



THE *Mystery* OF *Love*

A Discussion Guide

for individuals, community groups,
and organizations



THE *Mystery* OF *Love*

Dear Participant,

The Fetzer Institute is proud to be a sponsor of *The Mystery of Love* and community conversations that are associated with it. The stories in this wonderful documentary lift up the transforming power of love and forgiveness that is so needed in a world that seems to be dominated by violence and fear.

Our mission, to foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness, reflects the vision of our founder, John Fetzer, who guided his own life by an unshakable belief that love is the most powerful force in the world. We believe that in the United States, and around the world, there is a yearning for the acknowledgment and expression of love and forgiveness not only in our personal lives but in our institutions and community settings as well.

The Institute is supporting this documentary and accompanying outreach as part of the Campaign for Love & Forgiveness to help create a meaningful national dialogue that we hope will bring about positive changes in individuals, their relationships, and their communities.

The Mystery of Love is one of three documentary films and outreach efforts/programs funded by the Fetzer Institute as part of the campaign. We invite you to visit www.loveandforgive.org for additional resources.

Thank you for your efforts to put the power of love and forgiveness to work in your community.

Sincerely,



Thomas F. Beech

PRESIDENT/CEO, THE FETZER INSTITUTE

Dear Viewer,

As a journalist, I became interested in learning as much as I could about the subject of love, real love. Some might say I became obsessed with it. I was motivated to do a television program on the subject of love because I felt strongly that the experience of love in my own life did not correspond with the images of love that dominated the popular culture. I thought that the stories being told in the mainstream media—movies, magazines, and television—were one-dimensional and misleading caricatures of love, too heavily concentrated on passionate sexual romance. Even more disturbing was that the distorted representation of love was causing many people to be unhappy in love by not being able to live up to, or down to, the idealization and degradation of fictional love and its Hollywood endings, happily or unhappily ever after.

In my ongoing research, over many years, I discovered there was a great deal of insight into and illumination of love in countless books by psychologists, psychiatrists, scientists, social scientists, philosophers, spiritual leaders, artists, and authors. I realized, too, that there was almost no reporting of this thinking and knowledge in the mass media. I wanted to broker some of what I was learning into the popular culture and to introduce a more thoughtful, more hopeful, approach to the subject of love into the public dialogue and people's personal lives. Of course, the more I learned, the more love deepened as a mystery, one of the great mysteries of life.

I learned, and I hope viewers learn, from *The Mystery of Love* that love is more than romance, although romance, if fleeting and transitory, is very important. I learned, and I hope the program communicates, that there is no hierarchy of love, that love of a pet or love of music is as important as friendship and love of the divine, as many of the most respected writers tell us. I also learned that all loves are related, like overlapping circles or like the petals of a flower.

We hope the stories in this program will awaken an appreciation of the presence and the potential of love as it manifests in every person's everyday life. We believe that opening ourselves to public discussion about our experiences of love—including love's difficulties—will help further the recognition and expression of love in our community and in our personal lives.

What all loves have in common is the transcendence of the self, of the ego, that makes possible connection of one individual to another. As Dante wrote in *The Divine Comedy*, and the program reports, Love is seeing yourself, the world, the universe reflected in the Other's eyes.

Sincerely,



Joan Konner

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, THE MYSTERY OF LOVE

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Some people talk about it incessantly. Others rarely utter the word. It can be confusing, moving, empowering, distracting, complex, and everyone is affected by it everyday. **It is love.**

The Mystery of Love is a two-hour documentary produced by the Independent Production Fund, with a national broadcast on PBS in December 2006. The film reaches beyond common depictions of love associated with sex and romance to look at how love gives shape and meaning to our lives. The film presents real love stories about friendship, family, marriage, community, science, the search for the divine, and even the shadow of love, including war and violence. Each story is bracketed by commentary from authors and thinkers who have taken time to ponder how love shapes the human experience.

As a community engagement tool, *The Mystery of Love* can provide an opportunity for people to pause long enough to see love in their lives and reflect on how to transform feeling into action. As program host Anna Deavere Smith says, "In a world that seems headed toward mass self-destruction, we need to explore the force that holds things together—the positive force of love...We need to put love on the public agenda."

Left
"Love and Romance" segment

Middle
"Unconditional Love" segment

Right
"Love and War" segment
(courtesy of National Archives)

How To Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help viewers use *The Mystery of Love* as a springboard for dialogue in a variety of settings and to address a wide range of interests. Whether you're a family hoping to enhance dinner table conversations, or a grass-roots organization looking to create positive change in your community, this guide will help you process the stories in *The Mystery of Love* in a productive and proactive way. It is not intended that any single group will use every question or activity. Rather, choose those items that best fit the needs and goals of your group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The discussion suggestions are divided into two main categories. The General Discussion Questions on p. 10 can be used for any of the segments or for the film as a whole. For additional general discussion ideas, see the Activity suggestions on p. 24.

The remaining questions are divided according to segment, and there are four options for each segment:

1. Framework Questions

Each segment opens with a series of three questions in bold typeface. These questions are designed to help viewers look at:

THE **CONCEPTS** OF LOVE – What can be learned about love from this story?

THE **FEELINGS** OF LOVE – What can be learned about oneself and one's own relationships and experiences from this story?

THE **EXPRESSION** OF LOVE – What can be learned about what love looks like when it is transformed from emotion into action from this story?

You'll see that the questions for each segment are divided into columns indicating these three frameworks. This will allow you to focus on a specific framework across multiple segments.

2. Topic Questions

These are questions that arise from specific issues raised in the segment. If your group is slow to respond to framework questions, or if general prompts don't automatically lead to the issues you hope to address, the topic questions can help.

3. Commentary

To provide the opportunity to think more deeply about some of the key ideas presented in *The Mystery of Love*, this section includes selected quotes from the film's "experts." The quotes can be read (and re-read) aloud or silently to remind participants of important ideas, prompt agree/disagree-style discussion or writing, and/or provide inspiration to begin a moment of silence or send people on their way.

4. Compare & Contrast

This section suggests additional segments from *The Mystery of Love* that explore topics related to the story under discussion.

TAKING ACTION

The final section provides suggestions on ways that participants can act on what they have learned from talking about the ideas and issues raised in *The Mystery of Love*.

A Note to Facilitators

The skill of a facilitator can make or break a dialogue. An experienced facilitator can help ensure that the conversation is productive and rewarding without asking people to hide feelings of pain, discomfort, or frustration. If you need help locating an experienced facilitator, contact the International Association of Facilitators: www.iaf-world.org.

