

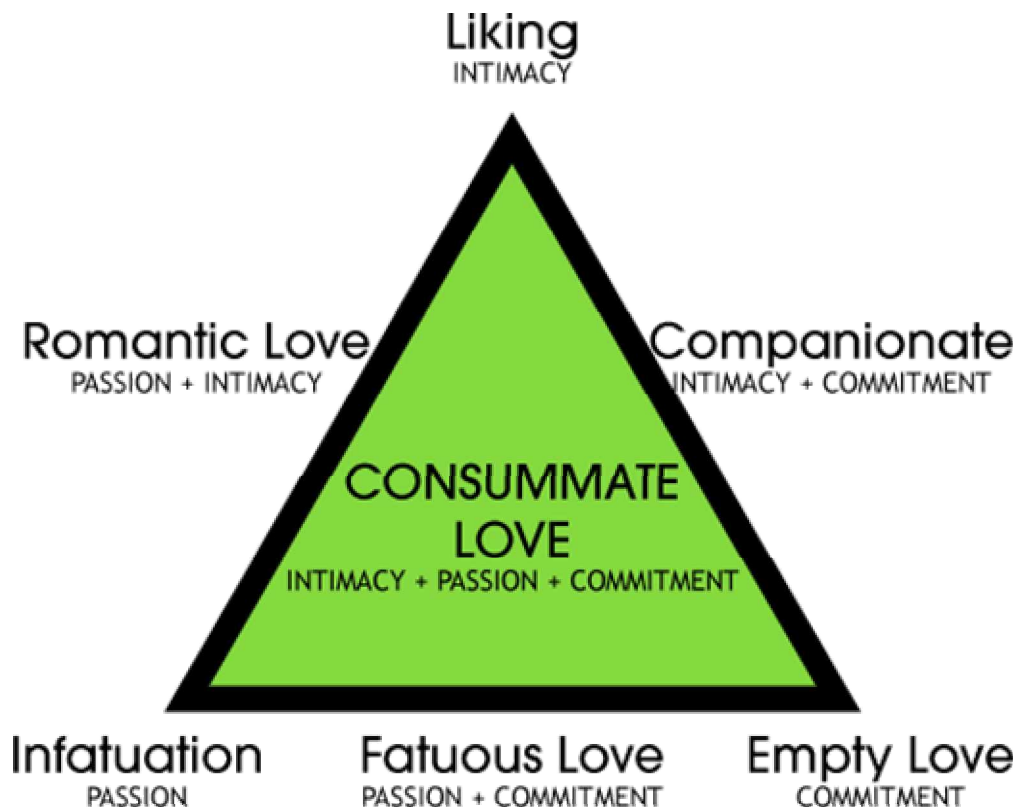
Triangular theory of love

The triangular theory of love explains the topic of love in an interpersonal relationship. Psychologist Robert Sternberg's theory describes types of love based on three different scales: intimacy, passion, and commitment. It is important to recognize that a relationship based on a single element is less likely to survive than one based on two or more.

Different stages and types of love can be explained as different combinations of these three elements. For example, the relative emphasis of each component changes over time as an adult romantic relationship develops.

Types of Love

Combinations of intimacy, passion, and commitment			
	Intimacy	Passion	Commitment
Liking or Friendship	x		
Infatuation or Limerence		x	
Empty love			x
Romantic Love	x	x	
Companionate love	x		x
Fatuous love		x	x
Consummate love	x	x	x



1. *Liking* in this case is not used in a trivial sense. Sternberg says that this intimate liking characterizes true friendships, in which a person feels a bondedness, a warmth, and a closeness with another but not intense passion or long-term commitment.
2. *Infatuated love* is often what is felt as "love at first sight." But without the intimacy and the commitment components of love, infatuated love may disappear suddenly.
3. *Empty love*: Sometimes, a stronger love deteriorates into empty love, in which the commitment remains, but the intimacy and passion have died. In cultures in which arranged marriages are common, relationships often begin as empty love.
4. *Romantic love*: Romantic lovers are bonded emotionally (as in liking) and physically through passionate arousal.
5. *Companionate love* is often found in marriages in which the passion has gone out of the relationship, but a deep affection and commitment remain. Companionate love is generally a personal relation you build with somebody you share your life with, but with no sexual or physical desire.

It is stronger than friendship because of the extra element of commitment. The love ideally shared between family members is a form of companionate love, as is the love between deep friends or those who spend a lot of time together in any asexual but friendly relationship.

6. *Fatuous love* can be exemplified by a whirlwind courtship and marriage in which a commitment is motivated largely by passion, without the stabilizing influence of intimacy.
7. *Consummate love* is the complete form of love, representing the ideal relationship toward which many people strive but which apparently few achieve. Sternberg cautions that maintaining a consummate love may be even harder than achieving it. He stresses the importance of translating the components of love into action. "Without expression," he warns, "even the greatest of loves can die" (1987, p.341). Consummate love may not be permanent. For example, if passion is lost over time, it may change into companionate love.

The balance among Sternberg's three aspects of love is likely to shift through the course of a relationship. A strong dose of all three components-found in consummate love-typifies, for many of us, an ideal relationship. However time alone does not cause intimacy, passion, and commitment to occur and grow. Knowing about these components of love may help couples avoid pitfalls in their relationship, work on the areas that need improvement or help them recognize when it might be time for a relationship to come to an end.

References

- Sternberg, R. J. (1986) A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93, 119-135.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1988) *The Triangle of Love: Intimacy, Passion, Commitment*, Basic Books (ISBN 0465087469)...la:triangulus amoris
- Adapted information available from wikipedia on the triangular theory of love.