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Issue 7 | Spring 2023



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For more information

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🐦 [@csunhelpcenter](https://twitter.com/csunhelpcenter)



Cover by Natalie Ammari and David Mesquita

Letter from the *editor*



When I was asked to be the print managing editor a few weeks ago, I was highly honored. With this being my last semester at CSUN, my objective is to get out of my comfort zone, and coming from the news section of the Sundial, this is most definitely that.

While we were in the preliminary stages of brainstorming ideas for this issue, it was important to us that we cover various aspects of love: friendship, romance and self-love. The goal is that these articles give you a deeper understanding of our greatest emotion: love.

I have a complicated relationship with love. Generally speaking, I think that the word carries a positive connotation. But for some, myself included, love can be difficult to navigate.

As I get older, I am starting to better understand the nuances of relationships, both platonic and romantic. When we are young, we love so deeply and without fear. We sometimes give ourselves to people and relationships without question or regard for our own needs. This can be a beautiful thing, but it can also cause us pain. It's why self-care and self-love are so important. It's like that metaphor about the oxygen masks on airplanes. In the event of an emergency, the flight attendants instruct us to put our oxygen masks on before helping others. In life, you have to put your mask on first. You have to love and take care of yourself first before you can love and take care of those around you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marissa Roberts'.

Marissa Roberts
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L O V E On the Brain

WRITTEN BY KIRSTEN CINTIGO

Rihanna sings about love's overpowering nature in her 2016 hit song "Love on the Brain," and the singer is not far off from love's actual connection to the brain.

Dopamine, typically known as a feel-good hormone, is a neurotransmitter produced in the brain that acts as a messenger between the brain and body and creates feelings of reward, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Its production is caused by different things, but mainly things that can bring pleasure. This can include taking a walk, playing video games or being with loved ones.

As more pleasurable activities are performed, more dopamine is released, which can affect a person's behavior.

The release of dopamine can create feelings of happiness, motivation and euphoria. Since these feelings chemically feel good to the body, the body begins to actively pursue them more and associate them with people, things or actions.

In terms of love, dopamine is responsible for the feelings of attraction and romance and can manifest physical changes in the body such as a pulse quickening or cheeks flushing. And as cheesy as it may sound, it can be a reason why someone is too in love to eat or sleep because increased dopamine levels can cause insomnia and suppress appetite, according to Harvard University's Katherine Wu.

Dopamine is at an all-time high during the early stages of a relationship and its production can be triggered by simple acts like someone seeing a picture of their partner, according to a 2015 study that was published in the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. However, this high release of dopamine can subside and wear off over a period of six months to a year and lead to possible breakups where feelings seem to be lost.

This is not always the case though. Depending on how high the release of dopamine was during the early stages of a relationship, it can create neurochemicals responsible for attachment and bonding. This is what helps to chemically sustain long-term relationships, not only romantically, but also in friendships and family.

When these relationships end, dopamine is lowered and can cause a person to feel stressed, unhappy or depressed. These feelings can present themselves in physical ways too, such as problems with sleeping, concentration or mood.

Chemically, this is why a person may go back to their ex-partner as a way to regain those lost dopamine levels.

Dopamine is also characterized as addictive, according to Wu. When there is too much dopamine being created it can cause jealousy, aggression and lead to irrational behavior. Furthermore, the brain turns off the amygdala, the area responsible for critical thinking, which can suspend a person's ability to judge, criticize or think clearly, according to a February 2020 article published on CNN. This may give reason as to why red flags in a partner are not always quickly recognized.

Nonetheless, relationships are not solely based on dopamine. There are a myriad of factors that explain why a relationship works out or not. Although, it is fair to assume that when Rihanna sang "I can't get enough," she was referring to dopamine in the brain.

