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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*

## The Love Revolution<sup>1</sup>

*Suzanna Smith<sup>2</sup>*

If you look at television programs, listen to popular music, or go to the movies, you are likely to be bombarded with messages about the importance of romance, not only in your life but in everyone else's as well. For the most part, life seems to be about falling in love—finding, courting, and winning the devotion of the target of your affection!

Today, we have high expectations of our romantic partners and our spouses, much more so than couples in the past. According to family historian Stephanie Coontz, for thousands of years, marriage was more about bringing together in-laws from two families than it was about finding a mate or having children. Marriage was an economic investment and a political alliance, joining the capital, labor, tools and contacts of two families.

In the 18th century the idea of a "love match" quickly replaced traditional marriage in Western Europe and North America. Suddenly couples devoted more emotional energy to their marriages than to their extended kin. They expected more of their partners—relying on them almost exclusively for intimacy and companionship. These

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were the seeds of the modern ideal—the spouse as close friend and romantic partner (Coontz, 2004).

Generally speaking, these historical changes have made a marriage a unique and treasured personal relationship— although, as Coontz points out, the emotional weight placed on marriage may also make it less stable (Coontz, 2004).

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