It is important for a facilitator to be involved in the planning of a dialogue, but be aware that it is difficult to assume the role of host or teacher and also serve as facilitator. In the best circumstances, facilitators remain neutral, focusing on helping others to be heard rather than sharing their own perspectives. Unlike a teacher, a facilitator enters the discussion only when needed to help move things forward. If you are the facilitator, be sure that your role in the dialogue is clear.

FACILITATION TIPS

Love is both deeply personal and, as the film says, “the force that holds things together.” In other words, the topic at the heart of *The Mystery of Love* is simultaneously intensely private and fundamentally public. *The Mystery of Love* can provide an opportunity for individual reflection, and it can also serve as a springboard to increase and deepen communities’ awareness, prompt dialogue, and inspire action. A facilitator can play a key role in helping people move along that continuum. The facilitation strategies outlined on the next few pages can help.

Designing a Dialogue

1. **Define your goals.** Set realistic goals based on your group’s experiences and abilities. Decide on a target audience (whom do you want to reach?) and be clear about what you expect them to gain from attending. These decisions will shape the structure of the dialogue, how it is publicized, and how you assess success.

Part of defining your goals will be to choose a focus for your dialogue. Review all segments from *The Mystery of Love* and choose which segment(s) will speak to your audience and achieve the goals of your group. For example, you might invite young couples or teens to a discussion with mentors on how to build a strong marriage (looking at Mark and Monica's example), or launch a community action project by exploring how love makes community members responsible for one another (as in the segment featuring B.A.C.A.), or help heal divisions within a neighborhood by considering the role of love and forgiveness in reducing violence (using the story of Ples and Azim’s friendship). Whatever you choose, know that public spaces in which it is safe to discuss love are rare. By providing such a space you are giving your community a precious gift.

2. **Choose a structure and format that match your goals.** There are several ways one can hold a dialogue using *The Mystery of Love*. Some people may choose to have a screening and hold a one-time dialogue for 2-3 hours, and others might choose to have a sustained dialogue, where they agree to continue to meet over time. One-time dialogues can provide people with new insight, but it is probably not realistic to expect any changes in behavior or community action without some kind of follow-up. If a group has several meetings over time, this creates the opportunity for deeper relationships and transformations.

Consider how long the dialogue will be, where it will take place, how formal it will be, and how large your audience is. There is no limit to the number of people who can participate in a dialogue. However, the larger your group is, the more important it is to incorporate the use of smaller “breakout groups” of 6–8 people, so members can share more personal stories they may not feel comfortable sharing in a large group. You may also want to consider using more facilitators with a larger group.

Be sure to let participants know in advance the day and time of the session and how long the dialogue will be. Other considerations are child care, holidays, and food, which is always a bonus!

3. **Determine how you will use the film.** There are several ways to incorporate *The Mystery of Love* into the dialogue. You may decide to work with the whole film and focus your dialogue on the many themes the film raises. Or it might be more appropriate for you to select specific segments that are relevant to your goals. Note that for every segment of the film, this guide lists related segments. As the coordinator of the dialogue, you should preview the film and determine which segments best address your goals and the needs of your target audience.

Once you have established a clear goal, think about how to create a safe environment that welcomes open, respectful participation:

For action-oriented dialogue, identify and involve all key players. If you are planning to use *The Mystery of Love* dialogue to advocate for an issue or mobilize your community, you will want to involve all key players in your planning. For example, if you want to work with Ples and Azim's story to address the needs of at-risk youth in your community, you'll need to involve families, city officials, social workers, and potential funders. Consider all of the voices that need to be in the room, and make sure you plan in advance to allow plenty of time for participants to clear their schedules. Also note that when different stakeholders are included in the conversation, there may be power differentials that will need to be addressed by an experienced facilitator.

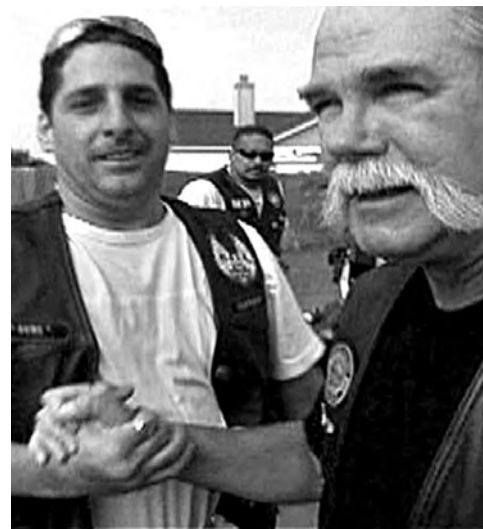
Choose a location where all participants will feel equally comfortable. If possible, hold your dialogue in a neutral place, easy to reach by various forms of transportation and accessible to people who live in different neighborhoods. Sites such as your local public television station or a library may be able to serve as a neutral location. Also be sure that the space is accessible to people of all abilities (e.g., that it can accommodate wheelchairs, has microphones so that those with impaired hearing can hear others speak, etc.).

In addition, be sure that the space can be configured to meet your needs. For example, an auditorium might be great for a screening, but it can make it difficult for people involved in a discussion to see and hear one another. Be sure that everyone can easily see the screen or monitor and also that chairs can be configured to facilitate dialogue (we recommend sitting in a circle). If necessary, check on the availability of spaces that can be used for small breakout groups.

Ensure that everyone will have an opportunity to be heard. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups or pairs, or should attendance be limited? Is the room set up so that people can see and hear one another easily? If you plan to break into small groups, decide ahead of time how those groupings will be determined. Will people divide by family, age, gender, or task, or will it be random (e.g., by counting off or by rows)?

Plan to leave enough time for next steps. For some people, just speaking publicly about love is an important action step. But if everything stops at the walls of the room you're in, lasting impact will be limited. Even if you're doing a one-time dialogue, discussion of next steps helps people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic. Your plans for future action will vary depending on your goals for the dialogue. They can be as simple as asking individual participants to have conversations about love with friends, family, or colleagues; or they can be more goal-oriented, such as encouraging a group to work together on a project demonstrating love in action. To facilitate follow-up, you may want to be prepared to ask people to sign in with phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses. The most effective follow-up, of course, is to design a sustained dialogue in which you host a series of discussions that build upon each other and provide the time and space for deeper conversations. If you are doing a sustained dialogue, be sure to create a consistent way to end each session; you may choose to set aside time for personal reflections, make space to reflect on past dialogues, or give "assignments" to participants for the next meeting.

