

THE SCIENCE OF FINDING YOUR SOULMATE

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Love is hard. Few of us can escape its scheming tentacles reaching every aspect of our lives, bringing anxiety and uncertainty. Science can't help you find love, but we can use technical mumbo-jumbo to estimate your chances of finding THE ONE, and how to know when you've met them.

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Finding a Needle in a Haystack, Among a Barn of Haystacks, Set on Fire

A former NASA roboticist tackled the probability of finding your soulmate, among other quotidian quandaries in his book "What If: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions". Intensive number crunching revealed bleak prospects for romantics. Even the most optimistic conclusion, consisting of wild conjecture, placed your odds at 10,000 to 1.

It does paint a grim picture, but before you pack your bags and start your new life as a hermit, it is worth noting that the author considers certain unrealistic possibilities. Like your soulmate might not have been born yet, or will be dead by the time you hit puberty, or might be a shaman healing a hunter's wife in the Amazons. Setting more practical parameters does inject some hope back into the mix.

Networking Matters

There's a theory called "Six Degrees of Separation" that postulates that every person on the planet is connected to another through a chain of acquaintances, namely six or fewer acquaintances. So, essentially you are on average six introductions away from any other person in the world. That might apply to your potential love interest as well, but to meet him/her, you will have to know the right combination of six other people.

That may be something

to keep in mind the next time you are invited to your paternal uncle's step-daughter's boyfriend's cousin's wedding. That annoying *kalojaam*-inhaling douche might just end up being the link you needed to meet your other half.

Or if you've already found your promised one, this might be the proof you need that the heavens parted, the stars aligned and all the pain and misfortune were hurled at you to bring the two of you together; a humbling notion, one that warrants new appreciation.

Moonwalk Your Way to His/Her Heart

Psychologists have shown that it

takes between 90 seconds to 4 minutes to decide if you are attracted to someone. Research suggests it has little to do with what you say and instead depends on body language and the tone and speed of your voice.

So maybe the next time a sore throat makes you sound like an inebriated James Earl Jones, you'll see it as a blessing in disguise. Or maybe there's a fast talking chipmunk hopped up on caffeine and dripping with swagger waiting for you just around the corner. You never know.

Baby, Is It the Knife Or Am I Happy to See You?

The Two-Factor Theory of Emotion states that when an emotion is felt, there's a physiological reaction. You then scan your immediate surroundings for emotional cues to label that physiological reaction. And humans, being the imperfect

creatures that we are, sometimes misconstrue the clues and misinterpret what caused them.

Hormones like adrenaline and dopamine are released when we are in a state of fear or anxiety, but they are also associated with the feeling of love, which may allow for the Suspension Bridge Effect. It theorises that if we are in a stress-filled or perilous situation, in the presence of a potential love interest, we might mistake fear or apprehension for affection or arousal. The example it derives its name from involves one stuck in the middle of a suspension bridge that's swaying precariously, with someone at the end of the bridge. He or she then mistakes the fear felt due to instability for attraction.

If that got you wondering whether it really were sparks you felt when you first met your better half, look back and search for the tell-tale signs and the subtle clues. Were you in a hostage situation at the time? Because dating your kidnapper is a no-no, even if they have nice eyes or high cheek bones. Or maybe the metaphorical butterflies in your stomach were just hunger, in which case you need a mango and not a soulmate.

For those feeling discouraged by this article, or those feeling like their love has been belittled, trampled upon and thrown to the side of the road like regular trash, it's important to remember that "love," in the end, is a social construct conjured up by us. There are no road maps to love, nor can you strictly define it. Maybe you had to battle against seemingly insurmountable odds and climb mountains to be with your loved one. Maybe you were simply meant to be. Regardless, love is what you want it to be, when you want it to be. So the next time your lack of a date for New Year's Eve gets you down, think of all the free time you have instead and just take a nap.

Adit Hasan likes to dabble, making him jack of all trades, master of none. The only constants in his life are penguins and mangoes. Send mixtape to facebook.com/adit.hasan.3