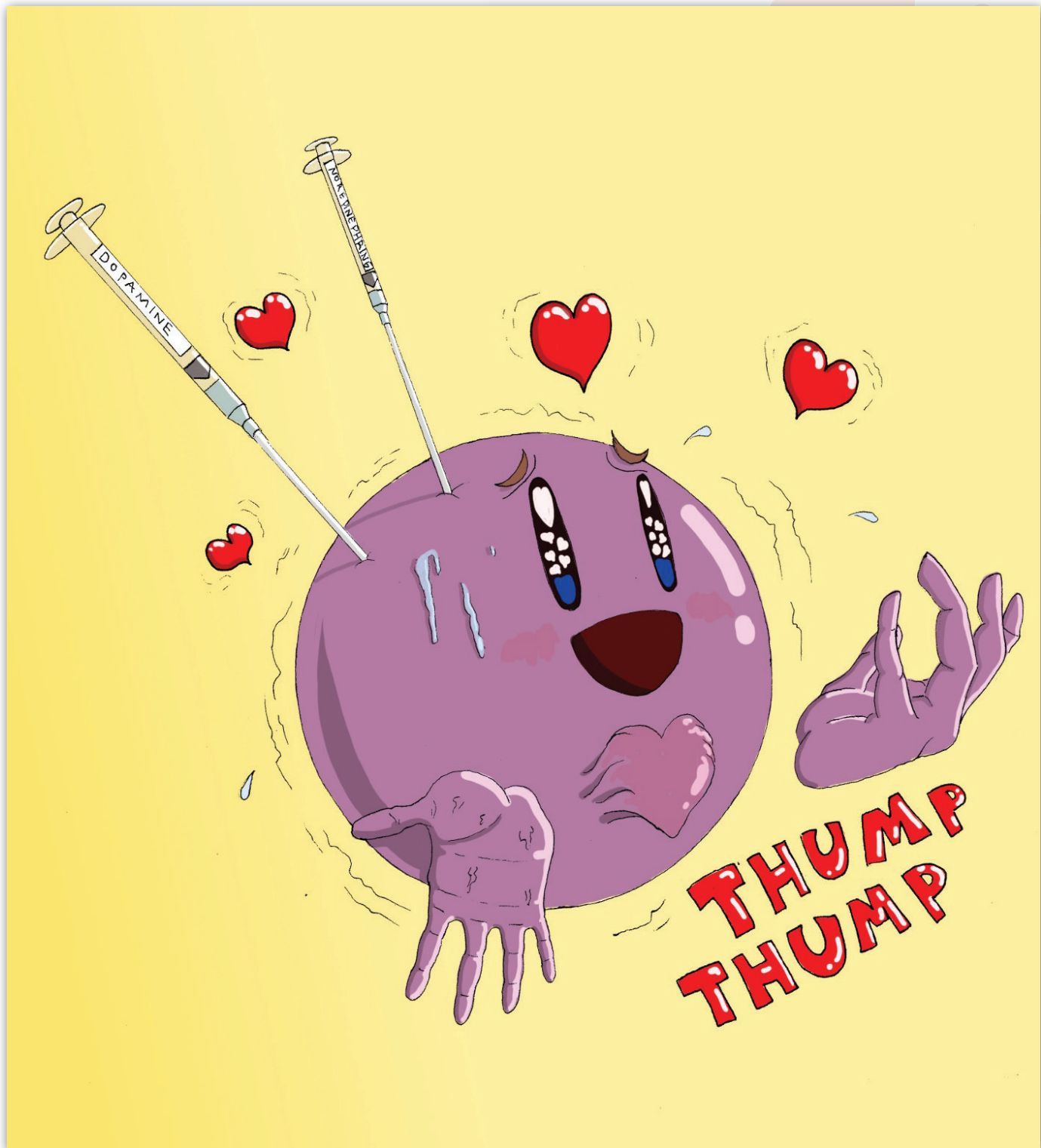


ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID MESQUITA

Team Bonding



WRITTEN BY EDWARD SEGAL

A bond formed between athletes through the exhilarating journey of wins and losses is like no other.