Consider working with a co-facilitator. Because ideas about love are influenced by factors like gender and age, it can be helpful to have a second facilitator who provides another perspective (e.g., if you are male, co-facilitate with a woman). This strategy can broaden perspectives and increase perception. One facilitator may pick up signals from group members that the other facilitator misses.



Members of B.A.C.A.,
Bikers Against Child Abuse

What Is Dialogue?

Dialogue means different things to different people, and even the experts who study and teach it will disagree about its exact definition. It is most known as a facilitated constructive conversation involving a process that allows people to share their perspectives and experiences with one another. Dialogue is not about judging, weighing or making decisions, but rather about understanding and learning. The process of dialogue is known to dispel stereotypes, build trust, and enable people to be open to perspectives that are different from their own¹.

But there is a distinction that makes it an art form. While the first thing that comes to mind when you think of dialogue is speaking, the actual emphasis is on *listening*. A successful dialogue needs a talented facilitator who, in addition to having an understanding of theory, intuition, and group process, is also committed to this emphasis on listening.

1. The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation. Accessed February 28, 2006.

For maximum results, it is strongly recommended that you hold your dialogue immediately after screening the film while it is still fresh in participants' minds.

Preparing Yourself

Be knowledgeable. You need not be an expert on love to facilitate a discussion, but the more you know, the more effective you will be at helping the group consider deeper issues. Resources at www.themysteryoflove.org can provide background. Reviewing the questions in this guide can also help you prepare.

Know how you will open and in what direction you will head. Choose one of the suggested questions in this guide to help get a dialogue started, but keep in mind that this is not a textbook. No one is expected to cover all the material in these pages, nor do you need to use discussion questions in any particular order. Questions are designed for varied audiences and situations; skip over any that seem inappropriate for your dialogue. To prevent the discussion from faltering, have a direction in mind. Know which questions or activities in the guide will work as follow-ups and/or will help people deepen their thinking about the topics related to your ultimate goals.

Identify your own "hot button" issues. Substantive discussions about love, family, and community can trigger intense feelings in ourselves as well as in others. As a facilitator, you may end up being a target or lightning rod for the feelings of people in the room, so give yourself some time to reflect on the issues in the film before the dialogue. That way you will not be processing your own emotions and trying to facilitate a discussion at the same time.

Know your group. Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors like geography, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, education level, and familiarity with a topic can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles, and prior knowledge. You might ask for relevant information as part of the registration process or plan to work with groups with whom you are already familiar. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same experiences and feelings about love.

Before the Dialogue Starts

The facilitator's primary job is to establish an encouraging tone that allows people to explore sensitive issues. The ability to remain calm and neutral, keep people on track, help the group move toward action, and model appropriate interaction will contribute significantly to the success of your dialogue and the longevity of its impact. The strategies below can help you create an atmosphere that encourages people to share their experiences and insights in respectful and productive ways.

Consider how well group members know one another. If you are bringing together people who have never met, it would be worthwhile to devote some time at the beginning to introductions or a welcoming activity that establishes safe space.

Set ground rules about language. You might involve group members in this process by asking people what rules would help them feel safe enough to participate openly. You'll need strategies for how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak, and how you will prevent one or two people from dominating the discussion.

You'll also need guidelines for the way people express themselves: No one may interrupt someone who is speaking; no one may use a "put-down" or slur; yelling is off limits; people may speak for themselves ("I think...") but may not generalize for others ("everyone agrees that..."), etc.

Set ground rules about confidentiality. To help participants feel as comfortable as possible, set a tone of confidentiality. What's said in the room, stays in the room. If your dialogue happens to be part of a larger event, such as a community screening or town hall meeting, be sure to let participants know whether or not press will be present.

In a productive dialogue, it is not uncommon for people to reveal things that put them in a vulnerable position. So a good facilitator invites people to be open and honest, but also limits the sharing of things that might put someone in danger or have serious negative consequences (e.g., admitting to being an undocumented worker, or to having committed a crime).

Encourage active listening. Share with your group the distinction of dialogue, that it is a form of communication that focuses on listening. One way you can illustrate this point is by encouraging participants to listen without thinking about how they will respond or what they are going to share with the group. Another activity that can illustrate this point is to break up into pairs and practice formal "active listening," where participants listen without interrupting the speaker and then rephrase to see if they have heard correctly.

Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and actively listening to each other.

Be clear about the purpose of the dialogue. Discussions can veer off course for many reasons, including the participants' desire to shift to more comfortable topics. It can be beneficial and logical to let the interests and concerns of your group dictate the flow of the discussion, but within limits. People who attend expecting to focus on one topic will be disappointed and frustrated if the discussion turns out to be about something else. To keep the group on track, make sure that everyone in the room understands the goals of the dialogue.

During the Dialogue

Take care of yourself and group members. Discussing love can evoke deep emotions. As a facilitator, you are not a counselor or social worker. If participants are particularly upset, especially about issues of family dysfunction or personal pain, acknowledge the power and validity of the emotions, gently let everyone know that the group is not equipped to address the situation, and be prepared to refer individuals to local support agencies or professionals.

Allow time for reflection. It is always a good idea to plan a moment immediately after the screening for participants to share their reactions to the film. If you anticipate strong emotions, you might plan a moment to allow participants to take a deep breath and silently process what they have seen before beginning any discussion. You might also consider providing safe space to "vent," perhaps with a partner or in a small group of familiar faces.

Providing a variety of ways for people to share can also increase comfort level. For those who feel uncomfortable speaking or sharing emotions in front of large groups, consider arranging time to pair and share or to break into small groups.

Evaluate. How will you know whether your dialogue has been successful in meeting your goals? Unless you have a formal evaluator, you might want to prepare a written questionnaire, or do follow-up phone interviews, but it is also possible to get immediate feedback by using a closing activity that asks people to share what they have learned or what action they plan to take.

Additional resources for *The Mystery of Love* are available at:

www.themysteryoflove.org

Offers information about how individuals, community groups, schools, and organizations can get involved in a national dialogue on love, as well as information on how to purchase the film.

www.pbs.org/themysteryoflove

Offers information about the film, the broadcast, and additional public television resources.

www.loveandforgive.org

Offers information about the Fetzer Institute's Campaign for Love and Forgiveness, a multi-year initiative that will work with three films, including *The Mystery of Love*, to encourage communities across America to engage in conversations about love and forgiveness.

