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The Effects of Unrequited Love on One's Performance in Society

Unrequited love (UL) is “unreciprocated love that causes yearning for more complete love.” It is caused by an inequality in the love expectations of a pair of individuals, whose relationship may be romantic or non-romantic (Bringle, et Al.). Typically, one of the two expects more in terms of love from the other person than he or she is willing to give, which results in unreciprocated emotions.

According to research, the different types of UL relationships are about four times more frequent than mutual love relationships. Common examples of such relationships range from celebrity crushes, crushes on taken parties, and infidelity in established relationships (Bringle, et Al.). The usual understanding of UL, however, is generally, a one-sided yearning for a relationship, with an unavailable or uninterested partner.

Because of its prevalence, researchers have been drawn to study the effects of unrequited love on the person experiencing it. They have found that these effects are similar with the effects of bereavement, suggesting a strong link between the two psychological phenomena (Saito 4). The manifestations that researchers have observed include insomnia and rumination, that may lead to more detrimental effects such as irregular heart symptoms and depression in more severe cases (Field 382-383).

These detrimental effects of UL pose threats to a person's well-being, and occur usually after heartbreak events (Saito 4). The human body, therefore, has developed a method for handling losses, which experts have named "adaptive grieving." It is a two-stage psychological reaction to a loss event, which helps the individual to overcome the post-loss trauma. However, though it is a natural process, there are times when other stimuli may cause abnormalities in the stages of the process, which may eventually lead to the aforementioned detrimental effects.

This paper aims to analyze the natural process of overcoming UL, and identify key points, wherein the process may fail to be beneficial to the person's psychological growth. It also aims to give recommendations in order to augment this process, and prevent abnormalities in it. This paper recognizes the importance of two principles, to ensure the beneficence of adaptive grieving and the avoidance of abnormalities:

1. Preventing the over-exposure of the human person to either of the two stages of adaptive grieving.
2. Utilizing both interpersonal and intrapersonal methods of intervention to ensure the person's psychological well-being.

Adaptive Grieving

Adaptive grieving is a dual process model of how humans handle loss-related events. It consists of two basic stages: loss-oriented and restoration-oriented actions. Loss-oriented actions have more to do with the experience of negative emotions after the loss (e.g. rumination, crying over what was lost, etc.), while restoration-oriented actions refer to the "moving on" that needs to be done, and adjusting after the event (Stroebe and Schutt 212-213). In unrequited love, actions of loss can be seen in usual depictions of UL in movies and television shows. The protagonists are usually (dramatically) shown thinking over the unrequited relationship while walking in the rain, breaking down once in the safety of their bedrooms, and other similar

actions. The “moving on” occurs in newfound love, having a relationship with a new partner who reciprocates more complete love, and adjusting his lifestyle, after having accepted the truth of his unreciprocated emotions.

This process, however, is unorthodox, since it is an oscillating process. The stages are not linear, but instead, shift from one stage to the other until the grief process is over. It is a “regulatory mechanism” that the person uses in order to cope for a prolonged period of time. It is a process that weakens as time passes, until such a time when the reactions are so minimal, they are hardly noticeable (Stroebe and Schutt 215). As with most models of grieving, the final goal of this process is acceptance of the event, and a carrying on with a new life, that contains changes.

The detrimental physiological and psychological effects occur when the person loses control over the process, and chooses to remain in one stage for too long. For example, an over-exposure to the loss-oriented stage may cause adverse reactions that can actually immobilize a person’s grieving process, and prevent him from reaching acceptance. Constant wallowing in sadness may actually lead to negative effects on a person’s physical and mental health (Stroebe and Schutt 216). Other negative emotions, such as anger, if left unchecked, can also lead to more violent tendencies, both inward and outward. Inward anger may lead a person to have suicidal tendencies, while outward anger may lead to a want for vengeance, or “retribution,” which may be in the form of physical abuse, slander, etc (Ortiz). On the other hand, a frequent denial of grief and other emotions can lead to negative health effects such as high blood pressure and heart rate (Stroebe and Schutt 216). Denying emotions also leaves them unresolved, and may cause them to fester over time, resulting in an explosive release, once they are triggered. These over-exposures tend to occur when the emotions experienced by the person increase in intensity, and become harder to manage.

Supplementary Intrapersonal Regulatory Mechanisms

A huge factor in preventing adverse reactions to an UL experience is developing an internal locus of control. A locus of control is a determiner that dictates how individuals see and think about themselves. This can be external or internal. People with external loci of control are heavily affected by the people around them. They gauge their self-worth through the reactions of people to them. Negative reactions result in a perceived decreasing of their values as individuals. A denial of their emotions or a rejection, therefore, is a severe blow to their self-esteem (Ortiz). These people are the ones susceptible to the over-entertaining of negative emotions. They take longer in the loss-oriented stages of grief, which allows time for the negative effects to develop. An internal locus of control, on the other hand, is a worth that “comes from within.” It is fueled by positive stimuli, such as love and respect, coming from the individual himself, who becomes relatively unaffected by what others think of him (Ortiz). Developing and strengthening this internal locus of control should therefore be the focal point of intrapersonal regulatory mechanisms against abnormalities in the acceptance process.