The love of the game is what keeps people motivated to continue playing, but the bond with teammates is what allows that love to go beyond the sport.

For the CSUN softball team, the system of accountability partners assigned by the coaching staff helps develop these bonds. The coaches pair a freshman with a returning player so everyone who is new has someone with experience to lean on for support, and everyone who is coming back makes a new friend to talk to.

For outfielder Maiya Alemania, this allows her to lean on fellow outfielder Bella Mejia when things don't go her way on

the field, and gives her someone to celebrate with.

"It's more of a trust system," Alemania, a junior majoring in child development, said. "We just kind of pick each other up through the ups and downs on the field. And we know we can trust that we can do whatever we're supposed to do on the field, and when things don't go our way, we know that we can rely on each other to be there to talk or pick each other up."

As someone who joined the team in 2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alemania said that having that bond with players on the team gave her someone to talk to during difficult times. She came to CSUN from Northern California, and the move away from her community to campus was a big obstacle her teammates helped her overcome.

The child development major said that the biggest thing her accountability partners have helped her with is her mental health. Since they are on campus and go through many of the same things together, Alemania says that her accountability partners understand some of her struggles better than her friends outside the team.

“I believe it’s different in the sense that it’s more mental talk, because I know personally, I’ve always struggled talking to people about my mental health and feelings and stuff like that, so I’m comfortable talking to her about those things,” Alemania said.

From joining as a freshman in the midst of the pandemic to her several injuries during her time with the Matadors, every

hurdle that Alemania and her partner overcame brought them closer together. The bond each year starts when they welcome the freshmen, and according to Alemania, develops into a friendship that transcends the game of softball.

“I feel like these friendships that we build are going to be lifelong friendships,” Alemania said. “I am still friends with people who have already graduated. I still talk to them, we still keep in touch. They always check in on me and on how I’m doing, and I feel like our accountability partners right now, we have that bond together which I feel like is going to go beyond softball, beyond college. Once we’ve graduated we’re still going to keep in touch.”



PHOTOS BY WILL NAVARRO

YOUR LOVE LANGUAGES *EXPLAINED*

We went around campus and asked CSUN students how they express their love.

ACTS OF SERVICE

Actions that one takes to show that they care and appreciate another person are what can be described as acts of service. Examples may look like cooking breakfast for a partner, offering to drive a family member to work or helping a friend study for an exam.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Physical touch is about showing affection through actions that bring one physically closer to another in a relationship. Sitting close, hugging, holding hands, kissing and having sex are examples of physical touch.

QUALITY TIME

Spending meaningful time with and having undivided attention from a partner, friend or family member is important for those whose primary love language is quality time. Having a deep conversation about one's career aspirations or going on a dinner date with a partner are examples of quality time.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Words that express support and appreciation for another person are considered words of affirmation. Texting a partner that you will always be there for them, complimenting a friend's outfit or reminding a family member that you love them are different expressions that affirm one's appreciation in a relationship.

RECEIVING GIFTS

Love and appreciation are felt through receiving gifts in this love language. Gifts may be interpreted as a physical manifestation of a person's love for another. It is not only the gift itself that is appreciated, but also the thought and effort behind the gift.

WRITTEN BY BRANDON SARMIENTO

VALERIE ALCALA

MAJOR: RADIOLOGIC SCIENCES

“One of the ways I like to express love to myself is dedicating time and thoughtfulness to how I’m feeling. I’ll sleep in the sun to relax, read a book or even blast music to dance.”

JACOB ALVAREZ-RUIZ

MAJOR: MUSIC, VOCAL ARTS

“One of my main ways of showing love is acts of service. Just doing something for someone. It’s not necessarily the way I receive love either. I feel like I have two separate main love languages when it comes to giving and what I receive. So I’m not big on receiving acts of service, but I’m a big giver. I’m also a big receiver of physical touch, but not a big giver of it.”

