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Host Mary Tsui: Today we're looking at cross-cultural marriages. And to help me with that I have with me marriage counselor Sylvie McDonald. Welcome Sylvie!

Guest Sylvie McDonald: Thank you, Mary.

Host: Now cross-cultural marriages are increasingly common nowadays.

Guest: Yes, increasingly so.

Host: Now I've heard that the search for a partner is, how do you say this? Biologically programmed into us?

Guest: Yes, it's sort of a bio-chemical process, yes.

Host: But even so, we usually get to choose who we marry, correct?

Guest: Of course, we do choose, though—in a sense our biological makeup may even control that to a degree!

Host: Well, what's fascinating are those cross-cultural marriages where the couple doesn't even share a language that they both speak well. That's a problem, right, Sylvie? After all, we so often hear that communication is the key to a good relationship.

Guest: Well communication certainly can be a problem, yes. But people still fall in love. The question is can they stay in love? Can they keep their romance alive? Not being able to communicate well with each other can mean that you're unable to connect through expressing shared feelings, resolving difficulties, and so on—things that can bond you as a couple. Of course, when we fall in love, our hormones go into overdrive and that doesn't seem to matter; but as time passes it can become the cause of tension, and lack of communication can ultimately lead to a break-up.

Host: Of course. So what are some ways for couples to deal with the communication issue?

Guest: One obvious thing is to try to learn each other's language, and keep trying: It not only helps communication but also shows willingness to communicate.

Host: Even if you're not so successful?

Guest: Yes, I believe it's important to keep both languages alive in the relationship—even if it's imperfect. Also, you have to expect some misunderstandings, be prepared for them, and be patient when they happen. It's also important to remember that different cultures have ideas about what is and isn't normal communication.

Host: For example?

Guest: For example, directness versus indirectness. Being very direct doesn't necessarily mean your partner's being hurtful or insensitive; he or she may simply be doing what's normal in his or her culture.

Host: Some great suggestions there for couples to try and put into practice.

Guest: And they're certainly worth the effort because cross-cultural marriage can be a wonderful journey and an incredibly life-enriching experience not just for the couple but their kids, too.

Host: Terrific point. Thanks, Sylvie. Thanks for coming on the show.

BUILD your vocabulary page 53

- 1 anthropologists: Anthropologists study people, their societies and their beliefs.
- 2 attachment: Having an attachment to someone or something means that you feel strong loyalty, love, or friendship toward that person or thing.
- 3 characteristic: A special quality or feature that someone or something has.
- 4 emotion: An emotion is a strong human feeling such as love or hate.
- 5 enhance: If you enhance something, you make it better.
- 6 hormone: A hormone is a substance in our body that influences our growth, development, and health.
- 7 invoke: If something invokes a feeling, it causes that feeling to happen.
- 8 mutual: This is a feeling or action that is felt or done by two or more people toward one another.
- 9 prospective: Prospective means that a person is likely to do a particular thing or that the event is likely to happen.
- 10 romantic: Romantic people express strong feelings of love in their words and actions.

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Speaker: All right. Now, one well-known psychologist, Robert Sternberg, has proposed a theory of love in the context of interpersonal relationships. He proposes that there are three kinds of interpersonal love. The first is intimacy, which concerns feelings of closeness and connectedness. Most of us feel this type of love with friends and family. The second is passion. As you might expect, this involves feelings of romance and physical attraction toward another person. The third and final type of love is commitment. This means that there's a commitment to maintain the relationship over a long period. Sternberg believes that relationships based on at least two of these types will last much longer than relationships based only on one of them.

