



Mental Health Matters

A Monthly Newsletter from Atlantic Behavioral Health

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | February 2024

A LOVE STORY

What's your favorite love song? Do you have a rom-com that you watch over and over again? What about a love poem?

Love and our relationships fuel a high percentage of our entertainment, art, music and literature, and no wonder, "LOVE is all ya need" right? "LOVE makes the world go round," for sure, and we all want someone to say they LOVE us "just the way you are."

But real relationships are not Disney movies or love songs. Turns out LOVE is one of big reasons people come to see a therapist. Our relationships are often the most important part of our lives and can often cause a lot of our distress.



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Here Are Some Relationship Trends

- Turns out marriage is down and living together is more openly accepted in the world of love.
- Divorce rates remain stable with about 40% of marriages ending in divorce.
- When people do get married, they are waiting longer and getting married older.
- Married couples are opting for fewer or no children.
- Couples counseling is increasing as the stigma of therapy and willingness to work on the relationship increases. [Top 5 Recent Marriage Trends - Parallel Wellness LTD](#)

To Help Increase Your Success in Relationships, Here Is a Little Love Story to Help You on Your Relationship Journey

Chapter One in the Love Story

Making a Connection

The beginning of a relationship is often a time of high excitement. Passion runs hot, we feel deeply connected and close, and we have a lot of hopes for the future. Here are a few things to consider as you start a new relationship:

1. Knowing what you want and sharing that clearly with someone will help you be on the same page earlier in the relationship. Work on writing a list of your values and priorities in your life.
2. Notice if you are both taking equal risks in sharing things about each other and making time to be together. Is one person doing all the calling, making all the plans, or sharing more personal information? If this begins to feel uneven, take the risk to discuss that with the person. This might be a relationship red flag.
3. In our world of virtual connections, learning and practicing in-person social skills will help deepen a new relationship. Texting and social media only takes a relationship so far, eventually you will need to be comfortable sitting across from someone and having an in-person conversation. Reaching out to a relationship counselor can be one way to improve these social skills.

[Start a New Relationship the Right Way | Psychology Today](#)

[How to Start a Relationship? It Boils Down to 6 Steps | Psychology Today](#)

Chapter Two in the Love Story

What Makes Love Last?

The age-old question everyone wants to know is how to make love last. While we don't have the magic answer to that question, there is some solid research-backed behaviors that will increase the happiness of a love relationship.

- Remember that relationships are a lot like a living organism. The relationship will need attention to thrive. In the middle of a love story, it can be easy to get distracted and even start taking it for granted. Consider a relationship tune-up as a regular habit to keep things growing.
- In the middle of the love story, there will usually be disagreements. Disagreements and fights are a normal part of any relationship. Learning how to fight fair is a good skill to have and will protect your relationship from doing harm that is hard to heal. John Gottman warns couples to avoid the 4 Horsemen of the Relationship Apocalypse: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness and Stonewalling.
[The Four Horsemen: Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, & Stonewalling \(gottman.com\)](http://gottman.com)
- With careers, family, and children it will be important to reconnect to the intention and goals of the relationship. These can change over time, so have this conversation with each other to be sure you are both going in the same direction.



Chapter Three in the Love Story

When Things Change

- Ending a relationship is often one of life's most painful experiences. If you are going through a breakup and your relationship is ending, try to stay respectful, clear, and as direct as possible. This might be a good time to reach out for some counseling to help you manage the pain of this loss.
- Sometimes a relationship ends because one partner passes away. This kind of loss is extremely difficult and will take time to heal. Therapeutic or spiritual support is often very helpful during these times of loss and ending.
- When a love relationship ends, there is a grieving process that will happen. Give yourself some time before making big decisions. Reach out for help and support in taking care of yourself. As hard as it is to believe, hold on to the knowledge that you will get through this difficult time.



If you notice you are having thoughts of not wanting to live, it is important to contact your medical provider and loved ones.



988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

Relationships are truly one of the most complex, rewarding, and challenging parts of our lives. Learning the lessons of love will help you grow in your relationships and in yourself.

That is a story worth finishing.

CRISIS RESOURCES

If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else:

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQIA + Youth : **1-866-488-7386**

Veterans Crisis Line: **Dial 988 and Press 1**

Dial 211: 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs and in times of crisis

For more information or to get help:

National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE**

National Sexual Assault Hotline at **1-800-656-HOPE**

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
24/7 Hotline **1-800-656-4673**

Website:

Atlantichealth.org

Atlantic Behavioral Health

ACCESS Center:

888-247-1400

Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention

Services **24/7 Hotlines:**

Chilton Medical Center: 973 – 831 – 5078

Hackettstown Medical Center 908 – 454 – 5141

Morristown Medical Center: 973 – 540 – 0100

Overlook Medical Center: 908 – 522 – 3586

Newton Medical Center: 973 – 383 – 0973



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