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**Love is a drug called dopamine, say scientists – 15th January 2024**

## Level 4

Writers have long-claimed that love is a drug. Scientists have gone a step further to prove this. They did tests on the relationships of prairie voles. Different pairs of voles were tested for levels of dopamine, which plays a role in our seeking pleasure. The researchers said the voles released a lot of dopamine when they were with their "established partner". Parts of the voles' brains lit up "like a glow stick" when they saw their mates.

The study shows how complex human relationships are. It says dopamine is released when we fall in love. A researcher said: "Our entire social world is...defined by different degrees of selective desire to interact with different people, whether it's your romantic partner or your close friends." She added: "Certain people leave a unique chemical imprint on our brain." Research also suggests that women get over breakups faster than men.

## Level 5

Songwriters and novelists have long-claimed that love is a drug. Scientists have gone a step further to prove this. They conducted tests on the romantic relationships of prairie voles. Different pairs of the mouse-like animals were tested for levels of dopamine. This plays a role in our seeking pleasure and addictive things. The researchers said the voles released a lot of dopamine when they were with their "established partner". Dr Zoe Donaldson said parts of the voles' brains lit up "like a glow stick" when they were reunited with their mates.

The study helps to explain more about how complex human relationships are. It says dopamine plays a key part when falling in love, and in the sadness when breaking up with a partner. Dr Donaldson said: "Our entire social world is basically defined by different degrees of selective desire to interact with different people, whether it's your romantic partner or your close friends." She added: "Certain people leave a unique chemical imprint on our brain that drives us to maintain these bonds over time." Research also suggests that women get over breakups faster than men.

## Level 6

Writers of novels and songs have for centuries claimed that love is a drug. Scientists have now gone a step further to prove this assertion. They conducted tests on the romantic relationships among prairie voles. Different pairs of the mouse-like rodents were tested for levels of dopamine - a neurotransmitter that plays a role in our seeking pleasure and a craving for addictive things. It can provide an intense feeling of reward. The researchers found that the voles released large amounts of dopamine when they were physically with their "established partner". Researcher Dr Zoe Donaldson said parts of the voles' brains lit up "like a glow stick" when they were reunited with their mates, and dimmed when with unknown voles.

The researchers said their studies help to explain much about the complexities of human relationships. They say dopamine in our brains plays a key part when falling in love, and in the grief experienced when breaking up with a partner. Dr Donaldson said: "As humans, our entire social world is basically defined by different degrees of selective desire to interact with different people, whether it's your romantic partner or your close friends." She added: "This research suggests that certain people leave a unique chemical imprint on our brain that drives us to maintain these bonds over time." Research also suggests that women get over a breakup, and fall out of love faster than men.

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