

# Love In America



# The Search for Real Community

# America in Crisis: Is **REAL** community disappearing?

## Loneliness in America



Loneliness is on the rise in the U.S., particularly among younger people, such as members of Generation Z, born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, and millennials, just a little bit older. Homelessness is on the rise in major U.S. cities.

# *What Are Americans saying about Companionship?*

## From article: Americans are a Lonely Lot:

More than 1/2 of survey respondents — 54%— said they always or sometimes feel that no one knows them well.

56% reported they sometimes or always felt like the people around them "are not necessarily *with* them." And 2 in 5 felt like "they lack companionship," that their "relationships aren't meaningful" and that they "are isolated from others."

From article: How American Masculinity Creates Loneliness: Men lack the ability to be vulnerable and they think it is a sign of weakness to need others.

# Suicide Rates in America:

**10th leading cause of death overall in the United States**, claiming the lives of nearly 45,000 people.

- **Suicide was 2nd leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34**, and the 4th leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 35 and 54.
- There were more than twice as many suicides (44,965) in the United States as there were homicides (19,362).

(According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) WISQARS Leading Causes of Death Reports](#), in 2016) 1# of death is heart disease

# *Opioid Epidemic? Disconnection and loneliness are the drivers of this epidemic.....*

America is an individual culture where any type of dependence on others is seen as weakness, and you pathologize human needs- Unbroken brain by Maia Szalavitz

\*Yes let's blame the drug companies, but why did our America allow this? Opioids—prescription and illicit—are the main driver of drug overdose deaths. Opioids were involved in 42,249 deaths in 2016, and **opioid overdose deaths were 5 times higher in 2016 than 1999.**

# COMPANIONSHIP

Relationships....they keep the human race alive:

Sexuality/Romantic partners\* evolution



Parental bonds\* evolution

Friendship/Community



Pets



# What Kinds of Love Do We Look For?

#1 Romantic love: Physical Attraction, Desire & Sexuality...Chase and obtainment driven by evolution



...lots of DOPAMINE.....Addiction=Romantic love? Yup same behaviors! THIS LOVE sells movies and novels, consumer culture appeals to this kind of love: gifts, gifts, gifts.....

## #2 COMPANIONSHIP LOVE: Contentment

Long term relationships: romantic, parenting, friendship, pets...



Challenges: 1) conflict due to lack of acceptance by either one or both involved in the relationship. 2) fear of being alone, or hurting the other person by leaving 3) Unrealistic expectations 4) Boring? 5) Life scripts hinder or enhance these.



### #3 “Unconditional Love”: Is America hindering this process?

Emotional Vulnerability: acceptance, respect, and trust.

Social and spiritual connections...can be hard work....human relationships are sloppy and risky....



# How do we learn in relationships?



## Brain chemistry + Our Environment + Repetition

\*LIFE SCRIPTS\*

Environment: parents/caregivers, school, culture, society, religion, friends, and unfortunately, social media...

# TEENAGE BRAIN...

# the EMERGENCE OF THE ADULT BRAIN....

Teenage brain is working at high speeds pruning what it thinks we need....



**“memories are easier to make and last longer when acquired in the teen years compared with adult years...a fact that can’t be ignored.**

**The brain in childhood and adolescence respond and change in response to VIRTUALLY any stimulation.....**

.-Teenage Brain, Jensen

# THE TEENAGE BRAIN....learning the tools to survive? Molding our Life Scripts...



My theory: In the teen years....

\*Existing childhood life scripts are kept/pruned, new ones are rapidly created.

\*Life Scripts are created for the teen years and beyond....

\*Some Life Scripts created in early teen years, keep us from MATURING AND ENGAGING...since priorities in teen years can be misleading...

**\*\*\*IMPACTS ALL RELATIONSHIP INTERACTIONS AND OUR ADDICTIONS**

# LIFE SCRIPTS: WHAT ARE THEY?

- Short sentences that we live by in our lives, sometimes 1-3 sentences are the most powerful. Positive and negative scripts. UNIQUE TO EVERYONE!!
- Molded by our environment and the repetition of them. Our brain tells us they are useful and they “protect us”...difficult to identify since they are so familiar
- Examples of non useful life scripts:

*I am not..... There's something wrong with me.... No one cares.....*

*I 'm bad... I will never be..... I need excitement... I did it again.....*

*I can't.... I've always been like this... This is boring... I want.....*

*Screw it...f\*\*\* it.... I don't care... Am I..needed/important....*

# Who is the voice of your Life Script?

## Trickster vs Iron Man

Like a super sponge our brain absorbs our experiences. **The brain thinks it's helping us and protecting us when it interprets our experiences and creates life scripts.....But does it always help? ...Does the brain need to evolve a bit? I think so!**