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Professor Missy Fox-Brown: E01 Who here has seen a romantic comedy or read a romance novel, or even met a special someone—and felt that “tug” of romantic love? Most of you, but maybe not all. Just how universal is this notion of romantic love? Any ideas? **(COACHING TIP 1)** Well, anthropologists have identified romantic love in almost every human culture. For instance, one recent study showed that 147 out of 166 cultures had some form of romantic love. This suggests that romantic love is at least partly biologically based. There’s also a social “science” to romantic love, which is where I’m going to begin today. **E02** Anthropologists describe romantic love as a high-intensity social ritual—a ritual being a prescribed form of conducting a formal ceremony. Now this may seem surprising because we aren’t usually aware of following any kinds of “rules” when we fall in love. But in fact, falling in love does have the four major characteristics of a ritual. The first characteristic of a ritual is that it brings people into face-to-face contact. Clearly, romantic love does this. People who are in love want to spend as much time together as possible. **(COACHING TIP 2)** The second characteristic of a ritual is that it focuses people’s attention on some common object or activity. With romantic love, the common object is the couple itself. For people in love, other people and activities seem to fade away. **E03** Now, the third characteristic of a ritual is that it promotes mutual emotion among the participants. Obviously, romantic love qualifies here. Few other experiences can surpass it in intensity—this is why romantic love is described as a “high-intensity” ritual. The final characteristic of a ritual is that it produces an emotionally-charged symbol that represents membership in some group. Well, what are some of the symbols in romantic love? In Western cultures, love is associated with heart-shaped objects and rings. For instance, a wedding ring symbolizes the couple’s love and commitment. We all know how important these symbols can be. For instance, losing a ring, for example, can cause a lot of anxiety, so be careful with those symbols! **(COACHING TIP 3)** **E04** Now let’s look at what’s happening in your brain and in your body when you feel the emotion that we call romantic love. Recent research indicates that there’s a biochemical basis to love, so there’s a good reason why people in love feel as if they’re in a different and more beautiful world. Their brain is literally flooded by hormones and chemicals that cause them to feel the way they feel. We can break the process of falling in love into three fairly distinct phases based on the hormones and chemicals dominant in each phase. **E05** In the first phase, the hormones testosterone and estrogen play important roles. Although testosterone has a reputation as a male hormone, it is also present in women. And it has many effects on the brain, one of which is to make us seek partners and to be alert to the presence of possible partners. So in essence,

these hormones get us out looking for and then noticing prospective partners to fall in love with.

E06 It’s in the second phase where people have the feeling of being in love. Here, some powerful amphetamines are released into the brain.

Amphetamines are a kind of stimulant, right? They make us feel alert. Well, two of these amphetamines are dopamine and phenylethylamine, also known as PEA. Dopamine has a physical effect on our body—it increases our heart rate and blood pressure and seems to make us more talkative. It also has a powerful psychological effect, invoking feelings of pleasure and excitement and it enhances our emotional responses to things. **E07** The other chemical released in this phase is PEA. PEA is a neurotransmitter, which means it increases the electrical signals between the neurons in the brain. This makes us feel euphoric—it’s the chemical that makes us smile a lot when we’re first in love, and feel like we’re in some kind of heavenly world. But because our body develops a tolerance to PEA, the euphoric feelings gradually disappear.

E08 And that brings us to the final phase of love, which is concerned with longer lasting commitment and attachment. The first important compound in this stage is endorphins. Endorphins are natural painkillers that give us a sense of security and feelings of peace and calm—they basically improve our mood. Our brain also secretes hormones that play a role in the formation of social attachments. One such hormone is oxytocin—sometimes called “the cuddle chemical.” Oxytocin seems to produce the feelings of relaxed satisfaction and attachment to another person. **E09** Now, as you might imagine, there is some resistance to the idea of love being determined by brain chemistry and hormones. **(COACHING TIP 4)** Do you know where this resistance might come from?

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Hannah: Who agrees with the idea that love is the result of a biochemical process?

Mia: I do. Absolutely! If you’ve ever been in love, you know that kind of “drugged” sensation she mentioned. That’s the chemicals and hormones at work!

River: Well, I’ve had some romantic experiences. I wouldn’t say I’ve ever been “drugged” by anyone.

Mia: Really? Well, what about that first phase she mentioned—the one where you’re looking for a partner, you know, seeking a partner? Surely you’ve experienced that part.

River: Actually, I don’t do much seeking. I’m usually the one being sought.

Manny: Well, that makes sense. After all, it takes all kinds to make the love ritual work.

Hannah: And what about you? Have you experienced the three phases of falling in love?

Manny: Well, not so much for myself, but I know about the third stage—the commitment stage—from

watching my older brother and his wife. They've been married for like five years, and they're content. I'd say happy. They're not real passionate, but I'd say happy. That's oxytocin. That's oxytocin working.

Hannah: Well, personally, I resist the idea that love is completely chemical or hormonal. I mean, we're not animals, right?

Mia: I don't think she was saying that.

Hannah: Well, maybe not. But can we at least agree that we do have some control? I mean, we may have these feelings, but we can consciously control them, right?

Mia: Yeah, of course!

River: Well, of course. Definitely. I mean, some ...