Falling in Love
Second Edition

Why We Choose
The Lovers We Choose

Ayala Malach Pines

http://www.psypress.com/9780415951876
Acknowledgments xi

Introduction

*About Falling in Love and About This Book* xiii

**Part One**

**Conscious Romantic Choices**

*Increasing the Likelihood of Falling in Love* 1

1 *Proximity: The Hidden Matchmaker* 3

2 *Arousal: The Elixir of Love* 13

3 *Beauty and Character* 27

4 *Birds of a Feather or Opposites Attract?* 47

5 *Satisfying Needs and Reciprocating Love: We Love Those Who Love Us* 61

6 *The Course of Romantic Love: Falling in Love as a Process* 71

7 *On Men, Women, and Love: The Role of Status and Beauty* 83

**Part Two**

**Unconscious Choices**

*How We Choose the Loves We Choose* 105

8 *Openness to Love* 107

9 *The Son Falls in Love with “Mother,” The Daughter with “Father”* 123

10 *The Internal Romantic Image* 137

11 *Four Stories* 161

**Part Three**

**Romantic Love in Long-Term Relationships**

12 *Turning Love Problems into Opportunities for Growth* 181
13 Love and Work: The Relationship Between Their Unconscious Choices 199

Appendix 1: Romantic Choices Workshops 205

Appendix 2: Analyzing a Romantic Relationship 213

Appendix 3: Research Findings 215

Notes 221

References 245

About the Author 265

Photo Permissions 266

Index 267

http://www.psypress.com/9780415951876
Chapter 6

THE COURSE OF ROMANTIC LOVE:
FALLING IN LOVE AS A PROCESS

The course of true love.
—Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night’s Dream

This bud of love, by summer’s ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
—Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

Even when she first saw him, she felt a powerful attraction. There was something about his tall lean frame, the head full of curls, the humorous twinkle in his eyes. He exuded masculine energy that made her heart beat faster. When they were introduced, he gave her a long look that made it clear that the attraction was mutual. The disappointment she felt when she discovered that he was leaving the country the next day made no sense given the fact that they had only spoken for a few minutes. It was several years before they met again, and at first she did not remember meeting him before. But her heart recognized him right away and responded with the same intense attraction and strange longing. Again, a mutual friend introduced them at a party, and again she found herself drawn to him, to the twinkle in his eyes and his powerful masculine energy. When he invited her to dance, she felt that energy engulfing her, pulling her toward him. She did not resist. Being with him seemed so natural, as if she had known him all her life. Because the party was noisy, they went out to the garden to talk. She found herself laughing, charmed by his wit and sense of humor. When they met again a few days later, he invited her for a walk on the beach. Somehow, it did not surprise her. It seemed only natural that her favorite place would be the place he would choose for their first date. The more they talked and the more she discovered about him, the more amazed she was about the similarities between them. Like her, he traveled extensively and was now ready to settle down. They came from a similar background, had a similar childhood, and were the first born in similar close-knit families. They both went to graduate school and had similar professional aspirations. But, what was most amazing was that they both desired the seemingly impossible, thing from an intimate relationship: total intimacy and total freedom. Their love was the most
passionate affair she had ever had, and it continued to grow deeper and stronger with the years of their marriage.

I didn’t feel physically attracted to him until we went out a couple of times. So it was a kind of gradual thing. It took a year before we were really close. We knew each other because we went to the same school. He was a kind of all-around nice guy, friendly, warm. He had a friendly presence, a warm presence. And he was a kind of lively, good-humored sort. And I thought he was cute, nothing stunning. Down to earth.

I thought she was gorgeous. From the first time I saw her I was really attracted to her. And then I got to know her. We were in a couple of classes together, and we would do homework together and just joke around. And so sooner or later we just started going out. She was a really neat person, fun to talk to, fun to get to know, fun to hang out with, fun to goof around with or be intimate with.