Rationalization and sublimation are two methods that aim to prevent overwhelming emotions from subduing the person. Rationalization is a technique that involves mentally processing emotional stimuli. It is a form of “self-talk” (Ortiz). The individual gives logical reasons for why the event occurred in his mind, and this allows a shift in paradigm. It puts the event in perspective, allowing for a decrease in the intensity of the felt emotions. It regulates the person’s actions and reactions, allowing for a stable state, of entertaining the sadness and anger, but not letting it control and overwhelm him. Sublimation is less of a mental process, and more of an emotional process. It involves a channeling of the emotions to a more constructive outlet. For example, instead of doing something self-destructive such as smoking, the individual can just study harder (Ortiz). The emotions are diverted in order to benefit the person. These two methods decrease emotional intensity and reliance, preventing an abnormality in oscillation.

Supplementary Interpersonal Regulatory Mechanisms

The key element that drives the regulatory effects of interpersonal intervention is social support. An individual feels social support mainly through the “perceived” feeling of belongingness and care in a string of relationships (Walen 7). They can be felt by the person through a variety of actions, such as comforting words, hugs, or simply through a companion lending an ear, to listen. Research has shown that this social support plays an important role in preventing or lessening the effects of stressful events on an individual (See Appendix A). Social support mainly intervenes in two parts of the stress process: as the person first experiences stress from a situation and after the person has adjusted behaviorally to the stimulus (Cohen 313). For example, a high-school teenager may have just found out that a girl he was pursuing got together with another guy. This can be considered as the stimulus, which may cause a stressful reaction. The teenager may take on a lot of stress and experience the grieving cycle, at a high intensity. Social support can play a key part in this step of the process. Parents, friends, and other people around the individual play important roles in this. They help put things into perspective, allowing the person to see a seemingly devastating situation, as something less debilitating and more manageable (Cohen 312). In the event, however, that the person continues on to develop negative changes in response to the stimulus, social support can take on more involved forms. The people around can control the person’s habits, should they be detrimental, even to the point of physical intervention, if it is necessary (Cohen 312). Social support aims to decrease a person’s affectedness from a situation, and helps decrease his emotional intensity, allowing for a better regulation and oscillation between emotions.

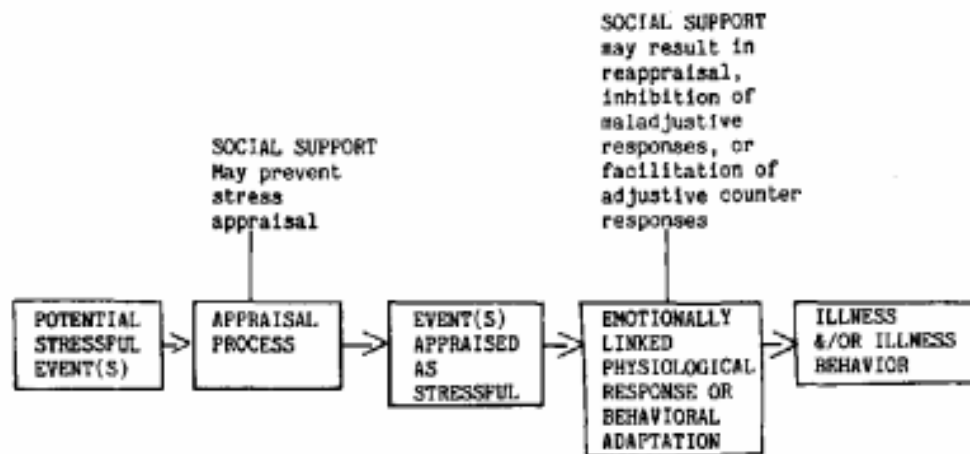
Conclusion

The intrapersonal and interpersonal regulation methods mentioned in this paper are possible methods that may be utilized to prevent an absence of oscillation in the grief process, and consequently, avoid its harmful effects. These methods, however, may not be sufficient in

extreme cases, where medical intervention may become necessary for the person's psychological well-being. In general, however, there is an ever-present need for these regulation methods. The researcher, therefore, recommends that these methods be promulgated to the general public, in order for them to be informed and equipped with the skills necessary to regulate emotions, whether they experience UL themselves, or have acquaintances experiencing UL. The goal should always be to ensure that though the person's heart was broken, his emotions should remain both controlled and intact.