DIEGO SCHWARZBACH

MAJOR: MUSIC, BREADTH STUDIES

“Love is so many things. If you’re my mom and I’m trying to express love, maybe I’ll just want to spend time with you and hang out. But if it’s more like a love with a partner or someone that I’m lustful for or loving, I’ll want to cook for you and show you my room and vibe with you. Maybe we can go on walks too.”

MOON JAEHYUK

MAJOR: ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

“Actually, I’m shy to express love with my parents and friends. So, especially on a parent’s birthday, I’ll write a letter to them to [say] I love you.”

NIKO CISTERNAS

MAJOR: DEAF STUDIES AND CINEMA AND TELEVISION ARTS

“I like to try to make plans with people and see them as often as I can, even if it’s just saying hello to someone as they’re walking by. I like letting people know that I acknowledge them, that I think they’re really cool people and I’m very grateful for them to be in my life.”

MATTHEW NAZLOO

MAJOR: CINEMA AND TELEVISION ARTS

“I think for me, one of the most important things is having the ability to make someone laugh. Most times of the year, I’m long distance and we would just hop on calls. Just being able to make her laugh and make her smile. It’s invaluable.”

SHIELA KIANI

MAJOR: PSYCHOLOGY

“[With] love for myself, I usually like to express it in forms of taking care of myself, whether that be going for a walk, eating my favorite food without feeling guilt or working out. Just moving my body around and being around people I love. Toward people, just giving them my time and spending my time with them.”

DAISY FALLON

MAJOR: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, MARKETING

“I like to give gifts and do things for people. Say my friend said something earlier at the beginning of the year saying that they wanted something, but they didn’t get it. Later on I’ll just surprise them and be like, ‘Hey, I got it for you,’ just to show my appreciation.”

AMY RAMOS

MAJOR: BIOLOGY

“I like to express love by reaching out to my loved ones and making sure that they’re okay. You know, providing those words of affirmation to them and basically just making sure that they know that I’m there for them and that whatever they need, I’ll be there for them.”

GIULIANA CASTRO

MAJOR: LIBERAL STUDIES

“For my friends, I really like to give them small little things when I see them. Whether that’s thinking of them, buying a Trader Joe’s snack or picking them up, taking them to go get coffee and stuff like that. That’s how I express love.”

Self-care matters

WRITTEN BY NAOMI RUIZ

While self-care might sound trivial to some, mental health professionals say that it is an important part of our overall mental and physical wellbeing.

Definitions for self-care vary, but the theme is the same – people deliberately taking time out of their day to participate in activities and practices that improve their lives.

Self-care practices are proven to help minimize stress, lower the possibility of illness and boost energy, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Psychotherapist and licensed clinical social worker Maria Barrata wrote about the importance of self-care in an article published in *Psychology Today*.

“Incorporating self care every day helps to serve as an armor to protect the energy that we need in order to survive and thrive,” Barrata wrote.

Self-care is subjective and can look different for everyone, and they don’t always have to be time-consuming or grand. Some might find it soothing to take a bath, while others prefer socializing with friends as a way of comforting themselves.

Amber Grayson is an English major at CSUN whose idea of self-care involves anything that keeps them motivated and at ease.

“I cook my own ‘healthy’ food, read my favorite and new books, go on daily walks, accessorize, watch anime or play cozy video games,” Grayson wrote in a message. “Anything that brings you joy or peace can count as self-care, even if it sounds unconventional.”

There is not a one-size-fits-all solution that cures everyone from dealing with daily stressors, but there are a variety of emotional and physical methods that people can use to cope.





BEAUTY IS NOT SKIN DEEP

WRITTEN BY BREANNA NICHOLS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SOLOMON O. SMITH

Today I woke up, went to the bathroom, and the first thing I saw was the biggest pimple I have ever seen on my face. It was not one of those pimples that could be easily hidden by a cute little pimple patch.

