**Bond Baby Bond**

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Previously, I have written about Dopamine, “The Love Drug” that draws a couple together in heated lust and passion. The only problem with this chemical is that it is fairly short-lived. Yes, it feels wonderful at the time, but if we were to have this chemical running through our brains and veins every day we would not be able to sleep, eat regularly, or focus on anything productive. It literally wears our bodies out.

The brain neurotransmitter that takes over for Dopamine in a long-term relationship is Oxytocin. This is the major bonding chemical. Oxytocin is all about attachment, nurture, love and romance. It increases empathy and builds trust. Oxytocin actually lowers blood pressure, reduces stress and promotes a feeling of safety and security. It is the chemical that not only bonds couples together but also bonds parents to their children. Although it is found in both sexes, it is more prevalent in women.

Vasopressin on the other hand is the bonding chemical that is more predominant in males. It manifests as protector of the turf, provider for the family and the gallant defender of what is “his.” This chemical is the one that tends to produce monogamy, loyalty and commitment. Research now shows that the wide range in Vasopressin receptor genes, may account for the differences in male faithfulness. Like the broad spectrum from total polygamy to total monogamy, the Vasopressin gene also comes in a variety of lengths – at least seventeen lengths to be specific. Men with the longest genes are shown to be the most reliable and trustworthy partners. This is a case in which length really does matter.

Every man and woman has a slightly different mixture of brain chemicals. Generally, women bond easier and more quickly than men, but not always. Like hormones, these neurotransmitters fluctuate depending on our age, stress level and relationship content. There are times and seasons in your life when you will feel closer to your partner than other times.

The good news is that we know how to increase one of the bonding chemicals. Oxytocin can be boosted in both sexes by increasing certain behaviors. If you are interested in developing intimacy and closeness in your relationship, there are specific things you can do. Below is a list of activities that you and your partner can think about adding to your regular routine to keep you happily bonded.

1. Hug and hold (for at least 7 seconds) every day
2. Look into each other’s eyes when you communicate
3. Sit next to each other with your legs touching
4. Hold hands as often as possible
5. Put your arm around each other when you are standing or sitting
6. Smile at each other
7. Spoon in bed naked
8. Massage each other’s feet, neck and shoulder
9. Kiss
10. Make Love!