

For love or money

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Games children play

In this game love and money get mixed up. This will examine how and why some people get money and love mixed up and hence we have the development of the materialistic person. The parents of such people believe they can express their love to a child by giving it things. They may even say to the child, "Of course I love you look at all the things I have given (done) for you", or "I sent you to that expensive boarding school because I love you".

Most often these parents for what ever reason find it difficult to express feelings of love or affection to the child. Such parents may have had the same done to them, they may have a "Don't show your feelings" injunction, they may have their own closeness issues, they may equate affection feelings with sexual feelings and that scares them, they may just be self centred and have little interest in giving affection to the child because they want it themselves, and so on.



Human relationships

From such backgrounds parents can learn to give things instead showing love or affection. A prime example can be boarding school. "I have sent my daughter to a very expensive boarding school so she gets the best education", (and by the way it also gets her out of the way).

In this game, over time the child's bedroom ends up looking like a "Toys-r-us" outlet. The child gets a never ending series of toys and things with which it can play or be entertained by.

The problem with this game is that it half 'hits the spot'. This can trick both the parents and youngsters Child ego states. They think they are being shown love when in fact they are not. As we know all humans have a need for love. That need can only be fully met when it is shown to the person first hand (not mother telling the child that father loves her), face to face (not via email or even the phone to some extent), with emotion involved, and with some form of physical contact. If this happens then the Free Child need of the person for love is fully met and satisfied.



I sometimes hear clients say; "I know my father loved me, even though he never told me that", or "I used to over hear my father tell others how much he loved me but he never actually told me". Unfortunately these only half meet that Free Child need for love.

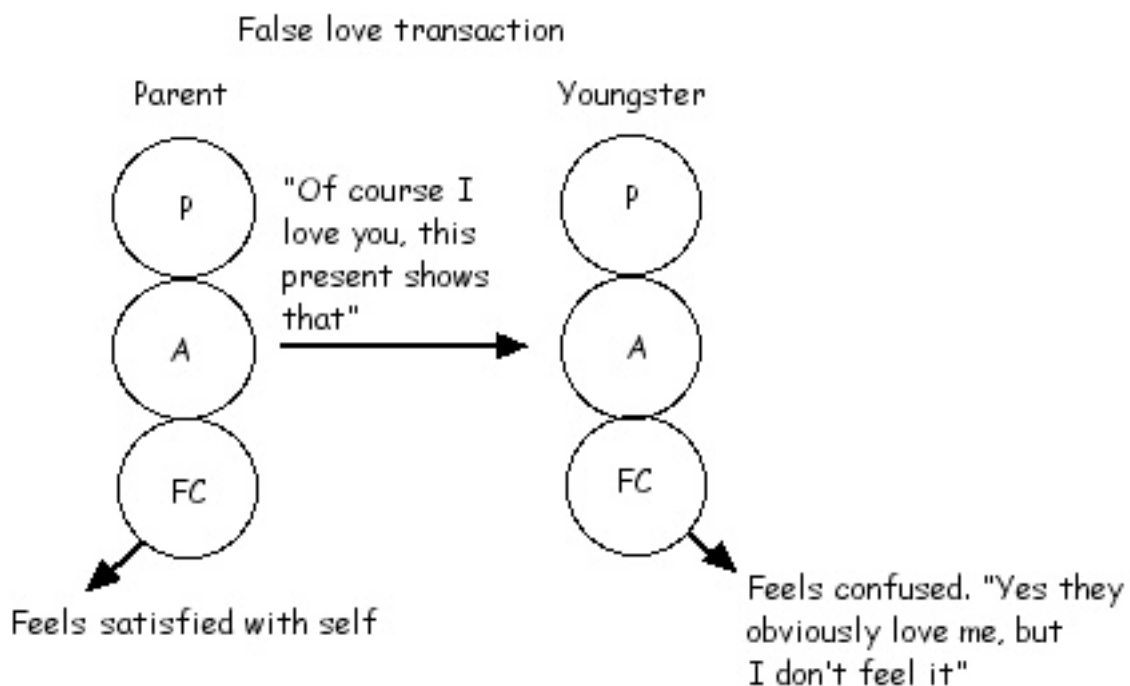
This is summed up well by Coleman & White (1988), "To clarify this point, consider the example of a parent and child playing a game of cards. We would invite such a parent to consider the following question : Are you playing cards with your child, or are you playing with your child and that just happens to be cards at the moment? Toys, games and play activities can provide an effective way of avoiding contact with a child. They can allow the parent and child to become side-tracked into the activity and avoid closeness, contact or openness with each other."(P13).



