TAKE A TRIP TO VAGUS

"That's because people with higher vagal tone, science has shown, are more flexible across a

"Love grows best when you are attuned to the present moment, your bodily sensations, as well as to the actions and reactions of others. Sadly, when you are more attuned to technology, to-do lists, and mass media than to the unique and wondrous individuals in your day, you miss out."

~ Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D.

“Love is not a magic bullet. You can no more expect to become healthier through a single, isolated micro-moment of positivity resonance than you can by eating just one piece of broccoli per year. Yet just as a steady diet of a wide range of fresh fruits and vegetables does indeed make you healthier, so does a steady diet of a wide range of loving moments.”

~ Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D.

“The soul must always stand ajar, ready to welcome the ecstatic experience.”

~ Emily Dickinson

whole host of domains—physical, mental, and social. They simply adapt better to their ever-shifting circumstances, albeit completely at nonconscious levels. Physically, they regulate their internal bodily processes more efficiently, like their glucose levels and inflammation. Mentally they're better able to regulate their attention and emotions, even their behavior. Socially, they're especially skillful in navigating interpersonal interactions and in forging positive connections with others. By definition, then, they experience more micro-moments of love. It's as though the agility of the conduit between the brains and the hearts—as reflected in their high vagal tone—allows them to be exquisitely agile, attuned, and flexible as they navigate the ups and downs of day-to-day life and social exchanges. High vagal tone, then, can be taken as high loving potential.”

That's from a fascinating chapter on “Love's Biology” in which Barbara introduces us to the fact that micro-moments of love are created by and result in changes in three main biological characters: your brain, oxytocin, and your vagus nerve.

As she says: “Put simply, your body was designed for love, and to benefit from loving.”

Very briefly, when we have positivity resonance, our brains synchronize in astonishing ways. This “neural synchrony” or “neural coupling” is produced as we attune to the individual(s) with whom we're interacting.

Oxytocin, the “love hormone” is, apparently, more appropriately identified as a neuropeptide because it shows up not just in our bodies but also in our brains. Barbara talks about some fascinating research on how increasing levels of oxytocin increase trust and cooperation.

Then we get to Vagus. Our vagus nerve is our tenth cranial nerve. “It emerges from your brain stem deep within your skull and, although it makes multiple stops at your various internal organs, perhaps most significantly it connects your brain to your heart.”

Hmmm... A physical, biological component of our bodies that connects our brain to our hearts? I'm listening!

Short story here: As per all the benefits articulated above, Optimizing our vagus nerve's functioning is a good idea. Good news is: our “vagal tone” can be developed much like our “muscle tone.” It just takes practice. We're almost ready for those practices. First, desire.

WHAT IS YOUR PREVAILING DESIRE?

“You are made in the image of what you desire,” Thomas Merton said. My aim in writing this book is to open your eyes to the wisdom of this claim and the scientific evidence that backs it up. Although a single desire may seem fleeting and ephemeral, when repeated and repeatedly acted on, desires become powerful, life-shaping forces. A single gust of wind, after it moves on, hardly alters the shape of a tree. Yet when you find all the trees in a given area leaning decidedly to the west, you can see the lasting effects of the prevailing winds. The new science of positivity resonance tells us that when you make love your prevailing desire, you remake whole domains of your life. You become appreciably and enduringly different, and better. You uplift others, helping them become different and better as well.”

What is your PREVAILING DESIRE?

What do you want more than anything in your life?

Before reading this book I would have answered that question by pointing to my purpose to help people Optimize their lives while being an exemplary husband and father and living my virtues, etc.

Now?

My prevailing desire is to love.

*"Love doesn't just sit there,
like a stone; it has to be
made, like bread; remade all
the time, made new."*

~ Ursula K. Le Guin

To expand my ability to create more and more micro-moments of positivity resonance.

I've mentioned my bookmark before—a super simple index card with the virtues I aspire to embody. Purpose-driven. Hopeful + Optimistic. Hardworking + Gritty. Energized + Enthusiastic. Kind + Generous. Noble + Virtuous.

Love was always there and implicit in many of those virtues but that card got a new entry:

Present + Loving. Twice the font size. Box around it. Arrow pointing to the top of the list. :)

How about you?

What's your prevailing desire?

Let's remember that we are made in the image of what we desire.

P.S. That's from a chapter called "Love's Ripples" in which Barbara walks us through how positivity resonance helps us become our highest selves and optimizes everything from our health to our resilience and wisdom. A very compelling case to make love the prevailing desire.

We're now ready for practices. Thanks for your patience. :)

CREATE 3 LOVING MOMENTS TODAY!

"Recall how energizing and rewarding it can be to really connect with somebody, sharing a flow of thoughts and feelings with ease. As your day unfolds, seek out at least three opportunities to connect with others like this, with warmth, respect, and goodwill. Opportunities may spring up at home, at work, in your neighborhood, or out in your community. Wherever you are, open toward others, freely offering your attention, creating a sense of safety, through eye contact, conversation, or, when appropriate, touch. Share your own lighthearted thoughts and feelings, and stay present as the other person shares theirs. Afterward, lightly reflect on whether that interchange led you to feel the oneness of positivity resonance, even to a small degree. Creating the intention to seek out and create more micro-moments of loving connection can be another tool for elevating your health and well-being."

Barbara gives us a bunch of super practical micro-moment practices plus guided meditations to optimize our love.

This is my favorite micro-moment exercise.

In addition to some awesome family micro-moments of love that wouldn't have happened if I wasn't practicing this, here's a quick look at my top 3 micro-moments from today! (So far... :)

First, there were the couple of interactions with my new friends on my sunrise hike. I saw them at the beginning and then again as we looped past each other. I've fallen in love with several women (my mom's age) who religiously hike. Simple, sweet interactions. Positivity resonance.