General Discussion Questions

The prompts below are designed to help open a discussion. They can be used with any segment from *The Mystery of Love* or with the film as a whole.

- If you could ask anyone in the film a question, whom would you ask, what would you ask them, and why would you ask that particular question?
- How do people in the film complete the sentence, "Love is _____"? How would you complete the sentence?
- Describe any part of the film that "spoke truth" to you.
- What media depictions of love have you seen, read, or heard? How does what you see in this film reflect, confirm, contradict, or differ from those depictions?
- Did this film help you notice things in your own life that you hadn't been paying attention to before? If so, what kinds of things did you notice?
- Who benefited from the relationship(s) you saw in the film? What did they gain? What, if anything, did they have to do in order to receive the benefits?
- Whom do you consider an authority on love? What makes them especially credible to you? How did they gain their expertise?

Discussion Questions By Segment

The questions on pp. 12-23 refer to specific stories from *The Mystery of Love*. Overviews of the different segments are available at www.themysteryoflove.org and may be printed for easy reference.



Nashalee Pagan,
community leader

“Every life is a love story, or contains one, for better and for worse.”

– HOST ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Love is “definitely a verb...It’s an action like sitting down and listening to someone’s day, even when your day is ten times worse.”

– TEENAGER MANDY INHOFER

“Love, to me, is respecting each other, holding each other’s hand along the journey, feeling safe.”

– OPERA SINGER EMILY LODINE

“We can imagine a hierarchy of love, but I wonder what you’d put at the top.”

– JUNGIAN ANALYST JAMES HILLMAN

“I think love is always accompanied by grace. And I am reminded of my Southern heritage.

A Yankee friend of mine went into a restaurant and ordered breakfast. The waitress came and there were grits with his eggs and bacon.

He said, ‘Ma’am, sorry. I didn’t order grits.’

And she said, ‘Honey, you don’t order grits. Grits come.’

And I think that’s what happens with love. Grace comes. When there’s love, grace is there. And by grace, I mean that sense of the extra dimension, the extra gift that life brings.”

– SCHOLAR BETTY SUE FLOWERS

Thinking More Deeply about Love in Your Own Life

These questions can be used before or after viewing to help participants think more deeply about how their current ideas and choices are shaped by the way that love is woven into the fabric of their lives. If you pose the questions prior to viewing, you might want to revisit them after the film to see if insights have deepened or perceptions have shifted.

- When do you feel love? Describe specific moments.
- When do you feel loved? Describe specific moments.
- How do you show love? What specific things do you do or say?
- For whom (or what) do you feel love? To whom do you show love?
- Where do you talk about love and with whom? Are there people with whom you would feel uncomfortable talking about love? Why do you think that conversation would be uncomfortable?
- When you were growing up, how did people in your family show love? What specific things did each family member do or say?
- Where do you see love now? Describe specific places, moments, and people.
- Where do you experience or see an absence of love? What does this absence look like in public or community life? What does it look like in your personal relationships?
- What are the obstacles to love, and how might you begin to overcome them and/or help others overcome them?
- What would your daily life look like if the people you encountered acted in consciously loving ways? What would your community or the world look like? What single action could you take to help bring your vision a little bit closer to reality?



Love and Marriage

Gary & Emily: The Farmer and the Opera Singer

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“Men and women express their love very differently, but they all want to be cared for.”

– PSYCHOLOGIST FRANCES VAUGHAN

“Buddhists say during their wedding ceremonies, ‘You should marry the whole world.’ But you can only do that through one person.”

– RABBI ALAN LEW

“What happens in love is that you feel like you’re losing your identity, but what is really happening is that you’re gaining your identity un-self-conscious of it. That is, you’re not focused on who you are. But in being who you are, you experience it, sometimes for the first time.”

– SCHOLAR BETTY SUE FLOWERS

What did you learn about love and marriage from Gary and Emily's story story?

How did this relationship help each person grow? How did that growth shape or balance the changes that were required of Gary and of Emily?

Emily says that she isn't certain what makes their relationship work, but that when she met Gary she felt “a huge respect for what he does.” Why might respect be a crucial component of a loving relationship?

Do Emily's love of her work (singing) and Gary's love of his work (farming) help or hinder their relationship to one another?

What insights did you gain about your own relationship(s) or experiences from Gary and Emily's story?

Emily says that her mother and her friends were not initially supportive of her decision to marry Gary. If Emily had been your friend or relative, what would you have advised her to do and why? In what ways were the expressions of concern expressions of love? When might such expressions not be experienced as loving?

How would you describe the bond between Gary and Emily's story? How did they show love? What, specifically, did they do or say?

Gary and Emily come from two very different worlds. How do they bridge the gap? What might communities in conflict learn from their example about transcending differences?

Top

Emily Lodine and Gary Overgaard, outside on the farm

COMPARE & CONTRAST

“Love and Romance” – Mark & Monica

“Divine Love” – Harriet & Steven



Love and Family

The Swann Family Overcomes Loss and Distance

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“That feeling of safety, and being approved of, and learning to project ideas into the future and have plans, is so related to what one’s parents give you.”

– PSYCHOANALYST ETHEL PERSON

What did you learn about love and family from the Swanns’ story?

What insights did you gain about your own family from the Swanns’ story?

How did the Swanns demonstrate their love for one another? What, specifically, did they do or say?

In what ways did Ann demonstrate parental love?

Ann Swann says that when her sons left, “I actually had a physical pain in my heart... I had never, in my entire life, been alone.” Have you experienced or witnessed times when emotional loss was expressed physically through the body? What were the circumstances? In your view, what enabled Ann to cope with the losses in her life?

How might loss or death—like the loss of the grandmother—make you more aware of the love you feel? Can you experience that without loss?

What is the impact of physical separation on family ties? How do the Swanns continue to support one another across distance? Do you know family members who have been or are separated geographically? What is that experience like? How are bonds retained across distance? What are the larger implications of living in a highly mobile society where people often move away from family? How might people outside a family help families who are separated?

Top
Ryan and Bryan Swann

Right
Ann Swann and her sons, home from Iraq



COMPARE & CONTRAST

- “Love and Altruism” – Daredevil
- “Love and War” – Soldiers
- “Unconditional Love” – Ryan and His Family



Love and Altruism

B.A.C.A.: The Wounded Healers

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“We cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.”

– MOTHER TERESA

“Every act of violation of another human being is a diminishment of the likelihood that there will be love in the community.”

– REV. DR. JAMES A. FORBES, JR.

“I define the word ‘love’ as reaching out and connecting to other people, and not staying in yourself.”

