The love of my life

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## Introduction

### Background context on the relationship

One of the most profound emotions known and experienced by human beings is love. Love manifests itself in a plethora of versions but a majority of people express this emotion by pursuing a romantic relationship with someone with who they are compatible. The meaningful outlook of life and its multiple aspects can be achieved through a romantic relationship, as it acts as a source of self-actualization and deep fulfillment. Since the advent of mankind, the need and resulting expositions of connections among human beings are innate, but the ability to form and carefully maintain a romantic relationship is learned. A good sense of humor, looks, ambition, are some of the common attributes due to which people get attracted to someone. Many times, it is mere proximity that increases our likelihood of liking someone and wanting to get in a romantic relationship with that special person. People who have a tendency to pursue physical fitness can be drawn towards healthy people. Moreover, our surroundings, specifically the culture and society play a pivotal role in helping us realize the contours of attractiveness and setting some standards regarding romantic relationships. In almost all of the cases, attraction sneaks up stealthily and unexpectedly, binding the choices of a person. Even if someone has some long-term plans about relationships in his or her life, or is trying to stay away from this labyrinth for some time, love still manages to conquer the individual’s state of mind and changes the life course, for better or for worse.

The arrival of winter during the last year proved to be a life-altering period for me. I found the love of my life in an abundance of stars. Robert had just relocated from Texas to Florida in an attempt to break the monotony of his 9-5 lifestyle back in Texas. Shortly after his arrival, he rented our next-door mini-apartment and started to move around things and boxes in the loudest manner. A week or two later, I found him in my office where I work as a data analyst. Robert was there for a job opportunity for a part-time financial consultant which was advertised months ago. He was handsomely statuesque, with accentuated features and an approving dressing sense which caught my attention the most. Not many men around me are particular about their physical appearance and Robert proved to be an outlier in this sense. Anyways, he got the job and started to settle in his new residence and job. Months passed and the elements of proximity and attraction started to play in. He was extremely articulate and at the same time, proficient in his job. Robert drove a Ford Mustang Convertible in the evenings when he had to come to the office and at nights, sat in his balcony and played with his dog. His dog was a delight and in his form, we got a source of entertainment in our neighborhood which had turned pretty quiet recently. Due to his great inclination towards sports, he joined the Florida Gators Men’s Basketball team, representing the University of Florida as he also got enrolled in the evening classes to attain a diploma in finance, insurance, and real estate.

Robert and I started to meet for drinks after work hours, right after getting acquainted over a round of long, boring meetings where he had to examine my analyses for a client from a financial perspective. I found him quite interesting as a person, as he could render the person standing next to him in a fit of laughter through his wit. After a significant period of time, we could not manage to keep it under wraps and declared to be in a relationship in front of my family and our work colleagues, at different instances. Reflecting upon my previous relationships, I realized that my bond with Robert is different from every aspect. Looking at Robert and spending time with him made me feel like I won a lottery every day. The feelings were mutual and we started to develop great admiration and respect for each other. I showed him around the city and together we explored some hidden, picturesque parts of Florida. Robert became an essential part of my life, one that I could not think of losing or parting ways with, ever. If Robert is asked about his level of ease and bias towards me, his response would reciprocate mine. In fact, he deems me as the most important part of his life and expresses this emotion quite often as well. One fine morning, he talked about the importance of fate in life and mentioned that moving to Florida was the best thing that happened to him as he was destined to meet me.

### The communicational aspect of the relationship that needs improvement

In spite of beaming day and night, considering and thinking about the special bond that I have with Robert, there is a specific area of our relationship that needs significant improvement. Now that a year and a half has passed, Robert and I do not get surprised and excited every single time we receive each other’s text message as we did in the initial blossoming period of our relationship. This is not unique in our relation, every couple who is involved romantically has gone through this time. Robert and I are busy adults, having work-related and domestic priorities that need equal attention. After I come back from work, I take care of my ailing mother, cook for my family, and help my younger siblings who are just completing their high school. Robert spends a greater part of the day practicing basketball as his team has a semi-final scheduled later during the year, and in the evenings he works. Our meetings and sleepovers relegated to weekends only where he and I could spend some quality time together. The busy schedules of our weekdays left us no choice but only to meet during weekends. Recently, my associate manager gave me a pretty big task for an overseas client, which required me to work from home for a month. This implied that most of the mornings and afternoons, I could take out long stretches of time to spend with Robert. This opportunity seemed like a blessing but I was unsure of the potential problems it could bring for me. He started to ignore my messages and calls and whenever I tried to meet him, he always seemed in a hurry to go for the Basketball practices even though he had sufficient substitutes in his team. I was always waiting for his replies and correspondence, wanting to know about his whereabouts. The frequency of texts and phone calls or even meeting on the weekends dropped dramatically, and he was no longer available to carry out my emotional responsibilities.

