Too Much Romanticism Can be Dangerous

Unrealistic Expectations in Relationships Often Lead to Disaster

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Have you ever wondered why fairy-tales are so beautiful and why they catch our attention so much.

It is a pretty simple answer. Everything is perfect in fairy-tale land, everyone loves one another and the good characters always win over those who are evil.The sky is clean, the grass is green and the lakes are shiny. When the princesses get stuck in towers princes come on their horses to marry them.

Isn't that what we call "romance?" Dreaming with the eyes clouded and living in a sugar-coated world, flying all-over the sky on white and fluffy clouds and believing in the romantic love-scenes from the movies and following them with dreamy eyes?

From this is what we call being free of the real world and living in your own desired world, imagining sweet things and rejecting the reality simply because you are in love? Then we realize that love is much harder than we thought it would be.

Why would you live the larger part of your life in an imaginative space and dream about perfect behaviors of the people? Too many people make their own story with their own heroes rather than dealing with reality.

It is not bad to be romantic, it helps to solve a lot of issues and many times being romantic has saved many relationships, but in high doses, romanticism will show its bad side.

Too many wishes, too many dreams, too many commitments and promises that bring out the dark and annoying sides of a relationship.

Many people overload their partners with an excessive and possessive love, with a love that asks too much from the partner, a love that was born from a fairy-tale dream, where things are the way you want them to be.

In confronting reality, people see that they are ignored by their partners, that things are much more complicated than the movies and that it's almost impossible to understand one another. It can be difficult for couples to understand that this is the result of living in a separate world. They may have many hopes and wishes for their relationship that may be good for the heart and soul, but none are proven to come true.

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People that think of themselves as romantic often think that loving their partner is all that keeps them alive. They think about this person day and night, and put all their hopes and future plans in this person. They transform a normal person into an idyllic love-god, a mission that no mortal can fully realize. While spending the time with the partner, the romantic person usually becomes so excited and agitated, that he or she feels almost dizzy and thinks that the "romantic" and perfect world still surrounds them. A person like this doesn't even have time to listen to their partner's thoughts and problems.

Being so preoccupied with feelings and sensations, they indeed forget about the real person that is sitting next to him or her, and start living with an imaginary copy.

This feeling is so strong that the person expects his partner to behave the same way, and prove how great his love is. Commonly, all the problems in a relationship start right here.

With couples, when one of the individuals is too romantic, and the other doesn't know how to show his love in the same sickly-sweet way, love transforms into jealousy-driven arguments. High expectations and demands of maximum love and understanding cause people to become nervous, stressed and bored. Because of the inability to give what is asked of them, they start looking for new interests and new people. People that hopefully won't be so possessive and won't ask for so much self-abandonment and sacrifice.

Even the most romantic person arrives at a moment in life when he is tired of producing unrealistic expectations, tired of giving wishful traits to the the person that he or she loves. People should understand that asking too much can frighten or scare a person. People love freedom and independence, that's the way we have been created, to think more about ourselves and to take care of others, but without being possessive.

Some dreaming of sweet love isn't all bad, but it can result in nothing else except a broken heart. Put reality first, fight the difficulties, and look at the real relationships. Leave romanticism for another time. The world we live in is a material and cruel one, it's hard to keep love and to be happy. People cheat on each other and you can barely trust anyone. Do you really think it's the proper time for dreaming with glazed-over eyes?

The War on Video Games

Those who Oppose Violent Video Games Fail to See the Benefits Games Provide

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Since 1972, when video games came out, there have been people trying to dispose of the violent video games such as "Mortal Kombat" or "Doom." Controversial video games started on the Personal Computer. The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) was created to rate games on a scale from Early Childhood (EC) to Adults Only (AO). The first couple of controversial video games were primarily controversial because of sexual content. As the video game franchise has evolved to console gaming, games have become more and more violent.

When violent or controversial video games are mentioned, the first game some may think of is "Grand Theft Auto III" (GTA3). Although this was not the first of its kind, it was the first popular one. In some countries this game has even been banned! Violent games similar to "Grand Theft Auto III" and "Doom" made some parents furious. Parents felt that this senseless violence was corrupting their children by exposing them to violence.