– TEENAGER MANDY INHOFFER

Before viewing this story, what was your image of bikers? Where did that image come from? Did this story challenge or confirm that image?

How is pain amplified when a person is hurt by someone they trust or love? How do B.A.C.A.’s actions help heal that kind of pain?

What organizations in your community help abused children heal? What might you do to support their work?

Daredevil says she has “more than one family.” How do you define family? Can you have more than one? How many families do you have? What do you get from each? How does each show love? What do you think would have happened to Daredevil if community members had not stepped in to help?

Thumper says, “Every adoption, I can see a piece of my story. And sometimes that makes it rough, seeing my story. But in that, it’s inevitable; I heal.” How does caring for others help heal oneself? Are there ways that you care for others? How do you benefit?

JD says, “I’m not totally selfless. I don’t think anybody is. I think we all do things with a hope of getting something back, even in giving love to someone.” Do you agree? What do you want to get back from the love you put out into the world?

Top
B.A.C.A. member

Right
B.A.C.A. on the road to help a child



COMPARE & CONTRAST

“Love and Family” – The Swann Family
 “The Communal Heart” – Conspirare
 “Love, Land, and Community” – Holyoke



Love and Romance

Mark & Monica Say "We Do"

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

"Love is a simple plant, like a creeping Charlie. Once it takes root, its talent is to spread."

– JESSICA POWERS

"True love is connection."

– RABBI ALAN LEW

"Immature love says, 'I love you because I need you.' Mature love says, 'I need you because I love you.'"

– PHILOSOPHER ERICH FROMM

"I think that sex is extremely important and crucial, but it's not a universal. I mean, there are some arranged marriages [in which the couple] may or may not have good sex lives, but their bonds are around other issues."

– PSYCHOANALYST ETHEL PERSON

"Sex is really important when it comes to love because it is the embodiment of union; it is the way we know union best."

– SCHOLAR BETTY SUE FLOWERS

"Romantic love is...idealistic. So you don't really see what the other person is, or even what you are. And what else is romantic love? It's unfulfillable."

– JUNGIAN ANALYST JAMES HILLMAN

What did you learn about love, romance, and marriage from Mark and Monica's story?

Before his first marriage, Mark thought that love alone would carry you through. He and his wife "didn't pay much attention to what our values or goals were in life; what we wanted out of life. And it turned out they were pretty different." Why isn't romantic love enough to sustain a successful marriage?

Mark says he approached marriage as being "as long as you both shall love" rather than "as long as you both shall live." What are the differences between Mark's two ideas of marriage?

Monica says, "I have learned that love is far from yearning." What do you think she means? Why isn't love about yearning? What is the distinction between "yearning" and "desire"?

Mark observes, "We are in a position now where we definitely could get hurt, and we're in anyway. That's where the juicy stuff is." Is love possible without vulnerability? Why or why not? In what ways can vulnerability open you up to the ability to love and deepen a relationship?

What insights did you gain about your own relationship(s) or marriage(s) from this story?

Monica talks about feeling like a "loser" because she hadn't found a husband. Where does this kind of attitude come from? Where do your views about marriage, romance, and/or relationships come from? Do you consider your sources of information credible? Why or why not? How are your ideas similar to or different from the ideas of others in the room, or of Mark or Monica?

Monica talks about the ways in which Mark, a guy divorced twice with a kid, did not fit her "list" of desired characteristics. And she describes being able to recognize the "right one" because, rather than trying to force him into her mold, she found he just fit in the mold. What does your mold for a mate look like? What kinds of characteristics do you value, and why are those characteristics important to you? How well do your expectations serve your best interests?

How did Mark and Monica demonstrate love? What did they do or say?

It took Mark and Monica several years of personal experience and failed relationships to develop the insights they share about themselves and their partners. What might others learn from their example? In your community, where can couples find guidance on building relationships that are likely to last? How might you help successful couples share their wisdom?

Top

Mark and Monica exchanging rings

COMPARE & CONTRAST

"Love and Marriage" – Gary & Emily

"Divine Love" – Harriet & Steven



Divine Love

Harriet & Steven and Dante

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“We are larger than what we know. And love reminds us of that. And the other thing that love does is remind us that our boundaries don't stop with our bodies, that we are all one in some very profound, real sense.”

– SCHOLAR BETTY SUE FLOWERS

“Love is a mystery because it tells me that there's more beyond that which I see in the realm of time and space.”

– REV. DR. JAMES A. FORBES, JR.

What did you learn about love and the divine from Harriet and Steven's story?

In your view, why do traditional marriage vows include the phrase “in sickness and in health”? Do you think that Harriet experienced caring for Steven as a burden? Would you describe her act as selfless? Why or why not? What is the difference between self-sacrifice and love?

Harriet describes her initial attraction as “a *coup de foudre*, a clap of thunder.” Describe what you think happens when people experience “love at first sight.”

What insights did you gain about your own relationship(s) or experience from their story?

In caring for Steven, Harriet says, “I began to learn something I never knew before, which was how to experience love; how to accept it.” In your experience, is it easier to give or to accept love? Why? Contrast Harriet's experience of quickly falling in love with the process of coming to accept love.

Harriet observes, “Only when he gets to Paradise does Dante realize that the object of our love is always God, and that God and man together are the formula for love. That's the greatest gift of love: seeing God in another person's eyes.” Does this description of love fit your understanding or experience? What connections, if any, do you make between experiencing love and experiencing divine power or presence? In what sense was Harriet's love “divine” as contrasted with “romantic”?

What insights about her own life did Harriet gain from studying Dante? What sources have been most instructive to you when it comes to understanding love?

How would you describe the bond between Harriet and Steven? How did they show love? What did they do or say?

COMPARE & CONTRAST

“Love and Marriage” – Gary & Emily

“Love and Romance” – Mark & Monica

“Brotherly Love” – Ples & Azim (especially for issues around divinity)

Top

Steven and Harriet exchanging vows in the hospital



Love and the Animal Kingdom

Yerkes National Primate Research Center

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“In the animal kingdom, we often get a sense of what, in full development, makes us fully human.”

– REV. DR. JAMES A. FORBES, JR.

What did you learn about love, friendship, and community from the primates’ example?

What insights did you gain about your own experience from this story?

How did the primates demonstrate “love”? What did they do?

Do you think that scientific knowledge helps our understanding of love? How might it inform our experience of love? In your view, what might we learn about human behavior from the study of animals?

What might we gain from being able to accurately describe love in scientific terms? What might we lose?

