

TACKLING (ROMANTIC) LOVE

This activity was developed by Élan Interculturel.



OVERVIEW

In this activity, participants try to bring to the surface the questions we have about the idea of “romantic love”. We’re going to work with “collage”, which is an art form based on combining existing images (from magazines, newspapers etc.) and gluing them together to create new combinations, and hence new meanings.



LEARNING CONTEXT

This activity can be done online, offline with social distancing, and offline with physical contact.

DURATION



About 120-180 minutes
(depending on number of participants)

PARTICIPANTS



Adaptable for 8– 20 participants

MATERIALS



A3 or bigger paper, a bit thicker for the collage
Newspapers, magazines, brochures with pictures
Scissors, glue
Coloured pens, markers
Removable putty or tape to stick the art works on the wall

OBJECTIVES



- Reflect on, explore and compare the participants’ views of (romantic) love
- Reflect on and compare the participants’ own “ideals” for relationships

PREPARATION

No preparation is needed for in-person version, only for the online option: creating and sharing a selection of png images.

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INSTRUCTIONS STEP BY STEP



Introduce the activity to participants, by telling them that we are going to focus on “romantic love” (not in the sense of current representations / stereotypes of what is considered “romantic”, but in the meaning of intimate love relationships). The English language does not make it easy to refer to this type of relationships without also referring to “romance”. More specifically, in this activity we’ll try to bring to the surface the questions we have about this specific type of love. We’re going to work with “collage”, which is an art form based on combining existing images (from magazines, newspapers etc.) and gluing them together to create new combinations, and hence new meanings. You can give participants the following instructions:

1. **IDENTIFYING A QUESTION, PREPARING A COLLAGE:** “Using the visual material at your disposal, please create a collage which expresses a question you have about “love”. Take an A3 paper as a canvas, and cut out and glue any image, coloured paper, etc. to give visual representation to your question. Please also write your question (or print, or glue as cut-out words) on your collage. When you are done, we’ll help you stick your work on the wall to create an exhibition.” Participants will probably need an hour to create their works. Often what takes time is to go through the magazines that are offered in order to find visual inspiration. You can put on some background music.
2. **EXHIBITION** Once the exhibition is ready and all the art works are on the wall, invite participants to visit the exhibition. In the exhibition, the authors present their pieces, one after another. To ensure a good pace, we recommend imposing a time limit that takes into account the number of participants. For a group of 15 or more we recommend 1 minute. For smaller groups you can allow 1.5 minutes per person. Thank each author, but without engaging in analysis / discussion or evaluation. If someone has questions to clarify, you can give a brief amount of time for that, but not for deeper discussions.
3. **CREATING SMALL GROUPS FOR A DEEPER DISCUSSION:** In the next round, invite participants to create groups of three to discuss together one of the questions proposed. The question is not necessarily the one proposed by a participant in the group, they can choose any question they are interested in. The groups can also be constituted by asking the participants to go to the collage question that they are most interested in working with.
4. **DEEP LISTENING:** We propose a specific format for the small groups which gives each participant the possibility to share their ideas with the others, before they engage in actual discussion. Participants can take turns in sharing, each having 2 or 3 minutes to talk, while the others only listen attentively and welcome the ideas of the person speaking. Once this round of sharing is done, discussion can start.
5. **DISCUSSION:** To close the work of the small group, you can invite them to find common answers to: a) the question that have been working with, and b) the skills needed for a harmonious love relationship. You can give participants 10 minutes to find their answers.
6. **PLENARY SHARING:** In plenary, you can start with each group giving a short account of how they experienced the cooperation and discussion, and what answers they have found.



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DISCUSSIONS AND DEBRIEFING



After the plenary sharing, you can continue discussing questions related to love, such as:

1. Explore the clichés of “romantic love”: how do they influence our own perceptions, representations and experiences of love?
2. What alternatives to classical “romantic love” appeared in the collages? Do we know any alternatives? What do we think about them? Do we know any alternative models from other cultures?
3. What do participants think about how the media represents romance, social norms, expectations and real-life relationships?

TIPS AND HINTS



For participants who have never made a collage before, you can give some tips: cutting out the shapes precisely will add to the clarity of the piece. If needed, you can show a couple of examples (check out the works of Barbara Kruger, Deborah Roberts and Lorna Simpson).

THIS ACTIVITY ONLINE



The activity can also be conducted online. In this case, instead of working with paper collage, we work with digital elements. Before the activity, you should provide a set of images (in png format) that can be used either as background or as feature images. You can invite participants to work in PowerPoint or Google slides which are maybe easier than proper visual creativity software. See example below:



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THEORY



Hatfield, E., Rapson, E.L., Martel, L.D. 2007. "Passionate love and sexual desire". In: Kitayama S., Cohen, D. (Eds) Handbook of Cultural Psychology, pp. 760-779.

Héritier Françoise, « Quel sens donner aux notions de couple et de mariage ? à la lumière de l'anthropologie », Informations sociales, 2005/2 (n° 122), p. 6-15. DOI : 10.3917/inso.122.0006. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-informations-sociales-2005-2-page-6.htm>

Anthony Giddens. *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*; Stanford University Press, 1992 – Psychology.

Perel, Esther. *Mating in Captivity*; 2006.