### A specific example of a communication-related problem

About a fortnight ago, upon my repeated messages and calls, he abruptly snapped at me displaying a rude behavior that made me really insecure and perturbed over this state of affairs. The transactional model of communication which included complex forms of our relational context was blighted after Robert’s behavior. Robert furiously told me to get off of his nerves as he has other important things to take care of. I was astonished at his behavior and immediately closed myself in a shell and broke all possible contact with him.

## Language and Non-Verbal Communication

### Violation of a language rule

The semantic rule of the language was violated in this conflict as it paved the way for more disputes between us. I gave a different meaning to Robert’s correspondence and thought that he might want to get rid of me. There was a lack of total understanding bilaterally, where I could not interpret his rude behavior in the context of our relationship, and he could not understand my emotional needs.

### Gender or cultural impact on verbal and non-verbal communication

The gendered impact on our verbal and non-verbal communication and the resulting conflict is conspicuous. Males normally are not actively involved in constant communication as compared to their female counterparts. Growing up, the boys are often conditioned to be segregated and non-expressive, which creates barriers for them to openly communicate later in their lives. Although the initial period of our relationship was extremely loquacious and conservative, there seemed to be an apparent decline in the intensity and frequency of Robert’s communication.

### Usage of the language of responsibility

The usage of language of responsibility would play a pivotal rule to avoid futuristic situations of the same nature. If Robert and I pay attention to the ownership of our respective feelings, speak directly to each other at the right time and interpret the responses accurately, these conflicts can be avoided altogether.

### Importance of improving language and non-verbal communication for the prevention of communication-related conflict

The need for belonging and strong connectivity can only be fulfilled if the language is considerably improved for saving the relationship. The language should be improved in this relationship in various ways, for instance, if Robert and I ask each other about our daily routines and about our general well-being. Assuming various negative things and talking when the time is not right are some barriers that do not allow us to improve our language. Apart from this, non-verbal communication can also be ameliorated. Robert and I can work on our body movements and postures, facial expressions, and other gestures when we are around each other. I need to give him a little more personal space so that he does not feel that I am getting all possessive and demanding for his attention.

## Listening

### Summary of the Listening Inventory Purview

The Listening Interview Purview, when analyzed for both Robert and I demonstrated that we both are involved and good listeners, who pay full attention to others while we are involved in a conversation. In the transactional model of communication, Robert and I fall on the spectrum at the end closer to active participants, highly contributing to the speaking and listening exchanges.

Robert had a score of 39 in the Listening Style Inventory which categorized him as an involved listener. I, on the other hand, got a score of 43, which also landed me in the category of an involved listener. Upon deeper analysis, it was found that we both have a carefully curate purpose for attentive listening when others are talking and we diligently ask questions when we do not understand the speaker’s message.

The Listening Style Inventory (LSI) as an instrument for improving listening skill has been used to refine the art of listening as it is the primary component of human interaction (Lu, 2005).

### Effects of the ineffective listening method on the relationship and on the partner

Robert scored relatively lower than me because he cannot control his attitude while listening to others. This is also evident from the root causes of our conflict. Robert seemed overly involved in his routine, friends, and basketball practice. Due to his vested interest in the potential success of the team, he could not pay attention to my repeated messages and calls. This ineffectiveness in his listening method resulted in our conflict.

### Utilization of active listening in the future

Primarily focused on both objective facts and subjective feelings, active listening can prove to be hugely beneficial in the future for the betterment of our relationship. Encouragement, validation, reflection, and restating our opinions are some of the techniques of active listening which allows for the resolution of a conflict in an efficient manner. These steps will be incorporated into our listening style to prevent any squabbles.

The most difficult techniques to adopt in the pursuit of improving our listening skills would be reflection and validation. Reflection involves the feedback of the emotional part of the message and validation is the acknowledgment of the other person’s effort that he or she is putting in the conversation. These techniques would be difficult to adopt by both of us because although we are good listeners, we often tend to ignore each other’s worth and do not recognize the value of each other’s perspective.