Word Count: 1635 words

Appendix A (from Cohen 313):



Appendix B (Interview Transcript of Ms. Maripaz Ortiz Personal Interview):

Bold – Interviewer

Normal Text – Ms. Maripaz Ortiz

Good morning, ma'am. Uh my name is Jom. This interview is about unrequited love amongst high-school students, and I think the proper question to ask first would be...

How do we commonly define unrequited love?

Okay, uh, for me, unrequited love is a one way street. There is affection or commitment only from one side, but it is not reciprocated; it's not returned by the other side. Or maybe initially, it was mutual but somewhere along the line, someone fell out of love or lost attraction.

Would it still be counted as unrequited love if the level of affection between each other is not equal?

For as long as both sides want to stick it out with the relationship, they want to maintain the exclusivity of their relationship, it's still considered *amo*, reciprocated love. The moment ever if, someone wants out of it, or "let's just be friends, *na-friendzone ka*, that's unrequited love.

So what are the common characteristics of that kind of unrequited love relationship, uh should they decide to stay together?

Well, it's not fair for both sides, *uh* if I'm the party that has lost interest, I do not owe the other person anything. And if I am the party who's more involved, more into the relationship, that's not also fair to me because I'm giving a hundred bucks, but the person's just giving me 50 centavos, if you want to put a value to it. So in a sense, it's unfair, unequal, and eventually, it will lead to their dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

How different are the psychological effects *po* between the party giving love but is unrequited, and the party receiving love that he or she doesn't reciprocate?

For the one who is pursuing the other, um, well, one effect is, sometimes they're hoping that the other person will have a change of heart. So even if there are negative returns to their investment in time, effort, money, but if they're still hoping, "I change this person's mind," so the anticipation of a future return might be worth it; that might be of value to them. *Kay, who knows? She might learn to fall in love with me*, and it has happened. In fact, many relationship has started off with someone disliking intensely the other. But the point is, there was an intense reaction to the other, it's more dangerous or less likely to develop if the person is actually neutral, neither like nor dislike. But the more intense the dislike a person has for another, and you've seen that in movies right? Uh they're...*ang yabang niya! I won't have nothing to do*. But if the guy is persistent and pursues, the girl might have a change of heart, *Oh, I never saw this angle in him, Oh, are you...she will learn to appreciate him*. So that's the hope. Kay, uh but, for the most part and as far as I can tell, usually, attraction is mutual. Okay, now, for the other person who does not want to read the signs, and is still...that person might be in love with the idea of being in love, the idea of a re...perfect relationship, so that person in his mind, is living the relationship, experiencing the relationship, but for somehow, there's a disjoint; it does not jive with reality. So he will still continue, because it's all in his mind. It's a.. Delusion means you remove something, so illusion,

it's an illusion. Delusion, uh ay, it's... you had it then you lost it, you were deluded, it was removed. But, illusion, you're living it.

What about the effects on the person being pursued?

Well, it, for one, it depends on the person; some are irritated by it. The others are, which, use it as a bragging rights [sic], Oh look I have so many suitors. Oh, see oh, there are all the gifts he gave me; that whole shelf of teddy bears from him, Oh, the love letters, they might even display it, and then *ano* they make others envious of them. And lots of girls do that or desirable guys do that. Oh see, the girls run after me, they have trophies. It could be a Facebook post, "Oh I was out with X, Ana X, and we had coffee latte together. So, bragging rights.

Um so you're saying ma'am the more intense the emotion, does it fluctuate easier between love and hate?

Um, it can make the transition. But between indifference and hate, hate has a better chance at being transformed. But, of course, there's hate that will remain hate. That's the other combination.

Have you encountered students with unrequited love problems?

Uh, all the time.

What's the common complaint?

Um, they already gave expensive gifts, and I tell those students the minute you find yourself digging into your pockets to win that person's approval, that person's love, that person's affection; there's already something wrong. I know of someone who gave a twenty-thousand peso uh pair of sneakers to his beloved, and the beloved took it, and still, made out with someone else.

Um what about the school academic performance and social performance?

It can enhance academics. When you're inspired you're feeling good, everything's fine, kay, it could be a source of inspiration. Uh, you, are you referring to a relationship or uh, the unrequited?

The unrequited *po*.

Ah, the unrequited. Uh because these are the people living it in their minds. Okay, or that could be, that could be additional *pogi points*. My honors, I'm desirable, okay, uh, but for others, they can be distracted, and these are people with low self-esteem, to begin with. Well, of course, the first love and first crush and the first busted experience, friend-zoned experience, it's painful, and it's always painful the first time, but most people get over it, and move on. So it depends on the person, uh, it's either a learning experience, or some people get stuck, now, it's their choice.

In severe cases, does it lead to physiological effects?

