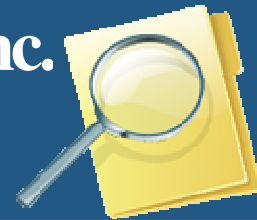


Newsletter issued by Forensic Nursing, Inc. At Your Service



February 2008



Mary Jane Barrett, M.S., R.N.

Nurse Consultant

Certified Case Manager

Certified Legal Nurse Consultant

Certified Medical Investigator III



“ Love: A temporary insanity curable either by marriage or by removal of the influences under which he incurred the disorder. It is sometimes fatal, but more frequently to the physician than the patient. ”

Ambrose Bierce. *The Devil's Dictionary*

CHEMISTRY OF KISSING The Lips do Kiss and Tell

Kissing unleashes a *cocktail of chemicals* that govern stress, motivation, social bonding and sexual stimulation. The release is because of the 12 or 13 cranial nerves that affect cerebral function, five are at work when we kiss.

Since kissing evolved, the act seems to have become addictive. Human lips enjoy the thinnest layer of skin on the human body, and the lips are among the most densely populated with sensory neurons of any body region. When we kiss, these neurons, along with those in the tongue and mouth, rocket messages to the brain and body, setting off delightful sensations, intense emotions and physical reactions.

To the extent that kissing is linked to love, the act may similarly boost brain chemicals associated with pleasure, euphoria and a motivation to connect with a certain someone.

What does the brain do when you kiss? A flurry of unusual activity in two brain regions that govern pleasure, motivation and reward: the right ventral tegmental area and the right caudate nucleus...the same areas that are stimulated by addictive drugs like cocaine -- result in the release of neurotransmitter dopamine. Kissing is a kind of drug for us humans.

Some scientists theorize that kissing is crucial to the evolutionary process of mate selection. Kissing boosts the pulse rate and blood pressure, pupils dilate, breathing deepens and rational thought retreats as desire suppresses both prudence and self consciousness, and the participants are too enthralled to care.

As poet E.E. Cummings once observed:
“Kisses are a better fate than wisdom.”

Kisses can convey important information about the status and future of a relationship. At the extreme, *a bad first kiss can abruptly curtail a couple's future.*

Do all humans kiss? There are some cultures who do not kiss....Chinese regard mouth-to-mouth kissing to be horrifying.....in the 20th Century there were Finnish tribes who bathed together but considered kissing indecent.....

“Despite all these observations a kiss continues to resist complete scientific dissection. Close study of the act of kissing has revealed new complexities woven throughout the most simplest and most natural of acts---- and the quest to unmask the secrets of passion and love is not likely to end soon. But romance gives up its mysteries grudgingly. And in some ways, we like it like that.”

from Chip Walter—Affairs of the Lips / Scientific American Mind 2008

13 O'Brien Avenue, Whitefish, MT 59937
Phone: (406) 257-8658 • Fax: (406) 257-8553

Toll Free: 1- 866-454-4018
Email: mjb@mjnurse.com • www.mjnurse.com