

# DEFICIENCY LOVE (D-LOVE)

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## DEFICIENCY LOVE (D-LOVE)

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### 1. Core Definition

Deficiency Love, commonly abbreviated as **D-Love**, is a central conceptual distinction introduced by the influential American psychologist Abraham Maslow, the key figure associated with the third force in psychology, humanism. D-Love is fundamentally defined as a form of attachment and affection rooted in the perception of a personal deficit or an unmet psychological or physiological need. In Maslow's framework, D-Love arises when an individual seeks fulfillment from an external source--specifically another person--to stabilize their own internal sense of security, belonging, or self-esteem. This type of love is therefore characterized by an inherent dependence on the partner to complete or satisfy the loving individual's own existential or fundamental requirements, making the relationship transactional and conditional rather than purely appreciative.

The psychological orientation of D-Love is outward and possessive, driven by the motivation to acquire, maintain, and control the source of satisfaction. Maslow clearly stated that D-Love "shows a need for longing and possession and little concern for the other person's welfare" beyond their capacity to serve the lover's needs. This structure dictates that the focus of the relationship is less on the intrinsic value or growth of the beloved, and more on how well they function as a provider of validation, safety, or emotional replenishment. When the partner fails to meet these often-unspoken demands, the D-Love relationship becomes fraught with anxiety, jealousy, and fear of loss, because the absence of the loved one signifies the reemergence of the original, underlying deficiency.

As a concept, D-Love is inextricably linked to the Deficiency Needs (D-Needs) outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, specifically the lower four tiers concerning physiological requirements, safety, belongingness, and esteem. When individuals operate primarily at these lower motivational levels, their relational impulses are geared towards deficit reduction. For instance, a person who feels fundamentally insecure (lacking safety needs) might seek a partner who offers unwavering protective stability; similarly, an individual with low self-esteem might pursue a partner whose admiration serves as a constant external source of validation. The defining feature is the instrumental use of the partner as a means to achieve personal homeostasis, thereby differentiating D-Love sharply from its counterpart, Being Love (B-Love), which stems from abundance.

### 2. Theoretical Context: Maslow's Hierarchy and Motivation

Maslow developed the concept of Deficiency Love as part of his broader examination of human

motivation and the process of self-actualization. He posited that human motivation could be broadly categorized into two systems: deficiency motivation and being motivation. Deficiency motivation is reactive and aims to restore equilibrium when something essential is lacking, driving behaviors designed to fill a void. D-Love falls squarely within this reactive motivational system, functioning primarily as a mechanism for survival and psychological stabilization rather than growth. This dependency ensures that the energy invested in D-Love is directed towards mitigating personal pain or anxiety rather than celebrating the partner's unique identity.

The genesis of D-Love in Maslow's theory can be traced back to the foundational human need for love and belongingness, situated in the middle tier of his famous hierarchy. While the need for love is universal, the manner in which it is sought determines its quality. If the need for belonging is approached from a position of chronic lack--perhaps due to childhood neglect or pervasive insecurity--the subsequent adult relationships will likely take the form of D-Love. The primary goal is not shared experience or mutual growth, but the urgent satisfaction of this fundamental, unmet need. Consequently, the relationship becomes a highly pressurized environment where the partner is burdened with the responsibility of filling deep-seated emotional gaps.

Furthermore, Maslow's definition implies that D-Love is finite; it is a satisfaction that can be consumed or depleted. Once the deficiency is temporarily resolved by the partner's presence or affirmation, the intensity of D-Love may diminish, or the focus may shift to another deficiency, leading to restlessness and dissatisfaction within the relationship. This transactional nature is what makes D-Love relationships inherently vulnerable to volatility and eventual dissolution. Because the love is centered on what the self lacks, the relationship is ultimately self-serving, and the loss of the partner is experienced not as the loss of a unique individual, but as the frightening return to a state of neediness.

### 3. Key Characteristics of D-Love

D-Love relationships exhibit a set of predictable characteristics stemming from their origin in deficit motivation. These traits reveal the underlying insecurity and the conditional nature of the affection exchanged. The relationships often revolve around emotional transactions where security is traded for compliance or where attention is earned through performance, fundamentally lacking the spaciousness and ease found in growth-oriented connections. This transactional framework creates a persistent tension, as both parties are constantly assessing whether the relationship is successfully neutralizing their respective deficiencies.