On top of that I felt extra bloated, so of course, everything I put on looked hideous. All of this was a recipe for a bad day. It would not be the first time my acne was the cause of me having a less-than-perfect day.

Living in an age where being flawless from head to toe is the beauty standard, it is easy to get discouraged if you do not live up to how social media expects you to look. This becomes even more difficult when plastic surgery seems to be as accessible as ordering a cheeseburger from McDonald's.

The fact of the matter is that we can't all look like Instagram models or beauty influencers, no matter how rigorous our efforts are. But guess what: That is OK! Being OK with what the world would consider flawed and undesirable is a lesson we as individuals have to learn. It is a lesson I am learning, and relearning, every day.

I have dealt with acne since I was in high school. My dermatologist diagnosed me with cystic acne when I was 15. She gave me many options and solutions on how to get rid of the acne: chemical peels, birth control, a change in diet, but nothing seemed to work. It was disheartening to go through all of this and at the end of it, my face was still as lumpy and

scarred as it was before.

Having acne created an insecurity in me so prominent that it not only affected my confidence, but also how I saw myself. I hated taking close-up pictures of my face. Wearing makeup is supposed to enhance your beauty, but it felt like all make-up did for me was enhance the visibility of my acne. There seemed to be no answer to this problem until one day, it hit me: I had to accept that this was just my face. Even though I had blemishes everywhere, that was OK. I was still cute.

When I stopped stressing about how to get rid of my acne and just let it be, the majority of my acne went away on its own. I still have acne scars, and I would be lying if I said looking at influencers on TikTok with their perfect skin doing their skin care routine did not make me a little envious from time to time. Seeing models and influencers like Winnie Harlow, Bianca Lawrence and Dixie D'Amelio, who have imperfect skin according to society, tell their stories about how they stopped comparing themselves to conventional beauty standards is helpful.

Harlow, a fashion model with the skin condition vitiligo, said it best: "I have my flaws, but I embrace them and I love them because they are mine."

Learning to love ourselves and our flaws means embracing who we are. It's a never-ending battle, but it results in our most beautiful self, without the approval of Instagram.



Q&A WITH THER

We asked our readers to send in questions about love and Sheree Jones-Pistol answered them! Jones-Pistol holds a master's degree in psychology and is a licensed marriage and family therapist who specializes in student counseling in Northridge. She served as an academic counselor with the Los Angeles Unified School District for 18 years while growing her private practice.

Q My fiance is very protective and gets jealous of any guy who looks my way. I am sure he trusts me because he never checks my phone or doubts me or any of that toxic stuff, but he thinks every man wants to steal me from him. It has been less than a year together and we are already engaged. Every single argument we have had has been about him thinking some other guy wants me. I have been single my whole life and he's the only man I've been with, so I don't know if this is normal boyfriend/fiance behavior?

A Some people have experienced relationships that have caused them to mistrust others. It sounds like this has nothing to do with you specifically. Since this behavior could intensify over time, I would suggest you both locate a couples therapist.

Q My relationship has gone amazingly well so far. We have been together for over a year, and are planning on moving in and starting a life together. I am excited and in love, but as I grow more and more in love with him I get more nervous of the idea of it not working out and what that would look like. Is it normal to get anxious just because we are growing such a deep connection? Is it that I don't want to lose him or am I afraid of getting vulnerable enough that losing him hurts more than I can take?

A Moving in together is a giant step. You lose privacy and must consider another person in everything you do. Your nervousness is very normal. Communication will be critical for both of you.

Q How to be open and honest about being non-monogamous/polyamorous when family and public judge[?]

A Protect yourself and only share this intimate information with those you trust implicitly. The world can be a nasty place sometimes.

APIST

Q My partner is amazing, and perfect on paper. I love him so much and he treats me amazingly, but sometimes I just go through times where I wonder if I am just settling for him because he's so good to me. I do love him, but sometimes I find myself thinking I'm bored with the relationship.



