

HEALTHY MINDS
A WEEKLY COLUMN ALL ABOUT MENTAL WELLNESS
Elliott B. Sewell, MAE, LPCC, NCC

Kissing Is Good For You



It's a bit late for Valentine's Day, but it's never too late for kissing, according to a panel of scientists, headed by the dean of the faculty of neuroscience at Lafayette College; Dr. Wendy Hill, also a professor, stated that kissing not only lowers stress hormones (cortisol) in men and women, but also promotes bonding IN MEN - more than in women - by raising the levels of a chemical produced in the body, called oxytocin (not to be confused with the abused pain-killer oxycontin). Surprisingly, the level of oxytocin went down in women.

Kissing is defined as touching your lips to another place, as a gesture of affection, greeting, parting, respect, affection, or sexual desire. What I mean to discuss here is kissing on the lips between a man and a woman. Kissing requires the use of thirty-four facial muscles and can entail one-hundred twelve postural muscles as well. If neither participant is carrying transmittable disease, kissing can be a very healthy activity.

Kissing allows individuals to smell and taste each others pheromones (hormones used for a wide variety of communication, found in humans, many other animals with backbones, insects, and some plants), in order to determine biological compatibility. Amazingly, women are able to unconsciously determine if a man's biological genetic traits are most suitable for reproductive success; in other words it will determine if they are likely to produce an offspring that will survive. The power of a kiss is awesome.

Hand-holding also produced similar results, in controlled experiments, but the effects were very much smaller. Are you surprised? Of course holding hands is romantic but the juices just don't flow. Most of us have done our own research and know these facts to be true, at least on an intuitive level; however, these chemical changes are actually measurable in the blood and saliva when compared before and after kissing. It's no wonder that so many people are looking for good kissers when choosing a partner or companion: they want to lower their stress levels.

All but 10% of various human societies practice kissing. Kissing, which greatly stimulates the action of the brain, has three functions: finding partners to satisfy the sex drive; finding romantic love, and; becoming attached to one partner, at least long enough to rear children. Kissing is a way to measure how much you like to be with a partner, as a prelude to starting a family. Kissing the "right" person can make romantic love occur and endure. It's also a way for the male to pass the hormone testosterone to the female in the exchange of saliva that occurs when kissing, which heightens the sex drive.

The science of kissing is known as philematology. This is an area in which we all can do our own research, in this under-studied field. You may not earn a Nobel Prize for research, but the work might be rewarding, and your stress level is sure to go down.

Be careful, however; unlike the fairy tale, kissing a frog will not always result in creating Prince Charming.

TIP OF THE WEEK: ALERT!!!! While most of us were busy watching our favorite TV show or football game, our traitorous congress was busy writing and passing a new stimulus package (stimulating mostly the super-wealthy). The mainstream media (owned and controlled by this very same handful of super-wealthy) failed to mention that provisions in the new bill would hurt and contribute to the early death of our elderly population. Drugs "that are found to be less effective and in some cases, more expensive, will no longer be prescribed." This bill approves or rejects treatments using a formula that divides the cost of the treatment by the number of years the patient is likely to benefit. In other words, the older you are, the less beneficial the treatment (for you or your older loved ones). Treatments for younger patients will be more often approved than treatments for diseases that affect the elderly, such as osteoporosis. Eye and brain surgery will be reduced or eliminated. Those of you who are now young, however, will age if you survive. This bill also opens up the door to the acceptance of euthanasia (early retirement from life), which is an inexpensive alternative to long-term care and nursing homes. It is not the one we should choose or even allow. We must wake up, for we are returning to the old feudal system that existed before 1776, where a handful of noble "elites" controlled everyone else.