One of the most defining characteristics of D-Love is its profound **\*\*egocentricity\*\***. While the lover claims to love the partner, the reality is that they love what the partner provides or represents. The partner is objectified, viewed as a functional commodity necessary for the lover's emotional survival. This objectification stands in stark contrast to the humanistic ideal of seeing the other

person as an autonomous, unique entity deserving of unconditional respect. When the partner begins to deviate from the role assigned to them--perhaps by pursuing their own independent interests or expressing different needs--the D-Lover perceives this as a threat to their own stability, leading to conflict and control efforts.

Another hallmark is the prevalence of **\*\*dependency and anxiety\*\***. The D-Lover is acutely aware of their reliance on the partner and constantly fears abandonment, which would precipitate the return of the deficiency state. This anxiety manifests as controlling behavior, jealousy, and possessiveness--all mechanisms designed to secure the resource (the partner) at all costs. Since the affection is conditional upon need fulfillment, the relationship lacks genuine trust; the relationship is perceived as fragile because the bond is based on utility rather than intrinsic commitment or shared vision. The anxiety is cyclical: the more dependent the person becomes, the more anxious they are about loss, which in turn increases controlling behaviors that ultimately strain the relationship further.

The following list summarizes the operational characteristics frequently observed in Deficiency Love:

**Conditionality:** Love is contingent upon the partner fulfilling specific personal needs (e.g., validation, status, financial security).

**Possessiveness and Control:** A strong need to monitor, restrict, or control the partner's behavior to ensure continuous access to the needed resource.

**Jealousy and Fear of Loss:** Intense emotional responses to perceived threats, rooted in the terror of returning to a deficient state without the partner.

**Fragility and Instability:** The love is often easily wounded or temporarily withdrawn if needs are not met, leading to cyclical conflict patterns.

#### 4. Contrast with Being-Love (B-Love)

Maslow introduced D-Love primarily to contrast it with Being-Love (B-Love), a concept describing the higher form of affection experienced by psychologically healthy or self-actualizing individuals. The distinction between D-Love and B-Love is arguably the most significant contribution of this framework to the psychology of relationships, providing a qualitative measure of relational maturity. B-Love is based on an appreciation of the partner's being, existing purely for the intrinsic pleasure and joy derived from the other person's existence, regardless of what they provide.

The fundamental difference lies in the source of motivation: B-Love stems from internal abundance and psychological richness, whereas D-Love arises from scarcity. The B-Lover is autonomous and psychologically complete; they do not require the partner to fill voids. Instead, they seek a partner to share in life's richness and to facilitate mutual growth. B-Love is therefore non-clinging, unconditional, and non-demanding. Maslow noted that B-Love is highly correlated with self-

actualization because it is a manifestation of transcending the lower, survival-oriented needs and operating at the highest level of motivational maturity.

A key structural difference is the nature of the emotional experience. D-Love often feels intense, needy, and volatile, frequently confused with passion due to the high anxiety and demanding nature of the attachment. Conversely, B-Love is often described as calmer, more profound, and less dramatic. B-Love fosters a relationship that promotes the self-actualization of both individuals, supporting autonomy and individuality. When a B-Lover's partner grows or changes, this is seen as a wonderful development to be encouraged, not a threat to be managed, which is the reaction typical of D-Love.

## 5. Manifestations and Dependency

In practical social interactions, D-Love manifests through a pattern of emotional transactions that prioritize the lover's momentary comfort over the long-term well-being of the partnership. For instance, a D-Lover seeking esteem might rely heavily on public displays of affection or success related to their partner to feel validated, putting undue pressure on the relationship to perform for an external audience. If the partner experiences difficulty or setback, the D-Lover may feel resentful or withdraw, as the "resource" they rely on (validation/status) has temporarily diminished in value.

The element of **dependency** inherent in D-Love creates inherent instability. Since the satisfaction of D-Needs is temporary, the D-Lover must constantly seek reaffirmation, leading to behaviors like excessive reassurance-seeking, testing the partner's commitment, or generating conflict to confirm the partner's dedication. This cycle drains both individuals and prevents the deepening of a mature bond. Furthermore, because D-Love is based on a perception of lack, the D-Lover often unconsciously selects partners who are also experiencing some form of deficiency, leading to codependent structures where both individuals are relying on the other to avoid confronting their own internal inadequacies.