### Listening as a contributing factor to prevent conflicts

Effective and active listening can chiefly contribute to the prevention of conflicts. Being attentive, keeping an open mind, trying to picture what my partner is saying while I correspond with him virtually can significantly help me in interpreting his narrative accurately. Interruption and imposing my solutions over our meeting schedules and trying to control him about his day-to-day routine will further aggravate the situation. If Robert and I give each other regular feedback on the trajectory of our relationship and pay close attention to non-verbal communication, then we can both prevent conflicts arising due to communication gaps. Non-verbal communication involves everything that is not being said. Excluding electronic mail and virtual correspondence, the majority of the conversation between Robert and me when we are together is non-verbal. Robert’s facial expressions and the cadence of his voice over the phone can tell me a lot about his current state of mind. It is just the lack of intention to listen deeply which poses barriers in our smooth communication.

## Relational Dynamics

### Most influential reasons for the development of the relationship

The relationship was developed on the basis of attraction based on looks, humor, appearance, and the mutual liking for each other’s demeanor. Robert’s ability to make me laugh in the most difficult times of my life fortified my fondness for him. Likewise, my ability to steer through struggles and mental toils with calmness attracted him. Currently, the most influential revisions for the preservation of the relationship are respect, communication, and mutual trust. Similarly, the absence of active and bilateral communication would pave the way for frustration and conflicts.

### Knapp’s relational stages

The relationship currently reflects stage three of Knapp’s model of relationship escalation, which is ‘intensifying.’ After creating a strong sense of attachment in our relationship and enjoying time in each other’s company, we are looking for emotional depth and are trying to increase the intensity and frequency of open communication between us. This stage comes under the ‘coming together’ sub-model of the Knapp relationship escalation model (Knapp, 2005).

### Level of content and happiness in this stage

I’m happy about where we are now in this relationship, as I am trying to give Robert ample space and he also tries to make an effort to understand my emotional needs. Previously we were at a point in our relationship where we could not even understand each other, but currently, we are comfortable in each other’s company and actively work on our weaknesses.

### The most significant stage of the relationship

This is not the most significant stage of our relationship as I am looking forward to many more possibilities with the gem of a person that Robert is. I am striving to take our relationship to the next level where more integration and bonding is possible. I want to honor this commitment legitimately and so does Robert as he has expressed this desire in several instances.

### Contribution of the current Knapp’s relational stage towards the communication-related conflict

I am not quite comfortable scrutinizing the dynamics of our relationship under the Knapp model and I do not think that this model and its specific stages should be a contributing factor for our mutual communication. The biggest reason behind this is that I think of ourselves as mature adults who are growing up together and are trying to understand each other rationally. We will pro-actively strive to not indulge in anything that causes misunderstanding between us. Additionally, the Knapp’s model presupposes that the relationship will ultimately dissolve and in our case, this is not something that should necessarily happen. In fact, I don’t want to consider this possibility even remotely.

## Conclusion

### Understanding the communication-related conflict through the impact of this project

The communication-related conflict which is described in the introduction has been efficiently understood through the impact of this project. Assessment of the conflict and acceptance of the fact that we are adults and we need to identify all our needs ourselves is the primary accomplishment that this project has succeeded to achieve. A review of our expectations, habits, and attitudes was also possible due to this relationship analysis. The most important thing is that; this project enabled Robert and me to forgive each other for all the petty things. This project also instigated the habit of accurately identifying who owns the problem among us, which is a pretty big achievement.

### Conflict management strategies

Although it is normal to face conflicts in a relationship, too many disputes can be of grave consequences for the precariousness of our relationship. Therefore, in the future, following conflict management strategies will be adopted to prevent any more issues:

1. Acknowledgment of differences through constructive arguments
2. Assertiveness of self-esteem
3. Healthy communication
4. Talking about feelings
5. Attempting to take a different perspective
6. Maintaining goodwill and not expressing any negativity
7. Effectively listening with curiosity and brainstorming solutions together to overcome issues
8. Taking exclusive time out for each other
9. Compromising or negotiating in a pursuit to reach a middle ground
10. Being prepared to ask for forgiveness or apologizing

### Impact of this project on the overall relationship

This project proved to be extremely advantageous and instrumental in steering our relationship in the right direction. The communicational aspect of our relationship which needed improvement was discovered and identified. The violation of the semantic rule of language was highlighted and the use of responsible language was advocated which will have a lasting impact on the overall relationship. Active listening as a pivotal factor for the improvement of bilateral communication has been recognized as vital for the success of our relationship. The relational dynamics were also appraised and the current stage of our relationship according to Knapp’s model of relationship escalation was determined through this project. Finally, the influential reasons behind the development of our relationship were uncovered and the most significant elements to retain the relation will be improved further.

# References

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