Trickster



Iron Man

# LIFE SCRIPTS: CREATED BY HOW OUR BRAIN CHEMISTRY REMEMBERS OUR ENVIRONMENT

1) **Dopamine + hormones**: desire/motivation/rewards

2) **Serotonin**: contentment, social connection  
emotional rewards

3) **Stress-fear-memory pathway**: protects us/over  
protects us

Robert Lustig: The Hacking of the American Mind

# The Dopamine Dictator of Our Life Scripts:

Dopamine rewards....

“You don’t control dopamine, it controls you!” Lustig





# OXYTOCIN: “Love Hormone or Cuddle Chemical”

Our Built in Safety Net? Critical to our social lives. Teaches us who is friendly/familiar and who is not.



BUT IS IT RELIABLE? Oxytocin focuses your brain on remembering the characteristics of the people who raise you and links cues with stress relief, regardless of how they treated you. Healthy or unhealthy.

(\*Oxytocin mixes with drugs so instead of associating with a person it associates with a drug.)

# Parents: MOLDING OUR LIFE SCRIPTS



Epigenetics: impact of stress on genes, generational changes

Parenting: Generational: Discipline + Communication.


**\*\*Stress/Expectations to raise a successful and healthy child.**

Negative Parent Messages: Use of Comparison, Guilt and Shame, Fear of failure or lack of acceptance, tough love.

**\*Lack of Self-Empowerment\***

# Culture, Religion and Society: Traditions and Expectations molding our life scripts....



A black and white close-up portrait of James Baldwin. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white collared shirt, and a dark tie.

**"I love America  
more than any  
other country in  
the world, and,  
exactly for this  
reason, I insist  
on the right to  
criticize her  
perpetually."**

**--James Baldwin**

THE ROOT

[www.theroot.com](http://www.theroot.com)

# Is American Influencing Our Relationships?

Molding our Life Scripts....With JUDGEMENT...

**We buy things  
we don't need  
with money we  
don't have to  
impress  
people we  
don't like.**



AND EXPECTATIONS.....

# Creating EXPECTATIONS: Molding our Life Scripts

AMERICAN MEDIA: movies, tv, advertising...



# American Consumerism: “Love” Expectations:



# American consumerism:

## Beauty Expectations:

Clothing/hair style/make up trends:



## Attraction Expectations:

power, gifts, social status, money, parties,  
social media, alcohol/drugs...





## What Excites Dopamine Learning in Relationships?

### **GIFTS, GIFTS, GIFTS**

\$19.6 billion on Valentine's Day gifts 2018, 2017 \$18.2 billion and 2016 record high of \$19.7 billion.

Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents day...

Weddings/Engagements: Do it right or else love is disappointed/let down, “not romantic”

### **EXPECTATIONS**

# Why Are Pets A Growing Trend in America?



Yes, they are cute! But... UNCONDITIONAL LOVE and ACCEPTANCE are missing in America.....pets fill the void....

AND GUESS WHAT? Consumerism is feeding on this...

**\*\*\$751 million on Valentine's Day gifts for their pets 2018.** For 2018, it's *estimated* that \$72.13 billion will be spent on our pets in the U.S.

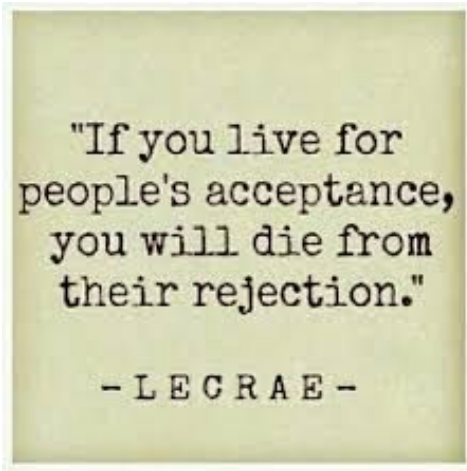
# RANKING AND LIKING IN AMERICA

My boyfriend is always following other girls on social media, liking their pictures, send friend requests. It hurts. He thinks nothing's wrong. Am I overreacting? He's cheated in the past on me..tell me what I should do. Please?



Ranking and liking is eroding American children's views on community. Love relationships are being impacted by "how liked" a person is.