Why do the scientists at the research center avoid using the word “love” in describing the primates’ behavior? Why is love so difficult to define?

Frans de Waal reports that the primates take an us/them approach, acting differently toward those whom they identify as in their group than toward those they identify as not being part of their group. Where do you see this kind of behavior in humans? Which people would you list as being part of your group? Whom would you exclude from your group? What kinds of actions might you take or encourage that would help humans expand their view of whom to include in their “in group”?

Frans de Waal says that “In the primates, all thinking that they do in terms of altruism and helping is focused on the group.” In your view, is this true of humans as well? What features of our culture encourage people to help the general community? What cultural messages discourage people from working on behalf of the general community?

What is the impact of what you see in this segment on your views about ethical treatment of animals? Are there animals that you love? How is that love similar to and different from love that you feel for people? How does that love shape your beliefs about what constitutes ethical treatment of animals?

Top
Chimps offering
a helping hand

COMPARE & CONTRAST

“Love and War” (especially regarding us/them groups)

“Love and Altruism” – B.A.C.A.

“Love, Land, and Community” – Holyoke



Love and War

Soldiers Band Together

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“If you truly loved yourself, you would never harm another.”

– THE BUDDHA

“Community is so very difficult to form since our society is based on competition; everybody for himself, pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.”

– JUNGIAN ANALYST JAMES HILLMAN

What did you learn about love, friendship, and community from the soldiers’ experiences?

What insights did you gain about your own experience from this segment?

How did the soldiers demonstrate “love”? What did they do?

Why do people love their country, their ethnicity, or an ideology? What are the ramifications of that kind of love? How is that kind of love similar to and different from other kinds of love?

What is the relationship between love and a willingness to die? What kinds of things would you be willing to die for? Why are these important to you?

What might be learned from this segment about preventing war? In what other ways might the need for the love experienced through war be met?

In your view, why do soldiers returning from war have difficulty talking about their experiences? Do you find James Hillman’s comparison to deep religious experience compelling? Why or why not?

In your view, what is the relationship between religion and war? How can religion be both a provocation to war and also a path to opening the heart?

Why might soldiers report fighting for the other guys in their unit rather than to preserve democracy or defend their country? Do you think their answer would have been the same if they had literally been defending their own homes (i.e., fighting on U.S. soil rather than in another country)? Why or why not?

What is the relationship between vulnerability and love? How does that relationship change when the vulnerability is experienced collectively, as part of a group, rather than as an individual in a couple?

James Hillman says, “It’s not only that they experience such horror, but they experience such depth, such terror, and such beauty at once.” Do you agree with Hillman’s conclusions about the reasons that war or the military is seductive or beautiful? Why or why not?

COMPARE & CONTRAST

- “Love and Family” – The Swann Family
- “Love and the Animal Kingdom” – Primates (especially about us/them groups)
- “Love, Land, and Community” – Holyoke (especially regarding allegiance to a group)
- “The Communal Heart” – Conspirare

Top

Camaraderie among soldiers (Courtesy of National Archives)



Brotherly Love

Ples & Azim: Linked by Murder and Forgiveness

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“When we think about the ancient racial hatreds in all of the ethnic conflicts that we have witnessed in recent years, we see how difficult it is for people to let go of the past and start over. And yet, I think that’s just what we’re challenged to do, just as those of us who have had personal experiences of loss and disappointment have to be willing to put that to rest before we can love again, before we can find a sense of renewal. I think the same is true in the world.”

– PSYCHOLOGIST FRANCES VAUGHAN

What did you learn about love, friendship, and forgiveness from Ples and Azim?

What role did Azim’s faith play in his ability to heal?

What role did the friendship between Ples and Azim play in their ability to heal? How do you think it might influence Tony?

What do you think would have happened if Azim had chosen revenge rather than forgiveness?

What insights did you gain about your own experience from their story?

Azim says, “When you stay in resentment, you are totally transmitting; you’re not receiving. There is no room for love and joy.” He also observes that as his love for Ples has grown, “I have been able to contain so much more of the divine spirit, so much more compassion, so much more understanding, and so much more joy.” How does holding on to negative emotion block positive emotion? How does acting in loving ways increase the chances to experience positive emotions?

How did Ples and Azim demonstrate “love”? What did they do?

What might communities experiencing division or conflict learn from Ples and Azim’s story? How might a community or group express forgiveness?

Top + Right
Azim Khamisa
and Ples Felix



COMPARE & CONTRAST

“Love and Friendship” – Boris & Camilla
“Love and Altruism” – B.A.C.A.



Love and Friendship

Boris & Camilla: Music and Respect Bridge Race and Gender

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“Friendship is the happiest and most fully human of all loves, the crown of life.”

– C.S. LEWIS

“Ordinary friendship is the essential element that all loves have in common.”

– HOST ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

“Friendship, Aristotle noticed, was a purer form of love than romantic love. It’s purely there for the other. It doesn’t seek to fulfill anything in itself. It seeks to give. And over time, as you get older, friendship becomes more and more important.”

– SCHOLAR BETTY SUE FLOWERS

What did you learn about love and friendship from Boris and Camilla’s story?

What insights did you gain about your own experience from their story?

How did Boris and Camilla demonstrate “love”? What did they do?

Describe the connection between Boris and Camilla. What allows their friendship to work so well? How did they nurture the friendship? How do our social structures and policies encourage and/or hinder the kind of friendship that Boris and Camilla have?

Boris and Camilla have been able to provide each other with comfort. Who provides comfort in your life? To whom do you provide comfort and in what ways?

Boris and Camilla encounter issues typical of many older Americans. In the U.S., who bears ultimate responsibility to care for our aging population?

In your view, how were Boris and Camilla and their families able to get past racial barriers when so many people around them held on to racial prejudice?

Camilla says, “I think there’s all kinds of love. There’s romantic and then there is friendship.” Assess her statement in terms of current trends, like “friends with benefits.” How do you distinguish between friendship and a romantic relationship? What is the difference between the two? What might one experience in friendship that one wouldn’t experience in a romantic relationship, and vice versa?

Top

Boris Bazala and Camilla Williams in their yard

COMPARE & CONTRAST

“Brotherly Love” – Ples & Azim

“Love and Marriage” – Gary & Emily

“Love and Romance” – Mark & Monica



Unconditional Love

Ryan's Struggle with Spirituality

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“Parental love is, in some ways, the closest we come to unconditional love, because we tend to love them even when they do what we don't like.”