On March 6, 2005 Correspondent Ed Bradley from CBS aired that 18-year-old Devin Moore who had played GTA day and night for months, murdered 3 men. This gave people such as Attorney Jack Thompson, a long-time crusader against violent video games, the upper hand on the war on violent games. Since then, others have done the same, blaming violent acts on violent video games claiming, "I was just reenacting something from a videogame."

A study done by the American Psychological Association concluded in their "Journal of Personality and social Psychology" that:

"Playing violent video games like Doom, Wildenstein 3D or mortal Kombat can increase a person's aggressive thoughts, feelings and behavior both in laboratory settings and actually life . . . violent video games can be more harmful than violent television and movies because they are interactive, very engrossing and require the player to identify with the aggressor."

My own mother hates all the blood in a Mature rated game I play called "Straglehold," a fun but senselessly violent game.

Universit of Southern California sociologist Karen Sternheimer said, "We need to look beyond video games for the roots of youth violence." www.Physorg.com held its own study.

They took a group of people and had them play "Asheron's Call 2" for a month, adding up to a total of 56 hours, and found no psychological difference between the people who played the game and people who don't generally play games at all.

I use video games as an outlet for my anger; it is not the cause of it. If I have a really bad day at school, where everyone is picking on me and they make me angry, I go home and play "Halo 3" and shoot some aliens in the face. Isn't that better than getting a real gun and shooting those who made me angry at school?

The act of playing violent video games is harmless, and it can affect different people in different ways. Blaming video games for violent crimes is ludicrous. I once read in a "Time" magazine that playing certain games can actually help surgeons before they go into surgery because it warms up their hand eye coordination.

Although all video games are not guaranteed to enhance hand eye coordination, most violent video games do require at least some tactical thinking. Video games are a virtual art form and are just as much a form of art as music, film, or painting. And all of those art forms actually go into making a video game, so to say violent video games perpetuate violence is like saying music, movies or paintings with violent content all incite violence.

Students Speak Out about Violence in Kalamazoo

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describes these groups, and that the term "family" is more accurate. Senior Anthony Stuckey asserts that a there is a difference between a gang and a "family."

"Family is different. You would give them everything, you would do whatever it takes; you would die for your family. You wouldn't do all that for a gang... Your family is the one you keep close," said Stuckey.

In recent years, numerous organized groups of youth have sprung up in Kalamazoo. Stuckey explains how these groups often form, and how multiple groups sometimes band together.

"You just make up a little clique for the people you be around, but if you need to come together, you come together," said Stuckey.

Some students feel that these smaller cliques are not "real" gangs. One Norrix junior feels that in Kalamazoo many of the cliques of people are not really gangs. He believes that some of the groups in Kalamazoo are "poser gangs" compared to the larger gangs in big cities such as the Bloods and Crips.

"[The gangs in Kalamazoo] All a bunch of posers. This is Kalamazoo, not 'the hood.' All these kids making up gangs to try an be cool," expressed this LN junior.

Rolland acknowledges that in Kalamazoo there aren't any large gangs such as in Los Angeles or Chicago, but that the gangs in Kalamazoo are certainly real.

"Ain't no Crypts and Bloods and stuff, just little cliques [in Kalamazoo]," said Rolland. However, Rolland also expressed that regardless of the size, "All of them real. Ain't no fake gangs."

So why are so many young people forming and joining these cliques? One of the main reasons why young people are drawn to these groups is because they offer a sense of support and belonging. Senior Marla Bowser believes that the sense of security offered by a gang and a lack of love at home influence a young person's decision to join a gang.

"They [young people in gangs] know somebody has their back. If they aren't getting the love they need at home, they can get it from their clique," said Bowser.

Stuckey agrees that when you are in a "family" they have your back no matter what.

"You don't even have to ask, they're there [for you]," said Stuckey.

Some students think that peer pressure has a lot to do with getting involved in gangs and that some individuals get involved only because they want to do what their friends are doing. One LN junior said that she thinks the reason some people get involved with gangs is because they want to be accepted by their friends.

"They are just trying to fit in with their friends and act hard. Some people don't even know what they are doing," said this LN junior.