I didn’t like him at first. I didn’t like him at all. He didn’t like me either. We would kind of butt heads when we first met. We had the same job, but in different branches. We were in class together, and there was only one seat available, and I sat next to him. I didn’t like him. I don’t know … . He started talking to me, so we ended up being friends. And he was there for me after the divorce. He was there for me, and I guess it just went on from there. It was different than any other sort of attraction. It was the way he treated me, his ideas, his attitude, his overall values and views about life.

We sat next to each other in class, and we sort of became good friends. I can’t remember who wanted to become intimate, her or me, but it progressed … .

I met him when I was a freshman and he was a senior. We lived in the same dorm, and he was always a nice guy, but you know, I really wasn’t interested in him because he was so much older. I mean, 3 years can seem like a lot. Here I was taking Freshman English, and he was finishing his major. I mean, he was big-time. He was friendly and asked me out a couple of times, but nothing more than that at first. My heart didn’t beat real fast. It wasn’t love at first sight. We were just buddies. I never even thought about it for a year and a half. After that period we started getting closer. We were talking on the phone a lot, we started doing things together. We liked a lot of the same things … . There was some tension at first because I still thought of him as a friend, but he didn’t necessarily think of me that way. I felt great actually.

Analysis of the romantic attraction interviews showed that, in one-third of the cases, falling in love was described as a gradual process. Only in about one-tenth of the cases was love at first sight.¹

When people fall in love, different variables play roles in different stages. The backdrop of the entire process is cultural. From birth, we are inculcated with certain expectations about falling in love. In Western society, the romantic ideal calls for a man and a woman, rather than a same-sex couple, to meet, fall in love, marry, and
live happily ever after. When a man and a woman meet, they share these expectations of the way things ought to progress between them. In the getting-acquainted stage—more likely when a couple lives or works at the same location, and, preferably, when in a state of arousal—appearance is important, especially to men. But, in order for a romance to spark, the couple needs to feel attracted to each other’s personality. For the spark to ignite, it is best if they are similar in background, personal assets, views, and emotional maturity. For a romance to evolve into a relationship, the love must be reciprocated and gratify their most important psychological needs.

A romantic relationship starts in different ways. It may be love at first sight—“From the first time I met him, there was something that attracted me to him,” or it may develop after years of friendship: “We knew each other 5 years, no, 4 years, as friends … . When I returned from a trip abroad, none of my old friends was around, so I called him, and then it started getting more serious.” A romantic relationship may start at a significant encounter (“It was a setup. We talked the whole night”) or evolve into a deep connection over time (“At first, I wasn’t attracted to her, but since we were involved in the same project, we talked a lot. We became closer and closer. Then I became more attracted to her.”). In all these cases, a state of acquaintance, such as friendship or mere physical attraction, develops into a state of passionate, romantic love—a development that has been documented in many studies.2

In secular Western society at the start of the 21st century, romantic love is an important element in the choice of a mate. Even in the arranged marriages of some traditional societies, romantic love is an important background criterion.3

Despite the different starting points and different rates of development among romantic relationships, there is usually a certain point at which both partners say, “This is love!” This turning point starts a series of physiological changes.4 It is often preceded and marked by a special mutual gaze. Victor Hugo described the power of this gaze in Les Miserables (1862):

Few people dare now to say that two beings have fallen in love because they have looked at each other. Yet it is in this way that love begins, and in this way only. The rest is only the rest, and comes afterwards. Nothing is more real than these great shocks which two souls give each other in exchanging this spark.