A If you already have thoughts of boredom, these will only worsen over time. You may want to take a break and explore other social opportunities as you learn more about yourself and what you need.

Q Is there ever a real chance at a healthy relationship with somebody that abused you? Can you heal where you got hurt or is it a form of Stockholm syndrome?

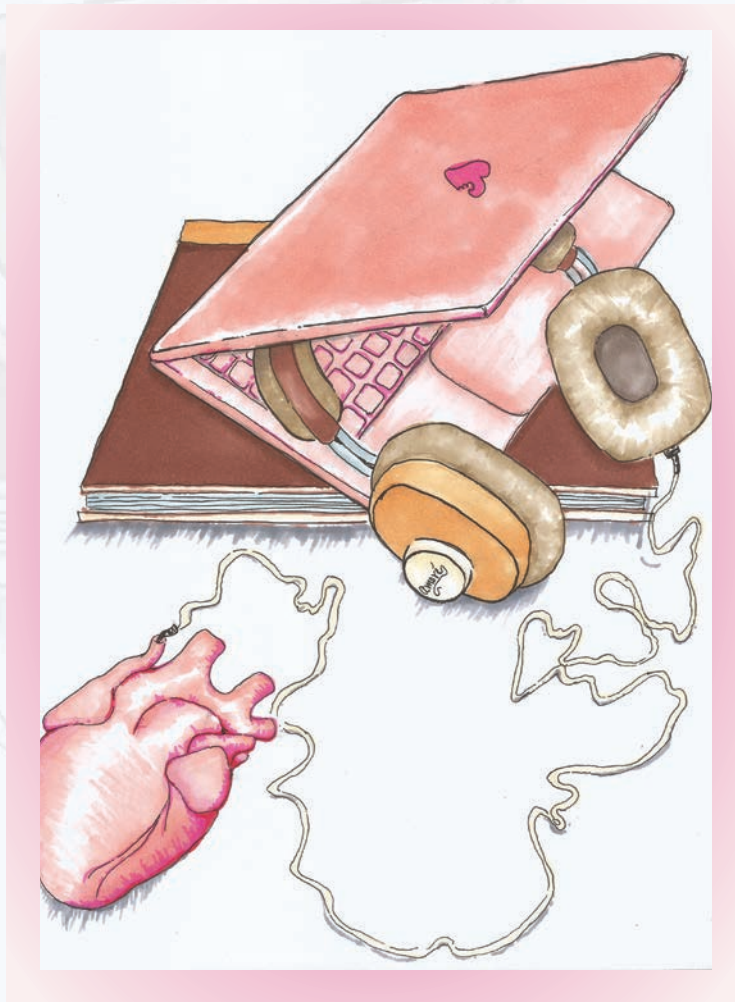
A A healthy relationship with an abuser can only take place after they decide to participate in regular therapy to work on their issues; otherwise, we can expect continuous occurrences of domestic violence.

Q How do we find the most genuine love without forgetting who we are?

A Self-love and respect are essential, and we must maintain boundaries for protection. Finding someone to love who respects these boundaries should result in a healthy relationship.

LOVE SONG *playlist*

CREATED BY MARISSA ROBERTS
ILLUSTRATION BY ZASHA HAYES



- *Mystery of Love* - Sufjan Stevens
- *Close To You* - Dayglow
- *Eternal Sunshine* - Lou Val
- *The Dress* - Dijon
- *K.* - Cigarettes After Sex
- *ceilings* - Lizzy McAlpine
- *Guys* - The 1975
- *LOVE. FEAT. ZACARI* - Kendrick Lamar
- *Look At Me Now* - Caroline Polachek
- *Otro Atardecer* - Bad Bunny, The Marías
- *Best Part* - Daniel Caesar (feat. H.E.R.)
- *Bags* - Clairo
- *By Your Side* - Sade
- *Matilda* - Harry Styles
- *I Will Always Love You* - Dolly Parton

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