

Love at first sight: Is it myth or reality?

Got a feel' inside (can't explain)

A certain kind (can't explain)

I feel hot-cold (can't explain)

Way down my soul yeah (can't explain)

The Who 1965

Charlie Simpson was sitting in his sociology class, idly contemplating the evolution of mankind. He glanced at the entrance where all his fellow students were rushing in to beat the bell. Suddenly, there she was.

"I immediately dropped my pen," Simpson recalled. "My heartbeat went up really fast. From that one moment, I wasn't aware of anything else but her."

According to some, what Simpson experienced was love at first sight (LAFS), a non-contagious disease that seems to afflict those who are romantically inclined.

Simpson himself believes this, saying "it was the first time I ever felt that way. She walked into class and sat down,

and I just stared at her for 40 minutes. I feel funny inside whenever I'm around her."

Simpson is not an isolated victim of LAFS, nor is he alone in describing "funny" feelings

Story by
Eric Bottjer

inside. "It feels like you've got a food processor turned on right here," said 22-year-old Scott Beadle, pointing at his chest.

OK, so now we know the disease and its symptoms. You see someone, and you feel "funny" inside, maybe like a food processor. You stare at this person. Perhaps you even drool a little, or temporarily lose control of your motor functions.

But doesn't this always happen when one sees an attractive member of the opposite sex? Isn't love at first sight (LAFS) just your usual case of lust at first sight (SEX)?

"No, it's different," said Wende Brummett, 18, a music major. "It's their personality, the way they carry themselves as well as their looks."

Brummett describes her first meeting with her boyfriend as



"love at first conversation. It wasn't exactly love at first sight, but it only took a few minutes."

Beadle said he has been smitten twice by LAFS. "And both times I got the girl," he says. From this revelation, we consider another possibility: LAFS can strike a person more than once.

University psychology Professor Norman Sundberg believes this is indeed possible. "As a person grows up, I think they unconsciously develop a set of values that attract them to another person. For men, there could be dozens of women who possess these values, and vice-versa of course. Once in a while, they happen to meet."

More than a believer in LAFS, Sundberg recalls being a victim while attending the University of Minnesota in the mid-1940s. "It was a very important incident in my life," he remembered. "I was waiting to go into my statistics class when I saw her. It was quite a look we exchanged, sort of like in the movies."

Sundberg said he is still infatuated with the same woman. "We've been married 38 years," he smiled.

A happy ending to be sure, but there is a dark side to LAFS. The odds of meeting one of your dozen potential "perfect mates" are mind boggling, considering they are mixed in with 5 billion other, less desirable humans.

Plus, even if you happen to meet your dream mate, odds are even longer he or she will go gaga over you. You may be like a contestant on Wheel of Fortune eyeing Vanna White,

damned to an existence of look but don't touch

Others doubt the wisdom of putting yourself through such mental and physical torture. They contend LAFS is a myth, a figment of the romantic's imagination.

"I liken it to the '10' syndrome, where what's-his-name was obsessed with Bo Derek," said sixth-year senior Nick Beres. "It's based solely on looks, which makes it a contradiction of terms. Love at first sight is basically sex in disguise."

Psychology Professor Ray Hyman offers a more professional opinion. "Psychology professors don't know anything about love," he said. "You need to go down the hall and talk to Robert Mauro, who teaches social psychology."

"Sorry, don't know a thing about it," Mauro said. "You should go see Norm Sundberg."

Sundberg, seeing I had encountered a vicious circle, invited me to his Survey of Psych Therapy class. "We'll poll the students and see what they think," he suggested.

Sundberg asked his class, "How many of you believe in love at first sight?" Nineteen hands went up. "How many believe it's a myth?" Thirty-two this time, with booing from the minority. One person declined to vote, saying, "It's an ambiguous question."

The "realists" had won, but only by a split decision.

Having never experienced LAFS, I had a mild curiosity when starting the story. Now,

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