# Rejection in America: An Epidemic on the rise



**\*We are not using rejection as a tool for growth and for building self-confidence. Social media driver of competition/judgement in society.**

**Outcome:** increased suicide rates, violence, domestic violence, rape, and school violence.

# Winning in America: Competition and Community?



# American Dream: Suffocating Community in America? Expectations: Power, Money and Status



# How Do We Create Real Community?

## HOW about just listen to your neighbor?

### ADD:

\*Social connections regardless of self-interests

\*Saying hello/supporting our neighbors in our community with no agenda. Redefine SOCIAL MEDIA Agenda.

\*Supporting Rejection and Failure as a tool for self-growth and acceptance



Move Away from: JUDGEMENT/COMPARISON: ...with Industrial Revolution we had to compete/make ourselves desirable for jobs....

GOSSIP: Addicting, rewarding? UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:  
Question consumer messages, impact of social media and impact on life scripts.

# The Bally Foundation





## Contact Info:

You tube: “Alison Lewis Counselor”

“Everyone’s an Addict: Drugs, Alcohol, the American Dream and more!”

“Love in America”

12 Steps for the 21st Century-(instagram)

Email: [alisonlewiscounselor@gmail.com](mailto:alisonlewiscounselor@gmail.com)

# Books, articles and resources

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/14/americans-are-spending-751-million-on-their-pets-for-valentines-day.html>

Consumed, Benjamin R. Barber

The Hacking of the American Mind, Lustig

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>

<http://money.cnn.com/2018/01/09/technology/business/apple-iphone-addiction-tony-fadell/index.html>

[https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/05/01/606588504/americans-are-a-lonely-lot-and-young-people-bear-the-heaviest-burden?utm\\_source=npr\\_newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=20180721&utm\\_campaign=npr\\_email\\_a\\_friend&utm\\_term=storyshare](https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/05/01/606588504/americans-are-a-lonely-lot-and-young-people-bear-the-heaviest-burden?utm_source=npr_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=20180721&utm_campaign=npr_email_a_friend&utm_term=storyshare)

<https://www.npr.org/2018/03/19/594719471/guys-we-have-a-problem-how-american-masculinity-creates-lonely-men>

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/america-has-a-big-loneliness-problem-2018-05-02>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/06/the-terrible-loneliness-of-growing-up-poor-in-robert-putnams-america/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.ace32f1160e8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/06/the-terrible-loneliness-of-growing-up-poor-in-robert-putnams-america/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ace32f1160e8)

A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction, Unbroken Brain, Maia Szalavitz

The Teenage Brain, A neuroscientist survival guide to raising adolescents and young adults, Frances E. Jensen, MD.

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/statedeaths.html>

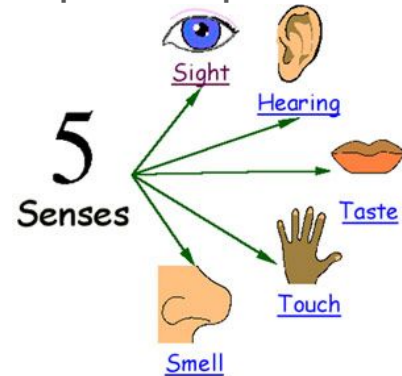
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/21/movies/kelly-marie-tran.html>

# Addiction = Romantic Love?

“For one, nearly every behavior seen in addiction is also found in romantic love”

“Misguided love is a problem of learning...in love, people learn powerful associations between their lovers and nearly everything about them and around them; in addiction these connections are made with the drug. “

“Soon, relevant cues like sights, sounds and smells will spur relapses into obsessive behavior” Unbroken brain-Maia Szalavitz



# What is the truth about American beginnings? Contradictory beginnings? You bet!

John Ellis: Pulitzer prize winning author of Founding Brothers says:



“The real drama of the American Revolution was the inherent **messiness**...this meant recovering the exciting but terrifying sense that all the major players had at the time-namely that they were making it up as they went along, improvising on the edge of catastrophe...”

# Codependency and other labels from 1980's 1990's..

Codependency: link of addiction and love in a damaging way. Combined with the idea of tough love, which diagnosed nearly any caring behavior toward people with addiction as “enabling” their drug use to continue.

The idea that being “kind” and “enabling” addicts does more harm than good is itself, damaging. Healthy relationships are essential to recovery, while love isn't always all you need, without it, few people get better. Lack of love helps cause addiction.

-Unbroken brain: Maia Szalavitz