

BEING LOVE (B-LOVE)

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1. Core Definition

Being Love, often abbreviated as **B-Love**, is a profound and mature form of affection characterized by genuine, non-possessive admiration for the intrinsic nature and existence of the other person. Introduced by American psychologist **Abraham Maslow**, B-Love stands in stark contrast to conventional forms of love that are rooted in need fulfillment or deficiency. It is described as a "new kind of love" that is only fully realized when the individual's cognitive abilities are enhanced and their basic psychological needs are largely satisfied, positioning them within the realm of self-actualization. This form of love transcends the selfish desire for emotional security or physical gratification, focusing instead on appreciating the other individual's unique being (B-values) without attempting to change or control them.

The essence of B-Love lies in its mutuality and unconditional positive regard. Where most relationships involve some degree of dependence or seeking validation, B-Love is an intersubjective experience shared between two individuals who are internally strong and autonomous. It is a love that flows from abundance, not scarcity. The self-actualizer, having achieved a high degree of integration and self-awareness, can engage in a relationship where the partner is viewed as an end in themselves, rather than a means to satisfy personal deficits. This leads to a marked reduction in the negative emotions typically associated with possessive relationships, such as **jealousy**, anxiety, or dependence.

Furthermore, B-Love requires a heightened level of awareness--awareness of the self and awareness of the other--allowing for a transparent and honest connection. Maslow emphasized that individuals capable of B-Love exhibit a more genuine concern for the other's growth and flourishing. This is not simply altruism, but a recognition that the partner's growth inherently enriches the shared experience. The love itself is an expression of the lover's own health and psychological maturity, embodying a deeply integrated and profound appreciation of life and reality.

2. Proponent and Origin

The concept of **Being Love** was first detailed and formalized by **Abraham Maslow** (1908-1970), a pivotal figure in the development of **Humanistic Psychology**. Maslow developed B-Love as a critical component of his broader theoretical framework centered on motivation and human potential, particularly following the satisfaction of the basic needs outlined in his famous Hierarchy of Needs. While Maslow's early work focused heavily on the deficiency needs (D-needs), his later work, especially in books like *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962), shifted focus toward the

transcendent qualities and peak experiences available to self-actualizing individuals.

Maslow's inquiry into B-Love stemmed from his study of psychologically healthy and high-functioning individuals, whom he termed "self-actualizers." He observed that the relationships these individuals formed were qualitatively different from the neurotic or need-driven relationships common in the general population. He realized that a new nomenclature was necessary to describe this higher-order phenomenon. The term B-Love, therefore, serves as a direct conceptual counterpart to Deficiency Love (D-Love), differentiating between love based on filling voids and love based on celebrating existence. This dichotomy provided Maslow with a crucial tool for analyzing the mature personality and the highest achievements of human connection.

The introduction of B-Love marked a significant departure from earlier psychological theories of attachment and romance, which often prioritized biological drives (Freud) or conditioned reinforcement (Behaviorism). Maslow asserted that B-Love represents a metaphysical or existential dimension of connection, tied not to basic survival or libido, but to the full realization of human potential. It became an essential marker of psychological health within the humanistic tradition, influencing subsequent theories in counseling, positive psychology, and existential therapy by providing a positive ideal for interpersonal relations.

3. Etymology and Historical Development

The term **B-Love** is etymologically linked directly to Maslow's broader concept of "Being," or the "B-values," which include truth, goodness, beauty, unity, and transcendence. These B-values represent the highest motivational levels for self-actualizers. Thus, Being Love is literally love derived from, and focused upon, the intrinsic value and reality (the Being) of the partner. Maslow began developing these concepts in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a period when post-war psychology was grappling with how to address human potential rather than merely psychopathology.