### THE STAGES OF FALLING IN LOVE

How do people fall in love? Several theories rest on an assumption that romantic relationships go through certain steps that occur in a certain order; thus, the falling-in-love process is described as a series of stages that are qualitatively different. In some theories, falling in love happens in two stages; in others, it happens in three or even four stages. But, all stage theories assume that there is a qualitative difference among the different stages.
According to a *two-stage theory* of love, falling in love involves a two-step screening process. People screen first for those they consider unsuitable. They do not notice these people when they meet, and they forget them right away. A typical example is screening for age. Many young people do not even notice older people because they do not perceive them as potential romantic partners. When someone does not fit our selection criteria, we simply do not notice them. Thus, the unsuitable becomes invisible. In the second stage, people select the most appropriate partners among those who are judged suitable.5

The initial automatic screening of unsuitables is influenced by social norms that dictate for us the category of people that contains suitable marriage partners. Robert Winch coined the term *candidates field of eligible spouse* to describe the range of people with whom we are permitted to fall in love and marry.6 In other words, the society or specific subculture in which we live determines the first stage of screening and happens even before we start operating our own love filters.

Most societies use similarities in background and social assets as their main selection criteria. Societal norms tend to prefer that marriage partners be from the same race, social and economic class, religion, and age group. A person who does not conform to these social dictates, such as an old man who marries a young woman, is often criticized and ridiculed and can become the object of jokes and gossip. Reactions of this sort teach both the person to whom they are directed, as well as the people watching from the sidelines, who is appropriate and who is inappropriate as a marriage partner.

Societies influence the screening process of romantic partners in two major ways. Most prominently, social norms reward people who follow the norm and punish those who deviate, as, for example, when friends and relatives shun or express outright criticism of an unsuitable, potential partner. Second, meetings are arranged between people who are judged to be suitable romantic partners, such as parties in schools, workplaces, and clubs or social events arranged for singles of a certain age group and a certain social or economic status.7 Societal agents such as parents, teachers, friends, and the media teach the social norms. They reward and encourage suitable romantic connections and discourage unsuitable ones.

Only after people pass through this social screening and choose a suitable partner can falling in love take place. And, according to another stage theory of love, it also happens in two stages. In the first stage, shared values are most important; in the second stage, compatibility of needs is most important.8

In the first stage of a romantic relationship, similarity in views, values, and interests is especially important. Disagreement about a value that even one of the partners considers significant limits the possibility of a romantic relationship. Consider, for example, a devoutly religious woman who finds herself attracted to a man who is a committed atheist. If she cannot see herself building a life with this man, she will no doubt try to quench her attraction to him. Or, consider a cowboy who loves open space and makes his living raising cattle who is attracted to an urban woman who loves theater and opera and is an editor. Because it is unlikely that two
such people will be able to make a living and be happy in the same place, it is unlikely that a relationship between them will go beyond the stage of romance.

It is important to note, however, that when people are strongly attracted to each other they are capable of ignoring such glaring differences; they assume that they can overcome incredible odds with the sheer power of their love.

Only growing intimacy can provide couples with the foundation of trust that enables them to reveal their deeper psychological needs to each other. Most people have to feel a certain degree of security in the relationship before they can remove their defenses and admit their more infantile, immature, and, some say, neurotic needs. This is why complementary emotional needs become central in the later stage of the relationship.

The most famous three-stage theory of love was proposed some 25 years ago by Bernard Murstein. According to this theory, in the first stage of a love relationship, the stimulus stage, external features such as appearance have the greatest impact. In the second, the value stage, the attraction is based primarily on similarity in values and interests. In the third and last stage, the role stage, the couple examines whether they function well in the roles related to their identity as a couple: friend, lover, roommate, and husband and wife.9

In the stimulus stage, people know only what they can learn from minimal interaction. Attraction is a function of the other’s physical, mental, and social attributes. Potential partners assess and arrive at an overall evaluation of the other, which each compares to his or her own overall attractiveness. Only if both partners perceive each other’s attractiveness as roughly equal to their own can the relationship progress to the value stage. When a man and a woman begin dating, they talk about their views about things. If they discover that their attitudes are similar, their attraction grows, and they can move to the role stage, in which they become concerned about their ability to function as a unit. How is each of them expected to act in certain situations or roles? How are holidays and birthdays going to be celebrated? Should a wife develop an independent career? Should a husband cook? And so on. When both partners discover that the other behaves in a way that fits his or her expectations and that their needs are complementary, the relationship can become highly satisfying.