As to why many of these cliques of young people often feel the need to resort to violence to get their point across, some students feel that violence is employed because they see it as the most effective way of making people listen to you. Rolland recognizes that there are other methods, but that sometimes people think violence is the only way.

"They [people] ain't gonna listen if you're just arguing, you gotta show them," explained Rolland.

> "Things might calm down a little, but they ain't gonna stop."
> -Darrell Hobson

One alternative to using violence is to bring conflicting groups together to work things out. Some students believe that this might be beneficial, but others feel that it will only temporarily calm things. Senior Darrell Hobson believes that getting people together to talk might offer a temporary solution, but not a permanent fix to the violence.

"Things might calm down a little, but they ain't gonna stop," said Hobson.

Although some students believe that violence between groups of young people will always exist, other students believe that the violence can be confronted and things can be changed. Some students agree that the main reason people get involved in gangs and street violence is because they are bored and do not have enough to do.

Shannon makes a strong point about there not being many activities for young people to get involved in.

"There is not a lot of stuff to do. Maybe if there was more stuff to do there would be less violence and people wouldn't be out on the streets all the time. I'm not saying it would solve all of them, but if we had more things to do then it would decrease some of the problems," said Shannon.

However, other students feel that even if more activities were offered the fighting would still continue. Rolland believes that more get-togethers would only intensify the conflict.

"[Bringing people together would be] creating more sparks. It ain't going to stop. I see it as a problem, but in another way it's life. You just gotta live and move on," expressed Rolland.

Junior Elizabeth Shorter also believes that getting groups together and offering more activities will only further aggravate the situation.

"[More activities would] make it worse because then everyone would be around each other and people who didn't like each other would have a reason to fight," said Shorter.

Most students agreed that younger kids are heavily influenced by their older peers. Much of the violence today is occurring among the youth, and it will continue to occur as long as the younger kids continue to be exposed to it.

Senior Jacobi Washington feels that younger kids get involved in gangs and violence mainly because they see their older siblings and friends involved in it, and they want to do what their siblings and friends are doing.

"They [young kids] are going to try an do the same thing the older people do. They're going to think all that stuff is tight, they're going to want to do it too. They'll get together a clique, call it a gang, and that's how it all starts," said Washington.

Students expressed that one way the violence can be confronted is by keeping the younger children away from this activity.

Stuckey said, "You could tell the younger people to stop, then they [the teens involved now] would be the last of the generation."

On the other hand he doesn't see this as a realistic idea because he recognizes that keeping younger kids out of it would be almost impossible.

"It ain't gonna happen because they [younger kids] want to do it too," said Stuckey.

Even though some people accept the violence occurring among young people in our community as a part of life, the violence has resulted in five deaths in the past year alone. Many students at Norrix are not content to let the violence continue and are passionate in their conviction that something must be done to confront the violence.

Senior Anya Dompier is one of the students who feels strongly that something must be done about the situation.

"It's so sad how it starts with something so little and people end up dead. It's not worth it," Dompier stressed.

Junior Ashley Davis also recognizes the crucial importance of addressing this conflict in our community. It is highly upsetting to her to see people her age getting drawn into the violence, and she tries her best to stay out of the drama. She also expressed her frustration with the media for seldom recognizing individuals doing positive things.

"A lot of people in the hood are doing positive stuff in their life…A lot of these boys [and girls] involved in gangs have a lot of potential, it's not that they're stupid or dumb or anything. How come we never acknowledge people doing positive stuff? We can't fix it if we always focus on the negative," said Davis.

So what can we do as students and as a community to help resolve this crucial issue in our community? Many students believe that the solution must come from the youth and that the young people are crucial in initiating change.

Shannon said, "It all starts from self and what their mind state is."

If young people with a positive mind set are able to influence their peers and younger kids, perhaps we can begin to address this problem.

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Dompier also stresses that having a positive outlook is crucial to resolving this problem.

"If you have that positive outlook and try and bring them [your friends] into it – try and give them a different, better, happier perspective. It could help," said Dompier.

Violence among youth in this community cannot be ignored, nor should the opinions and ideas of youth who have been directly affected by this violence be overlooked. It is tragic when young people with their whole lives ahead of them are killed by these "bullets without names," or any other violent action.