Historically, the concept emerged as Maslow refined his understanding of the highest level of his motivational hierarchy: **Self-Actualization**. He recognized that individuals who reach this level operate from a fundamentally different perspective; they are motivated by "metaneeds" rather than basic deficits. Consequently, their emotional relationships also reflect this shift. Prior psychological models, such as those rooted in dependency or object relations, could only explain the lower-level "D-Love." Maslow's work, influenced partly by existential philosophy and Eastern thought, provided a framework to describe relational fulfillment that was not predicated on mutual neediness.

The development of B-Love as a construct was crucial for distinguishing humanistic psychology from its psychoanalytic and behavioral predecessors. By postulating a form of love free from pathology and rooted in health, Maslow offered hope and direction for personal growth. It became a powerful tool used by Maslow and others to illustrate that psychological maturity leads to richer,

more integrated, and less conflict-ridden interpersonal bonds. The concept has maintained its relevance, informing modern therapeutic approaches that emphasize authenticity and relational presence.

4. Key Characteristics of B-Love

B-Love is defined by a constellation of characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of attachment. These characteristics stem from the psychological health and non-anxious presence of the individuals involved, allowing the relationship itself to become a vehicle for growth rather than a source of stress. The focus shifts entirely from how the other person can fulfill the self, to how the shared experience can celebrate the totality of both beings.

Non-Possessiveness and Autonomy: B-Love is fundamentally non-controlling. The B-Lover respects the partner's individuality and autonomy completely, viewing the partner's unique identity as something to be cherished, not curtailed. There is no attempt to mold the partner into a preferred image.

Lack of Anxiety and Jealousy: Because B-Love is rooted in internal fulfillment, it does not rely on the partner for security or self-esteem. Consequently, the anxieties, fears of abandonment, and possessive jealousy inherent in D-Love are largely absent.

Mutuality and Unconditionality: This love is profoundly mutual, involving a reciprocal recognition of value. It is unconditional; it does not disappear when the partner fails or falls short, but remains focused on the underlying 'Being' of the person.

Enhanced Cognition and Awareness: B-Love is made possible by "fully enhanced cognition." The lovers see each other more accurately and realistically, without the distortion of psychological needs or idealized projections. This clarity fosters deeper understanding and acceptance.

Focus on Growth (Eupsychia): The relationship promotes **Eupsychia**, or psychological health. B-Lovers actively support the partner's self-actualization journey, viewing the partner's successful growth as a source of joy rather than a threat.

These characteristics illustrate that B-Love is not merely a strong feeling, but rather a state of relating that reflects internal psychological integration. It requires emotional independence and the capacity to view the world, and the relationship, objectively and generously. The relationship becomes a safe container for the expression of authentic selfhood, free from the demands of deficiency.

5. Contrast with Deficiency Love (D-Love)

Maslow's primary method of defining B-Love was through its antithesis, **Deficiency Love (D-Love)**. Understanding this contrast is essential to grasping the revolutionary nature of B-Love. D-Love, which characterizes most human relationships, is rooted in the individual's unmet needs

(deficiencies) and operates according to the principles of the lower tiers of the Hierarchy of Needs.

D-Love is essentially **need-love**: the partner is loved because they satisfy a personal void. This void might be physical security, belonging, esteem, or ego validation. When needs drive the relationship, the partner becomes an object used for gratification. This instrumental view of the other inherently leads to conditional affection, where the love may diminish or disappear if the partner fails to maintain their function as a need-satisfier. D-Love is therefore inherently unstable, prone to anxiety, and often results in conflicts over control and dependence. The D-Lover feels impoverished and seeks to be filled by the other.

In sharp contrast, B-Love is **growth-love**. It is non-instrumental; the partner is loved not for what they provide, but simply for who they are. The B-Lover is already filled (self-actualized) and is capable of giving love freely, without expectation of return or obligation. While D-Love seeks to acquire, B-Love seeks to celebrate. Maslow argued that relationships dominated by D-Love can never fully escape the cycles of conflict and disappointment because they are predicated on dependency, whereas B-Love offers a path toward true relational freedom and maturity, built on two autonomous wholes coming together.