Other stage theories talk about four stages of falling in love. One of these theories focuses on rewards, roles, and norms (rather than compatibility in deep psychological needs). A romantic relationship develops in the following stages: In the first stage, the exploration stage, the rewards and cost of the relationship are weighed. In the second, the negotiation stage, the relationship is defined, and the behaviors that bring the most rewards to both partners are learned. In the third stage, commitment, mutual dependence develops between the partners as a result of their deepening involvement with each other. In the final stage of formalizing, both the couple and the people in the couple’s social circle view the relationship as sanctioned by society.10 Not a word about love!

According to another multiple-stage theory of love, all romantic relationships start with the attraction based on similarity, which causes feelings of comfort and
closeness: “You also love staying at home next to the fireplace and reading on stormy nights?! That’s incredible!!” When couples feel close and comfortable with each other, they start opening up about their deeper issues and needs. Only if they feel and express empathic understanding for each other in the self-disclosure stage can the relationship move on to the next stages. The final stages of a love relationship demand compatibility in the roles involved in being a couple, making a commitment to the relationship and the development of an identity as a couple.11

One of the most complex and comprehensive stage theories of love was proposed by Israeli psychologist Avner Ziv. The theory is based on interviews with men and women, young and old, married and single, who were asked to describe an experience in which they fell in love. Analysis of the interviews suggested that falling in love involves emotional, behavioral, mental, and social components. Ziv combined all these components into a four-stage model of falling in love.12

The first stage of attraction is influenced by past experiences and the partners’ physical attributes, physical beauty being the most prominent among them. In the second stage of examination, the partners examine their social compatibility (social and economic background), their intellectual compatibility (education and areas of interest), and their emotional compatibility (feeling of comfort with each other). Because both partners know at this stage that they are on trial, they try to present as positive a picture of themselves as possible. In the third stage of self-revealing, intimacy is created when deeper thoughts and feelings, including negative ones, are revealed to the partner. In the fourth and last stage of mutual expectations, each partner learns about the expectations of the other and makes a conscious effort to respond to these expectations in all areas (including economic, emotional, social, and sexual).

When a couple first meets, if there is an attraction between them, the romantic relationship will start. If there is no attraction, it will not. As the relationship progresses and they examine each other, if there is no social, intellectual, or emotional compatibility, the relationship will end. If compatibility exists, the relationship will continue evolving. With intimacy growing between them, the couple starts revealing vulnerabilities and negative sides to each other. If either partner does not understand or fears what is revealed, the relationship ends. If they understand and are empathic to each other’s vulnerabilities, the relationship continues to the stage of mutual expectations. If partners do not satisfy each other’s needs and expectations, the relationship is terminated. If the needs and expectations of both partners are filled, the result is love—mutual dependence respectful of each partner’s independence.12

Which one of these stage theories of love is the correct one? Or, better still, is any of the theories correct? One critical question in the evaluation of any stage theory is the question of the order of the stages. In Murstein’s theory (stimulus, value, role), for example, does the value stage always precede the role stage? Or, are couples able to deal with role issues such as “Will she be able to be a professor’s wife?” “Can I invite him to the New Year’s Eve party at the office?”—before they have examined their similarity in values? A number of studies have shown weak evidence for the existence of fixed stages in the development of intimate relationships. One of these
studies referred specifically to Murstein’s stage theory. Another study asked newlywed couples to describe how their relationship had evolved. Analysis of their stories revealed different patterns of development from the first meeting until the marriage. The romantic attraction interviews I analyzed also showed that couples go through different stages at different times and at different paces in the development of their love relationships.

Even if we accept the premise that romantic relationships change and evolve with time, it does not mean that we have to accept the existence of definite stages in which different variables play key roles. Indeed, there are several theories that describe the evolution of an intimate relationship without describing distinct stages. Here is the evolution of a romantic relationship according to one such theory.