– PSYCHOLOGIST FRANCES VAUGHAN

“People are the greatest obstacle to love. We get in our own way... our needs, our desires, our fantasy images of how it ought to be... the requirement that the other person meet the model that you have in your mind. Those are all big obstacles.”

– JUNGIAN ANALYST JAMES HILLMAN

What did you learn about unconditional and parental love from the Johnson family's story?

Describe the bonds between parent and child in this family. What words would you use to characterize the relationship?

Are there limits to unconditional love? Under what kinds of circumstances is unconditional love desirable, possible, and/or beneficial? Can you think of circumstances under which unconditional love might be harmful?

How do each of the Johnsons show love of God or their religion? Is their commitment to religion a force that binds them to one another, or does it separate them from one another?

Is unconditional love an ideal, or can it be a reality?

What insights did you gain about your own family relationships from the Johnson family?

Therese says, “You know, a parent wants to fix things for their kids. But sometimes it's a greater act of love, I feel, to step back and let them bleed a little...let them come to it on their own.” Under what circumstances is allowing a child to make his or her own decisions an act of love? Under what circumstances might it be harmful or irresponsible?

If Ryan had chosen to pursue Buddhism, where might the family have found common ground? How does a parent disapprove of a child's choice and still continue to love that child unconditionally? How does a child disapprove of a parent's values and still love that parent unconditionally?

How did the Johnsons show love? What, specifically, did they do or say?

[Top](#)
Ryan Johnson

COMPARE & CONTRAST

- “Brotherly Love” – Ples & Azim
- “Love and Family” – The Swann Family
- “Love and Friendship” – Boris & Camilla



The Communal Heart

Conspirare Choir

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

COMMENTARY

“We are made for a delicate network of relationships. We are meant to complement each other.”

– BISHOP DESMOND TUTU

“We must love one another or die.”

– W.H. AUDEN

“People who are dying need to know the meaning of their lives... Very often they realize that love is the answer to that question of what really gives their lives meaning.”

– RABBI ALAN LEW

What did you learn about love and community from the Conspirare story?

What happens to an audience when they witness the power of people coming together in a unified, connected performance?

What insights did you gain about your own relationship(s) or experiences from Conspirare?

Think about the meaning of the choir’s name, Conspirare, “to breathe together.” For singers, there is a literal meaning here. How would you describe the non-literal connotations? Are there other places in your life where you might apply that metaphor? What would it look like?

In your view, how was Craig able to inspire talented soloists to voluntarily give up individual recognition in order to create a unified whole of the assembled talent? Where in your life do you see individuals working together toward one unified goal? What does participating in that kind of effort feel like?

Are there other familiar circumstances in which we experience “a communal heart”? A sports team? A parade? In school? A theater group? In business? Politics? A funeral? Where have you experienced “a communal heart”? What did it feel like? How did you benefit? How did others benefit from your participation?

How did members of Conspirare show love? What, specifically, did they do or say?

COMPARE & CONTRAST

- “Love and War” – Soldiers
- “Love and Altruism” – B.A.C.A.
- “Love, Land, and Community” – Holyoke

[Top](#)
Conspirare, in rehearsal



Love, Land, and Community

Holyoke Community Garden

THE CONCEPTS OF LOVE

THE FEELINGS OF LOVE

THE EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE

What did you learn about love, friendship, and community from the Holyoke story?

What insights did you gain about your own experience from this segment?

How did the gardeners and organizers in Holyoke demonstrate love of the land and love of community? What did they do?

Do you think there is an essential love between the individual and nature? The community and its environment? In your view, what are the sources of the bond between people and nature or people and the land on which they live?

How does ethnic identity bring people together? How does it separate people into "us" and "them"?

How did members of Nuestras Raices use their own love of the land to benefit and empower their community? How might you use the things that you love to benefit and empower the people in your community?

Describe the ripples created by love in this story. How does the choice of a few to put their love of land into action affect the community as a whole?

Top
Nashalee Pagan and her family

Right
Nuestras Raices community garden in Holyoke, Massachusetts



COMPARE & CONTRAST

"The Communal Heart" – Conspirare

Mandy Inhofer



Boris Bazala and
Camilla Williams
in their home

Activity

The words on the following page are taken from *The Mystery of Love*. There are empty boxes so that you or others can fill in any words that you think should be added. The page may be photocopied and used in several different ways:

Focus for Viewing

Cut up the words and hand one to each participant. Ask them to watch the film with special attention to the word (or concept) that they have in front of them. After viewing, ask each person to share their word and what they learned about it.

Concepts

Distribute the full grid and ask participants to circle the concepts they see as most related to love. Invite people to share their answers and comment on the similarities or differences in their choices.

Changing the Action

Distribute copies of the full grid and ask participants to cut out the “be”, “ing”, and “ed” boxes. In small groups, let people add the cutouts to existing words in the grid and talk about how it changes the concept. For example, what is the difference between “appreciate” and to feel “appreciated,” or between “hear” and to “be heard”?

Ask people which concepts they find easier and why: those that put them in the role of acting or those that put them in the role of receiving.

Love Poems

Invite participants to use words from the grid as a basis for constructing poems that reflect their reaction to the film. Invite people to share their poems and publish them on *The Mystery of Love* website: www.themysteryoflove.org.

Word of the Week

Reproduce the grid as a take-home handout. Invite people to discuss and/or practice one concept per week with their loved ones. Or let each family member pick one word from the grid, and on that family member’s week (or meal or night), the family will discuss that word. Be sure that discussions include the meaning of the word (so everyone ends up with a common understanding or at least understands one another’s definitions), as well as how each person might act to express that concept.

listen	feel	express	connect
respect	appreciate		unconditional
care	attend	give	receive
open	passionate		vulnerable
trust	support	desire	hear
visible	understand		comfort
embrace	strong	forever	safe
powerful	beautiful		compassionate
accept	holy	ecstatic	heal
be	_ing		_ed

TAKING ACTION

Together with other audience viewers, brainstorm actions that you might take as an individual and that people might do as a group. If you need help getting started, you might begin your list with these suggestions:

