

# A LINE ON LIFE

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## Love with Style \*

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(When Valentine's Day approaches, people express their feelings of love with cards and gifts. This is my "*card*" to my treasured wife of almost 40 years.)

What is love? Is love the same for everyone? There are many different ways of viewing love, but none of them "*tell the whole story*." From one perspective, sociologist John Lee (1973, 1988) described **styles of love**. People can use a combination of these styles. The style(s) used can change as the relationship changes. Lee categorized six basic styles.

- **Eros** is named after the Greek god of love, the son of Aphrodite. (The Romans called him "*Cupid*."). Erotic love is very sensual, tactile and immediate. Lovers are drawn towards the beauty of the partner. (However, beauty is in the eye of the beholder.) They love to sense their partner through sight, sound, smell and touch. This style is suggested by couples that continually cling to each other or constantly touch. They are fascinated by every physical detail of their beloved. This style burns brightly, but it soon flickers and dies. On the other hand, it may change to another style of love.

- **Mania** comes from the Greek word for "*madness*." This style leaves lovers possessed. They have nights of sleeplessness and days filled with anxiety. It is like a *roller coaster*. When things are positive, manic lovers are "*on top of the world*." But with the slightest sign of rejection, manic lovers are "*down in the dumps*." Just as any act of attention leads to ecstasy, any oversight is interpreted as total rejection. Manic love is most likely to lead to possessiveness and jealousy.

- **Ludus** is Latin for "*play*." Ludic love is a game. It does not require deep emotional involvement. It is for fun and enjoyment. Encounters are casual, carefree and often careless. Ludic lovers may be concerned about "*scoring*" with partners or keeping a tally on how many partners they have had. "*Nothing serious*" is the motto of ludic lovers.

- **Storge** (pronounced "*STOR-gay*") comes from the Greek. It indicates the natural, affectionate love one might have for a friend. In Lee's terms, it is "*love without fever, tumult, or folly, a peaceful and enchanting affection*." It usually starts as a friendship that slowly develops into love. If the love ends, it is gradual. However, the friendship usually remains. In contrast to the hot flames of erotic love, storge lovers share the comfortable warmth of glowing embers.

- **Agape** (pronounced "AH-gah-pay") is from the Greek for "*brotherly love*." Agapic love is charitable, selfless, patient, undemanding and chaste. Those who have it do not expect it to be returned. (Some call it "*Christian*" love, but a more inclusive term would be "*altruistic*.") Agape is best illustrated by those who anonymously help others. It is likely to be a strong component of love of parents for their children, teachers for their students or doctors for their clients. Although this love is admirable as an ideal, it is unrealistic. We all need some expression of appreciation for what we do, even if our action is selfless. To maintain agapic love, at the very least, we need some feedback that our actions have caused meaningful changes.

- **Pragma** is from the Greek word for "*business*." Pragmatic lovers take a very practical approach – they look for someone who can fulfill their needs without excessive cost to them. They make a logical search for a partner – seeking someone with compatible interests, personality, education, religion, finances, etcetera. Very much like a love accountant, the "*plus*" and "*minus*" values of a partner are the main consideration. This style may seem very unemotional and cold. However, once a partner is found, other styles of love can develop.

Once you know your current style of love, it is helpful if your partner has a compatible style. Lee has developed a questionnaire to detect your style(s) of love. It has various statements. You respond by indicating how true the statements are about your relationship. (It is too long to include in this article.)

However, I have taken Lee's scale in relation to my wife, Marlene. My style now seems to be a combination of Storge and Eros. Over the years, I have developed a warm, comfortable feeling of a deep, enduring love toward her. However, I still have strong elements of the erotic style that typified our earlier relationship. I deeply enjoy her presence. Even with changes that have occurred over time, she is still beautiful to me. The sound of her voice – or even her slightest touch – lifts my spirits. Almost always, my experiences are brighter and better, when I can share them with her.

What is my wife's style in our relationship? Well, if you really want to know that, I guess you'll have to ask her.

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\* Adapted from Bryan Strong, Christine Devault and Barbara Werner Sayad's *Core Concepts of Human Sexuality*, Mayfield Publishing, 1996, pages 190-194.