The couple starts meeting more frequently and for longer periods of time. They feel comfortable when together and make efforts to meet again and again. They become more open with each other, are less reserved, and are ready to express negative feelings. They develop a unique style of communication. They develop an ability to predict each other’s expectations, feelings, and views. They adjust to each other’s behaviors and goals. Their investment in the relationship and its importance for them grow. They consider each other in their goals. They feel growing affection, trust, and love. They view the relationship as unique and irreplaceable. They see each other as partners.

In another example, the development of a romantic relationship is described in terms of the growing influence and interdependence of the partnership. As the partners’ influence on each other grows and as their mutual dependence grows, the relationship becomes closer and more intimate. Because this is a gradual development that takes time, only long-term relationships can achieve true closeness, intimacy, and love.

And, did you know that couples first choose each other according to physical traits but only stay together and marry if they are also similar psychologically? The proof is that although married couples and dating couples have a similar number of shared physical traits, married couples have significantly more (11 to 1) shared psychological traits.

FALLING IN LOVE AS A FUNNEL-SHAPED SCREENING PROCESS

All this brings me to propose that falling in love is the result of a funnel-shaped screening process. There are no distinct stages in this process but “love screens” at different points of the funnel. The first five chapters described these love screens. Now, we can see how they operate in the process of falling in love.

To enter the funnel of love, people need to grow up in a society that acknowledges and values romantic love; they need to be socialized to expect falling in love (the subject of the introduction). Geographic proximity (the subject of the first chapter) determines to a large extent the pool of potential candidates for first encounters. A state of emotional arousal (the subject of the second chapter) increases the probability that a pleasant encounter will be defined as romantic. Only after
they are ready to fall in love, which is to say they have met and are aroused, are potential partners likely to notice each other’s exciting appearance and pleasant personality (the subject of the third chapter). Having noticed each other and concluded that they deserve each other’s romantic attention, they start heart-to-heart talks that help them discover whether they have similar values and interests (the subject of the fourth chapter). The greater the similarity, the greater the feelings of comfort and validation and the greater the desire for closeness. The greater the discrepancies, the more misunderstandings and conflicts that can break up the relationship. A notable exception to the rule of attraction to the similar is the attraction to the complementary. With growing involvement and intimacy, a couple’s deep psychological needs are revealed and with them their ability and willingness to satisfy those needs (the subject of the fifth chapter). The higher a couple’s willingness and ability to satisfy each other’s needs are, the higher their mutual attraction and love.

Even this long summary does not do justice to the complexity of the process of falling in love. Perhaps it is better this way because the result is the subjective feeling of every couple that their experience of falling in love was unique only to them and could have happened to no one else in the whole world. Han Suin said it most poignantly in the preface to A Many Splendoured Thing (1952):

Do you really think, then, that other people get as much pleasure and happiness out of their bodies as we do?

Dear Love, even the paunchy, ugly people of this world believe they love as much as we do and forever. It is the illusion of all lovers to think themselves unique and their words immortal.

I cannot end the discussion of stage theories of love without mentioning my favorite stage theory, a two-stage theory proposed by one of Italy’s great sociologists, Francesco Alberoni, in his book Falling in Love.19

According to Alberoni, the significant stages of a romantic relationship are simply “falling in love” and “love.” If falling in love is like taking off or flying, then love is like landing. Falling in love is being high above the clouds; love is standing firmly on the ground. Falling in love is like a flower; love is like a fruit. The fruit comes from the flower, but they are two different things. “And there is really no point in asking if the flower is better than the fruit or vice versa. By the same token, there is no point in asking whether the nascent state is better than the institution. One does not exist without the other. Life is made of both.”