- Pick one person with whom you might not otherwise talk about love and arrange to have a conversation with them.
- Because it leaves time for reflection and correction, writing can be an effective way to build or heal a relationship. With the intention of building or healing your relationship, write a letter to someone you love. To become involved with the Fetzer Institute's Campaign for Love & Forgiveness letter-writing initiative, go to www.fetzer.org/LoveandForgive.
- Visit www.themysteryoflove.org to see how others are taking steps toward a more loving life, and share your own story of love.
- Determine which volunteer or nonprofit organizations in your community perform acts of loving kindness or increase people's capacity to act in loving ways. Find out how you can get involved and/or support their work.
- Assess the following areas of your life and think of at least one specific thing you could do in each area that would allow you to act in a loving way. Commit to at least one of the actions on your list in your:
 - school or work
 - immediate family
 - extended family
 - neighborhood (including people with whom you engage at places like the grocery store, gas station, etc.)
 - team, civic organization, religious congregation, or volunteer group

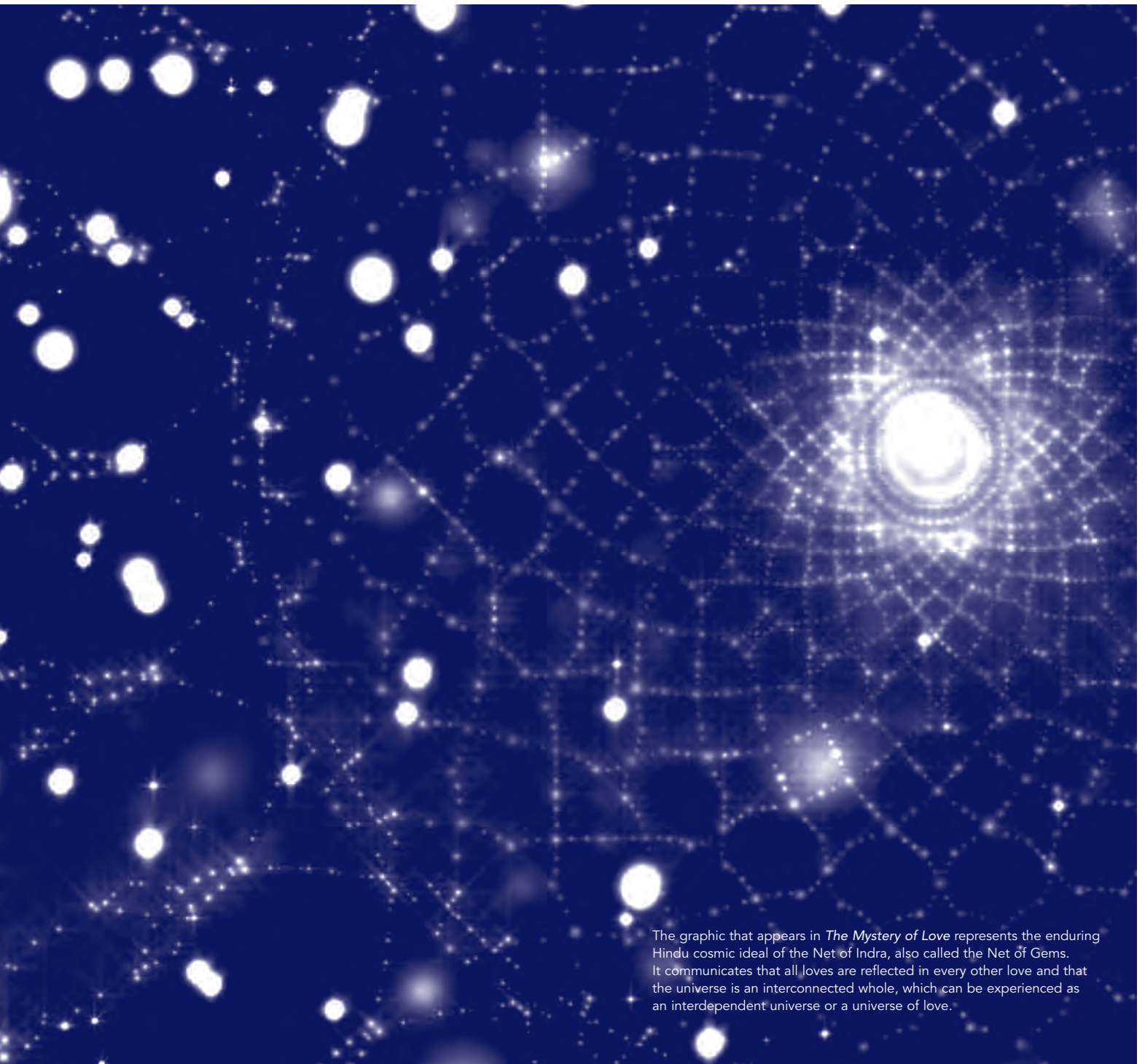
As you decide on your actions you'd like to take, take some time to see if there are other people in your group who would be interested in supporting each other's projects, or even combining projects and working together.
- Research your religion's teachings about love or acts of loving kindness. Share your findings with your congregation.
- Host Anna Deavere Smith challenges viewers, saying, "Most of us cannot survive, and do not want to live a single day, without love. We can make a choice to live life through the lens of fear, of separation, competition, and loss. Or we can see the same world differently, through the lens of love and connection." Pick an area of your life or community to approach with a new vision. See if you can begin to make that vision concrete by creating it in art. Host an art exhibition with contributions from everyone in the group who is willing to share.
- Host Anna Deavere Smith says, "We need to recognize and honor equally the many loves that help create a healthy life." Make a list of all the different kinds of love that you think are needed to create and sustain a healthy life. Make a ripple chart for one or more of the items on your list (i.e., on each ripple emanating from your source, indicate who would or could be touched). As each person in the group shares his or her chart, make special note of how many people can be affected by a single source or act.



Host
Anna Deavere Smith

For example, perhaps love of music is on your list. That love might be expressed by choosing to listen to music rather than talk radio in the car when you do errands with the kids. Each trip, someone else gets to pick the style of music they want to hear. Might that action improve your mood, and in turn, the mood of others as you interact with them more calmly? Or might your kids' growing ability to appreciate different styles of music translate into an openness to kids from different ethnic groups in their school?

Imagine the possibilities...



The graphic that appears in *The Mystery of Love* represents the enduring Hindu cosmic ideal of the Net of Indra, also called the Net of Gems. It communicates that all loves are reflected in every other love and that the universe is an interconnected whole, which can be experienced as an interdependent universe or a universe of love.

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www.activevoice.net

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The Fetzer Institute is a private foundation established by John E. Fetzer, a broadcast pioneer and former owner of the Detroit Tigers. The Institute's mission is to foster awareness of the power of love and forgiveness in the emerging global community. Informed by both scientific rigor and spirituality, the Institute's research and education programs explore how love and forgiveness effect transformation and healing for individuals and communities.

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