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### **What's love got to do with it?**

Besides giving us a holiday in February - Lots!!

Several studies show us that:

- The Capacity to Love and be Loved (from the VIA Strengths Survey, available online for free at [www.viasurvey.org](http://www.viasurvey.org) ) is one of the top 5 strengths of the happiest people. The others are Zest, Optimism, Curiosity, and Gratitude.
- Good social relationships (i.e. close friends) are one of the most important aspects of being both happy and healthy in old age.
- The Capacity to Love and be Loved is one of highest ranking strengths of the best leaders among cadets at a US Military Academy.
- The emotion of love broadens a person's "behavioral repertoire" – basically, it gives a person more choice of how to act.
- Love lifts us up where we belong. (that's actually a song, not a research finding – just a use of humor, one of my top strengths)

We're not talking about just the romantic, passionate love. More so, the types of love connected to long term happiness are a familial or friendly love, or a transcending, unconditional love.

The definition of love as a character strength is: "valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people". Note that the strength is two sided: the capacity to love and be loved.

The easiest way to bring more love into your life is to be more loving. Start by noting the people you care about. Who do want to see happy? How do you express the love you have for them?

Then extend beyond the obvious people. When you're getting ready to interact with someone, whether it's a co-worker or a bagger at the grocery store, ask yourself, "How can I express love towards this person?" It may feel like a stretch, but by building your capacity to love you are investing in your long term happiness.

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