Falling in love is a positive, energizing process that causes both physiological and psychological changes. Arthur Aron demonstrated the positive influence of passionate love on people’s self-concept. Over a 10-week period, he followed students who were in love and students who were not in love. Results of the comparison revealed that the students who were in love expressed greater self-confidence and higher self-concept. In addition, they expanded the scope and range of their self-definitions, probably as a result of their partner’s admiration of certain aspects
in their personalities that they had ignored or underappreciated. In other words, falling in love helps develop self-confidence and enhances self-concept; it makes us expand emotionally and develop more expansive personalities. Clearly, falling in love is a positive and highly recommended experience.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE PROCESS OF FALLING IN LOVE

In the romantic attraction study, a similar percentage of men and women described falling in love as a process. However, there was a significant difference in their description of the process. Men were more often initially attracted to the physical appearance of the woman, followed by a discovery of her charming personality. Women, on the other hand, frequently felt no initial physical attraction. The attraction followed the development of friendship and emotional intimacy. To put it more bluntly, for many men the physical attraction caused the relationship; for many women, the relationship caused the physical attraction.

Here are examples of the way women described the development of their romantic relationships.

“The relationship started as a friendship. I was actually going out with his roommate, so I spent a lot of time in their house, and we became close friends. We got to know each other really well. We got to be close friends before we became involved. As soon as the other relationship was over, he and I became romantically involved. I felt very attracted to him because I loved him so much. He had been attracted to me ever since we met. He initially told me that he loved me. I wasn't interested in him. Then I started to fall in love with him.

I wasn't attracted to him at the beginning, but he was there during the difficult time. He's not a macho type. I didn't have to put on an act. He was always nice to me, really understanding when I was upset. Now we have a friendship behind the relationship. He's my best friend.

I didn't find him particularly sexy. We were just buddies, and we started getting closer. On our first date, I didn't really know what to expect, I wasn't really thinking about him in a romantic way. I guess he had a different idea than I had, so there was some tension at first because I still thought of him as a friend.

The following are examples of how men described the development of their romantic relationships:

I liked her. She would tell you it was for the wrong reasons because I was always looking at her. She's slightly top heavy, and my eyes were always wandering. And she knew it too . . . . Before we really got into the relationship, we talked about a lot of things.
I thought she was gorgeous. From the first time I saw her, I was really
attracted to her. And then I got to know her. She was a really neat person.

It started initially as a sexual thing. I met her in the students’ office. She was
a secretary in the office. We started talking. There were interesting things about
her physically, also her personality. She’s one of the nicest people I’ve met.

These quotations suggest that for many men the initial sexual attraction is
dominant. It makes them listen to the woman to whom they are attracted, to be
attentive and supportive. For many women, the attention, the listening, and the
support are the most attractive and are what make them fall in love. Men should
remember this when they want to conquer a woman’s heart.

What is the reason for this gender difference? One explanation has to do with
gender stereotypes and gender roles that define the correct courtship behavior for
men and women. During the getting-acquainted stage, men are supposed to take
the initiative. Women can hint their interest by flirting but not initiate directly.

One study discovered 52 nonverbal courtship patterns of women flirting with men
to attract their attention. Despite the sexual revolution and the openness and tol-
erance that characterize romantic relationships today, women who take the initia-
tive with men are often still perceived negatively.

According to young singles’ scripts for a first date, men are expected to be more
influenced by the physical appearance of their dates, and women are expected to
be more influenced by the emotional closeness and intimacy. For both men and
women, sexual attraction is expected to be important. All these expectations are
part of a well-defined social script. The script is so familiar that when young men
and women are asked to describe the order of events on a first date, the similarity in
their descriptions is amazing.

The feminine script of courtship emphasizes attractive appearance, ability to
carry on a conversation, and control of sex, usually by refusal. The masculine script
covers planning the date, paying for it, and taking the initiative in sex. Women who
break the script by, for example, taking the initiative sexually, are perceived as ag-
gressive and masculine. Men who break the script by, for example, demanding that
the woman pay her share of the meal are perceived as cheap and unmanly. These
scripts structure and exacerbate the differences between men and women. The pen-
nalties for breaking their scripts force men and women to comply with them.