Uh, depression, emotionally. Well, the person begins to neglect himself, of course, it will reflect, uh, sadness, that he doesn't seem to get over with. They sleep a lot, they eat chocolates, they get fat, okay, so there's this is the aggression, that was turned inward, or low self-esteem, uh, we call that, external locus of control. You allow other people to dictate how you see and feel about yourself. Uh, how you see and feel about yourself. So if you take rejection as the source of your self-esteem, okay, well, ay, that will really bring you down. But if your locus of control is internal, meaning it comes from within, my love, my respect, my sense of self-worth comes from within. Uh, that's like teflon. It will protect me from the misfortunes of life so in fact, uh, the time is an opportunity to find your inner strength, inner resources, anyway. Ending with a positive outlook towards life. There will be, well, sig, I'll forgive myself, for uh making a mistake, or it was a calculated risk, but it didn't pay off. I'll forgive myself then move on. Those who cannot forgive themselves for another person. *Walang biya 'yan*, she went out with another guy. *There with a... in*

spite of my invitation. There are some people who become vengeful, and they start to post, *Oh, she's a bitch, she's a whore, gan'on.* There are vengeful people, and to me, that's also not fair to themselves and to the other, because like war, all is fair in the field of love.

I've read, ma'am, that heartbreak are very similar to the effects of one who is grieving.

Yes, because they lost something. They're mourning for something. So what are the stages? First, denial. I might have mistaken her not returning my call. Denial. Oh, she hasn't been returning my calls for the past month, okay, then, after that, there is bargaining. Oh, what if I give her a teddy bear, or a big bouquet on her birthday, *Oo*, so there's bargaining already. She might change her mind. Then finally, oh no, she...I saw her, and she's having a date with another guy, my best friend pa, (laughs) then, there's anger, would set in. Now anger could be outward, the girl, you might scratch her car, when the next time her driver picks her up, social media post, or might hurt the other guy, okay, or slander her. Okay, the girl you're going out, she's like this and like that, or it could be inward. And it has happened, some guys actually did themselves in. Just to show you how much I love you, I'm gonna jump off this river, or off this ledge. Or you come back to me, you're my ex-girlfriend. Or they'd try to make the other person jealous. So that's it, that's anger. That's anger. Out to restore the balance. Well that's what anger is. It's a reaction to an unfair situation. Then, finally, reality sets in, then they get sad. Oh I miss, every time I eat Baskin and Robin's or if I go to Regis Center, I remember her so this is sadness, because something's absent. But in fact, you know, from Inside Out, that sadness is good, because you realize you lost something important, or of value to you. And then, finally, there's this sense of acceptance. Resignation. And the end is actually hope. Kay, now, it's your choice.

I've read about the grief process *po*, and I was wondering about this dual-process of grief.

It's cyclical. You might think you're already in the resignation stage, but the anger emerges and you're pulled back. It's cyclical. There, uh, it's actually not even sequential. Okay, but that's the pattern.

They oscillate amongst each other?

It can. It can go back to denial.

What's the best method to get over unrequited love?

Uh, number one, it's rationalization. It's a defense mechanism that we're all born with. What does that mean? We, it's an emotional trauma, but we tell ourselves, or it's mental. We rationalize, so that somehow, softens the blow. In other words, we process it, in our minds. So, oops. And then usually, at this stage, you give reasons. It did not work out because we have different interests. Or I guess, she prefers a taller guy, or I'm not her type, or etcetera. So you give reasons and that ration..rationalization, will help bring you back to reality. So you go outside of yourself. You look at some... There's another factor at play here. Maybe she was just being nice, that's why she was going out with me. Or, uh, maybe, I overwhelmed her, or I scared her, or it's too intense or she's not ready for it, or I'm trying too hard. So all of these reasons, these are self-talk, and then when you're leveled off, the emotion intensity is usually, is decreased, kay, the emotional energy, comes out and is processed, so there's balance already. It kinda helped. Think of a balloon that's super-inflated. Parang sasabog na puso ko. But that is a release valve. And that should ano, mellow it down.

So rationalization is the key?

It helps. Secondly, sublimation. Sublimation means charge it to experience. You sublime, you lift it up, okay, oh this is, um, or my anger, instead of taking it out on her, I'll just study harder. Or you distract yourself, but you should do something that's positive, that would actually help yourself. So, you sublimate it. So, an potentially negative, destructive force, you harness it, you channel it, to help yourself feel better. Okay, I will take one ice-cream cone, but if I take ten more, it's gonna add to my weight. That's not helping. That's self-destructive. So finding a balance.

What about interpersonal support *po*?

Social support is also important. You have friends there who, *okay lang'yan*, You have us, (laughs)

Well, I think that concludes the interview, ma'am. Thank you very much for accepting my request for an interview.

Thank you, Jon, I hope I was helpful.

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