Psychologically, D-Love can be seen as a failure of integration, where the individual is unable to meet their own basic psychological needs independently. The resulting relationship is not a union of two whole people, but rather a temporary fusion driven by mutual neediness. The relationship exists primarily to bandage deep-seated wounds, meaning that the relationship's survival is paramount, often overriding considerations of truth, honesty, or genuine emotional intimacy. When security is the primary driver, authenticity is often sacrificed, contributing to a sense of underlying emotional alienation even within the supposed intimacy of the relationship.

## 6. Significance in Clinical and Social Psychology

The D-Love/B-Love distinction holds significant therapeutic value, particularly within humanistic

and integrative counseling approaches. Therapists utilize this framework to help clients identify the quality of their attachments and recognize whether their relational motivations are defensive (D-Love) or growth-oriented (B-Love). Recognizing D-Love allows the client to shift the focus from controlling the partner to addressing the underlying deficiency within themselves. The therapeutic goal is often to help the individual achieve greater autonomy and internal resourcefulness, thereby mitigating the need to use a partner as a psychological crutch.

In social psychology, Maslow's concepts illuminate patterns of relationship pathology, particularly concerning issues of jealousy, possessiveness, and codependency. D-Love provides a lens through which possessive behaviors can be understood not merely as malicious acts, but as desperate attempts to secure a vital psychological resource. Understanding D-Love is crucial for diagnosing the sources of relational conflict that stem from attachment anxiety and fear of abandonment, rather than simple incompatibility. Furthermore, the concept underscores the societal importance of healthy self-esteem and belongingness, arguing that healthier societies are populated by individuals capable of B-Love, which fosters altruism and genuine community.

The conceptual significance extends to parenting and developmental psychology. Maslow suggests that children who receive B-Love--unconditional acceptance and support that fosters autonomy--are more likely to develop into adults capable of forming B-Love relationships. Conversely, children whose love is conditional or used as a tool for parental need fulfillment may internalize the D-Love dynamic, perpetuating the cycle of deficit-driven relationships in their adult lives. Thus, Maslow's framework serves as a powerful diagnostic tool for assessing developmental experiences and their long-term impact on relational capacity.

## 7. Debates and Criticisms

While Maslow's concepts are highly influential and intuitively appealing, particularly in popular psychology and self-help literature, they face scrutiny common to many humanistic theories, primarily regarding empirical measurement. Critics often point out the difficulty in operationally defining and quantitatively measuring constructs like D-Love and B-Love. The distinction relies heavily on subjective reports of internal states and motivations, making consistent scientific validation challenging. Furthermore, the theory is often criticized for its potential oversimplification of complex emotional experiences, arguing that most real-world romantic relationships involve a mixture of both D-Love and B-Love components that fluctuate over time.

Another major area of debate centers on the concept's inherent cultural bias. Maslow developed his theories largely based on observations of Western, educated populations, and the emphasis on extreme individualism and autonomy (essential for B-Love) may not translate perfectly to collectivist cultures where interdependence is highly valued and often integrated into healthy adult attachments. What Maslow categorizes as necessary "dependency" in D-Love might be viewed as

essential "interdependence" and mutual commitment in other cultural contexts, challenging the universality of the B-Love ideal as the sole metric of relational maturity.

Finally, some critiques argue that the framework implies a rigid hierarchy of emotional needs, suggesting that D-Love must be completely overcome before B-Love can be accessed. Modern attachment theories, such as those concerning secure attachment, suggest that even highly secure and healthy individuals may temporarily revert to D-Love behaviors during times of extreme stress, illness, or vulnerability. Therefore, the contemporary view often integrates Maslow's insights not as a strict dichotomy, but as two poles on a motivational continuum, acknowledging that relationship quality involves continuous negotiation between needs satisfaction and intrinsic appreciation.

### Further Reading

[Abraham Maslow \(Wikipedia\)](#)

[Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Theory of Motivation \(Simply Psychology\)](#)

[Self-Actualization and Being Needs \(Wikipedia\)](#)