A derivative of the game, "for the love or money" is the game of "Childhood obesity". In this game love does not get mixed up with an expensive gift but instead love gets mixed up with food. The parent has the mistaken belief that it can express its love to a child by feeding it. Over time the child begins to take this belief on and when it feels full it kind of also feels loved. It is provided with lots of food and it eats the food in its desire to feel loved. Again this only half "hits the spot". For a brief while the Free Child need for love is met when it eats but it does not last because the need is not really getting met in the way I described above.

This can be illustrated with the false love transaction. It half 'works' and as a result confuses the child. In adulthood this can result in a person who is materialistic. They mistakenly believe that as they acquire more things then that equates to feeling loved. It works for a little while and then wears off and hence

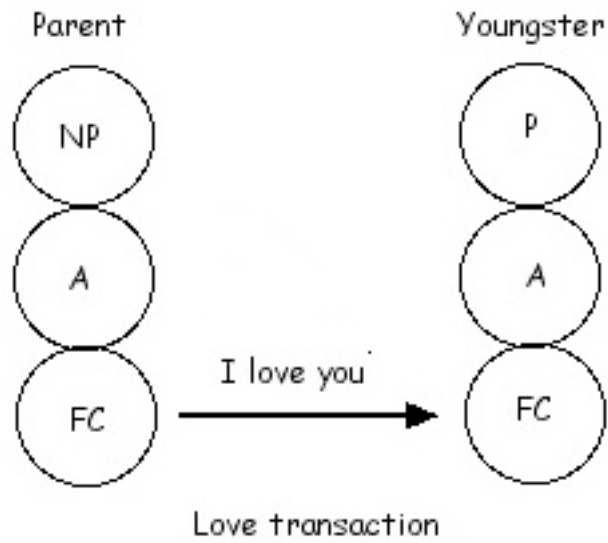
the subsequent need to acquire more possessions.



The other derivative of the game, "for the love or money" is the game of "Higher, faster, longer". In this instance love gets mixed up with achievement in the child's mind. "If I can jump higher, swim faster or run longer then mum will love me". "If I can win the gold medal then dad will finally notice me" The child believes that if it can achieve success in sport, business, education and so on then the parental love that it craves will finally be given. I would suggest that many high achievers are of this ilk. What person is going to be driven to do all that training if there was not an ulterior psychological motive in there as well.

Again, it works for a little while, and the parents may in fact provide the contact with the child when it does achieve. The problem is there is always another race, there is always more that could be achieved. The child never gets to the end and often high achievers are left with a hollow feeling as they look at their trophy cabinet, investment portfolio or degrees hanging on the wall.

Strangely enough the 'real' love transaction is remarkably simple which is illustrated on the next page. Every child wants this from mother and it really is as simple as a parent saying "I love you" with meaning to a child. However whilst it may be simple unfortunately that does not make it easy. It also includes things like feelings, closeness, trust and vulnerability just to name a few of those psychological things that can frighten all of us.



If I can perform just good enough
 then maybe they will love me.
 (The Olympian's creed)

Reference

Coleman, J & White, T.

1988. Playing with children. WPATA Bulletin. Pp 9 - 13.