Gender differences exist in courtship and in the move from courtship to com-
mitted relationship. Although women tend to be more cautious during the court-
ship stage, men tend to fall in love faster and stronger. In the move from courtship
to marriage, women tend to move faster, and men tend to be more cautious.

Women’s cautiousness, especially about sex, can function not only as part of
a script, but also as part of a social norm. In a survey conducted among American
female students, for example, it was discovered that 30% of these young and edu-
cated women sometimes said no to sex when they actually meant to say yes. Wom-
en’s token resistance to sex is culturally prescribed and is part of the mating game.

It is comforting to note that after the initial stages of courtship in which both sexes
behave according to the socially prescribed scripts, men and women tend to fall in love at a similar pace and with similar intensity.

Another explanation for the gender differences in the process of falling in love arises from the difference in men’s and women’s innate programming for mate selection. This difference is a major topic of evolutionary theory, which is discussed extensively in the next chapter. As we will see, according to this theory, different evolutionary developments have dictated different courting strategies for men and women. Indeed, the difference between men and women in the way they view sex and love is one of the most significant gender differences found based on studies involving thousands of subjects. The conclusion, which should be taken with the appropriate caution, is that men are more likely to use love to get sex, whereas women are more likely to use sex to get love.

Evolutionary theorists assume that because these, and other, gender differences result from evolutionary dictates, they are universal. This assumption has received a great deal of criticism arguing against a universal, biological explanation and in favor of a cultural explanation. The findings of an anthropological study that examined the courtship patterns in several North American countries supported this criticism. These findings showed that courtship is a well-defined process of specific meaning and prescribed verbal and nonverbal content. The subjective experience of this process is the development of strong mutual feelings of attraction and sexual arousal. None of this is new, of course, but the findings are augmented by comparing the parts of the falling-in-love process that were shared by different cultures to the parts that were not shared. Because the latter were unique to each culture, it was possible to conclude that the gender differences in courtship are not universal.

This suggests that the evolutionary theories that present themselves as universal may be nothing more than ethnographic theories that describe how men and women in certain cultures view the process of mate selection, a description that includes some narrow assumptions about the roles of men and women. In other words, even if there are certain differences between men and women in falling in love and choosing a mate, there are also some powerful social and cultural influences that can account for these differences.

Furthermore, as most people know from personal experience, there is a personal and private aspect to falling in love. This is the aspect that lies behind the choice of a particular man or woman from all the eligible, appropriate, and attractive potential partners that people meet. It is this choice of one particular person from all the appropriate people in the world that gives love its magical quality. In the words of the 15th century poet, The Nut-Brown Maid:

For in my mind, of all mankind
I love but you alone.
Be aware of your love funnel. Think about the two most intense, most significant falling-in-love experiences you have ever had. Did you fall in love at first sight, or was the falling in love preceded by a long process of getting acquainted and becoming friends? Do you like the way you fall in love (either fast or slow), or would you like to change it? Identifying your preferences in love is the first step. Doing something about it should come soon after. The previous chapters offer a number of practical suggestions on how you can increase your likelihood of falling in love.

Once you have identified your love funnel as a whole, you can focus on specific love screens. Think about the two people with whom you were most in love. What did they have in common: something about their looks, their personalities, their intelligence, their social standing, their sex appeal, the way they treated you, or the fact that they loved you? The quality, or qualities, they had in common says more about you than about them. The commonalities point to the screens you use for choosing a romantic partner.

Once you have identified your love screens, try to evaluate the extent to which these screens are truly yours. Are they part of a social script you adopted that does not really suit you—or does not suit you any longer? The more honest you are with yourself, and with potential partners, about your true love screens, the more likely you will be to find a partner who will pass through them successfully.

It is also important to recognize the mating script in your own social group. But, be ready to abandon, as fast as possible, the gender-related part of the script in order to assure yourself of a genuine and authentic love relationship.