

- Heart—Physiology

## The Heart And Brain

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Does love reside in the heart or brain? Scientists say that love originates in the brain, just as scientific theorems do. The brain's neurochemistry is what creates our feelings and different parts of the brain specialise in different kinds of emotions as well as rational thought. Hitherto, the focus of researchers has been on mapping negative emotions like fear and anger in the brain. Now the focus is on positive emotions, for instance, to map love and attachment.

Interestingly, the fight-or-flight response theory to an attack was derived from data collected from males. Female-centric studies now reveal that another kind of response, selfless behaviour, had never been included in threat-situation response studies. Steven Johnson reports in Discover magazine that University of California researcher Shelly Taylor suspected that the fight-or-flight response was only half the story, and that gender differences might help shed light on the other half.

Life-changing events like childbirth and breastfeeding reinforce emotions like love and attachment, activating brain chemistry that triggers feelings of protective love.

Oestrogen, higher in women, heightens the oxytocin effect, whereas testosterone, higher in men, tends to reduce its effect. This may explain why women are considered more nurture-oriented and loving, when compared to men. There are, of course, exceptions. What about the heart? Perhaps it beats faster or skips a beat corresponding to the intensity of what one feels in the brain, and heart emojis are definitely cuter and more appealing than brain emojis.