6. Relationship to Self-Actualization

B-Love is inextricably linked to the highest tier of Maslow's Hierarchy: **self-actualization**. Maslow posited that the capacity for B-Love is a characteristic reserved almost exclusively for self-actualizing individuals--those rare people who have fulfilled their basic needs (physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem) and are motivated by B-values (meta-needs).

The requirement for self-actualization is logical: engaging in B-Love requires a deep sense of internal security and self-worth. If an individual is still grappling with unresolved issues of belonging or self-esteem (D-needs), their relationships will inevitably be contaminated by the need to extract reassurance or validation from the partner, thus defaulting to D-Love. Only when the person is comfortable in their solitude and identity can they offer love that is truly selfless and non-dependent. Self-actualization provides the necessary psychological foundation for this relational maturity.

Moreover, B-Love fosters continued self-actualization. Maslow suggested that the relationship itself becomes a catalyst for further growth, offering the lovers a privileged space where authenticity and vulnerability can thrive without fear of judgment. The B-Lover sees the partner's potential and, through genuine concern, facilitates its realization. Thus, B-Love is both a consequence of, and a contributor to, the ongoing process of realizing one's fullest human potential.

7. Significance and Impact

The conceptualization of B-Love has had a significant impact on several areas of psychological thought, particularly in redefining the goals of psychological health beyond mere symptom reduction. It established an aspirational framework for interpersonal relationships, suggesting that the most meaningful and enriching connections are those free from pathological dependency.

In clinical practice and counseling, B-Love provides a benchmark for relational maturity. Therapists operating within humanistic and existential traditions often use the principles of B-Love to help clients recognize when their relationships are driven by unmet needs (D-Love) and to guide them toward healthier, more autonomous ways of connecting. The emphasis on unconditional regard and the celebration of the partner's unique being has strongly influenced modern couples therapy and relational dynamics training.

Furthermore, B-Love contributed substantially to the foundation of **Positive Psychology**. By focusing on the strengths and optimal functioning of the healthiest individuals, Maslow shifted the psychological paradigm from fixing what is broken to cultivating what is best. The idea that love could be a powerful, non-neurotic force rooted in internal fullness offered a positive ideal that continues to inspire research into well-being, peak experiences, and flourishing in adult relationships.

8. Debates and Criticisms

While B-Love offers a compelling ideal, it has faced several significant criticisms, primarily focusing on its practicality, measurability, and potential elitism.

The most common criticism is that B-Love is overly **idealistic** and perhaps unattainable for the vast majority of the population. Since Maslow strictly limited the capacity for B-Love to the small percentage of individuals he deemed self-actualized, critics argue that the concept offers little practical guidance for individuals struggling with typical, need-driven relationships. The theory sometimes appears to suggest that one must first achieve total psychological mastery before one can experience mature love, a demanding prerequisite that limits its universal applicability.

Additionally, B-Love is often criticized for its lack of empirical verifiability. Like many concepts rooted in humanistic and existential psychology, **B-Love** is difficult to operationalize and measure scientifically. It deals with subjective states of being and profound appreciation, making it challenging to study using standardized psychological methods. Critics from experimental psychology often find the concept descriptive rather than predictive.

Finally, there is debate concerning the distinction between B-Love and D-Love in real-world contexts. Many psychologists argue that real relationships are not purely one or the other but exist

on a complex continuum, often cycling between need fulfillment (D-Love elements) and genuine appreciation (B-Love elements). Suggesting a clean separation may oversimplify the complex tapestry of human relational dynamics, where dependence, need, and appreciation often coexist.

Further Reading

[Abraham Maslow](#) (Wikipedia)

[Self-Actualization](#) (Wikipedia)

[Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) (Simply Psychology)

[Maslow, A. H. \(1962\). Toward a Psychology of Being.](#) (Goodreads)

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