Then Emerson and I went to the park. I'm training for a bunch of Spartan Races next year and a few weeks ago I asked the amazingly cool guy who owns the outdoor CrossFit gym right next to the playground if I could pay something to train on his rope in off hours. Being the incredibly cool guy he is, he said "Of course! And no way am I going to let you pay me!" then he proceeded to teach me how to do it. (Thx, Tyson!)

Fast-forward to this morning. E and I stop by. Tyson and a couple other people are working out. Although I default to being more introverted, here's another opportunity to practice positivity resonance. So, I say "Hi!" to the guy doing heavy squats. He's wearing a Tough Mudder t-shirt so I ask him about that. Amazing chat celebrating his awesomeness. I learn Tyson's daughter is working out as well. "Hi!" I practice on the rope (got an applause—hah! yah!) as Emerson bangs out some burpees with Tyson. Wow. Amazing. Heart-opening positivity resonance. All because I opened up to the possibility and deliberately looked for the opportunity.

*"Love is not something you
stumble or fall into. While
love can certainly catch you
by surprise, like a sudden
rain, unlike the weather, you
can also seed and cultivate
the conditions for love all on
your own."*

~ Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D.

"Love is brief, but frequently recurring."

~ Francois de La Rochefoucauld

Then there was an older couple we saw while coming back from the park. We live in a small town called Ojai that's sort of a vacation destination in Southern California and I like asking people who are obviously visiting (often looking at a map!) if they need any help. I don't always initiate a "Can I help you find anything?" but I always love it when I do and, of course, now that I'm out on the hunt for these opportunities I definitely asked. Enter: More awesome.

They were visiting from Canada, enjoying the warm weather and, although I couldn't help them find the type of coffee spot they were looking for (sorry, not my expertise!), I did tell them about a hike I thought they'd love—with a beautiful view of the valley. They were excited. Then we laughed about the pomegranate juice on Emerson's face, hands, and shirt that I'd left there to laugh at with mom. Positivity resonance. (Even just retelling that story fills me up again!)

(Lest I come across as a saint (hah!), I also had to check my frustration more than once during the day. Laughing. It's all good mental + heart-opening training!!!)

So back to you.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it: Create 3 loving connections today!!! :)

HOW TO EXIT YOUR COCOON OF SELF-ABSORPTION

"Loving is a skill. It takes practice."

~ Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D.

"Bring your awareness to the sensations of your own heart. Breathe to and from your heart. Notice how each breath brings new energy to your heart and allows your heart to send life-giving oxygen coursing throughout your body. Rest in this awareness for several breaths. 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 loving-kindness meditation, silently to yourself, in some form or another. 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."

Loving-kindness meditation. The book walks us through the remarkable science that proves its efficacy in toning our vagus nerve and boosting our health and happiness. Super compelling.

60 minutes per week (less than 10 min/day) = huge benefits.

That's my new meditation starting tomorrow morning. (btw: I spent the last month practicing some [Oxygen Advantage](#) reduced-breathing techniques to optimize the CO₂ levels. Benefits of that + breathing thru my nose all.the.time have been amazing. Check out that Note for more!)

Each chapter in Part II comes with a different guided meditation—to help us expand our love for ourselves and others and beyond. They're beautiful. Check out free guided meditations at PositivityResonance.com.

P.S. Barbara tells us we need to exit our "cocoon of self-absorption." You know, that place we live in pretty much all.the.time—where we can't see beyond the narrow confines of our own goals, to-do's, thoughts and worries? <— "Cocoon of self-absorption." Wow. What a powerful phrase.

A VERY powerful (and simple) way to exit? Loving-kindness meditation. Practice with me?!

"What is rich? Are you rich enough to help anybody?"

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

"I never knew how to worship until I knew how to love."

~ Henry Ward Beecher

LOVE 2.0 X 2: COMPASSIONATE + CELEBRATORY LOVE

"The facts are that all people face both good and bad fortune every year, if not every day. When you look out at others, even without speaking with them or knowing anything specific about them, you can be virtually certain that they are simultaneously blessed by good fortune, however small or large, and also burdened by bad fortune, again, however small or large. Each person we encounter, then, simultaneously merits both our compassionate love and our celebratory love. Love, upgraded as positivity resonance, comes in many flavors. It bends towards compassion when suffering is salient, and toward celebration when good fortune is salient. Above all, love is connection. In connection, you are far more likely to recognize what other people are going through, and meet them where they are, sincerely wishing them the very best."

Compassionate love and celebratory love.

Everyone is suffering in one way or another at one point or another. May we open our hearts to that reality and offer grounded + warm presence as we bless them to find peace and offer compassionate love.

Then there's "gratitude's generous cousin"—celebratory love. We know gratitude for our blessings boosts happiness. Guess what? When we seek out and celebrate *other people's* successes we infinitely expand our capacity to be grateful and loving.

Another favorite micro-moment practice Barbara shares involves her sitting on campus and watching people walk by—looking for signs of success like a smile or a purposeful step. She offers celebratory love via a virtual high five and the silent blessing: *"May your happiness and good fortune continue!"*

And so I say to you, my dear friend, *"May your happiness and good fortune continue!"*

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson is the Founder + CEO of Heroic. He's spent half of the last 25 years as a Founder/CEO and the other half as a Philosopher. Brian loves integrating ancient wisdom and modern science to help YOU become the best, most heroic version of yourself so we can create a world in which 51% of humanity is flourishing by 2051. Learn more at heroic.us.

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