

Love from afar

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A conundrum has arisen around the recent death of Steve Irwin the "Crikey" crocodile hunter and others like Michael Jackson. In this country of Australia there was an outpouring of grief from millions of people for Steve 'Crikey' Irwin and more recently for Michael Jackson.

This raises the question, How can people be grieving with crying and sadness and feelings of loss when they have never even met the man, let alone had some form of relationship with him? A good question indeed as it disputes one of the mainstays of psychological theory, the area of human attachment and separation.



Psychological theory says that if you form an emotional attachment to another person, when that person leaves or dies then you will suffer a grief reaction. One way of telling how attached you are to someone is by watching the depth of your grief reaction to their demise. If you go to a funeral and don't feel all that distraught or grief stricken then you did not have much of an emotional

attachment to that person at the time of their death.

The other aspect of human attachment theory is that to form an attachment of any substance you have to have spent a considerable amount of time with that person in their company, face to face and so forth. The less you do that the less the attachment there will be.



To form a significant attachment you have to spend time together in face to face contact. If that does not happen then the attachment can never fully mature.

How can there be millions grieving the death of Steve "Crikey" Irwin when they have never even met him. Psychological theory says they can't be, but they are. It appears that some cracks have arisen in John Bowlby's theories of attachment and separation.

Perhaps there is another form of attachment called "Love from Afar". We have all done this to someone we know very little and have strong feelings for yet will never have a relationship with for whatever reason. We love them from afar and sometimes those feelings can be quite strong.

The Child ego state is a smart little thing. To love from afar the Child ego state has to make up a fantasy. It can think about the person, maybe even daydream about them and so forth. Thus we have the attachment forming based on a fantasy. We are very good at tricking ourselves and lying to ourselves. But so what if you want to love someone from afar, go ahead and have a crush on them, and it seems that some sort of attachment can develop as a result. It becomes apparent that John Bowlby's theories of attachment are incomplete as this is a very real phenomena.



The perfect love - fantasy. You can have wonderful romantic dinners with those who you love and nothing bad ever happens.

The other thing about such love is its safety. You can love the school teacher, next door neighbour, man at work or the local seamstress and they can never hurt you. They can never reject you, shame you or say cutting remarks to you. They don't even know you exist. Perfect love? You can love someone and they can't hurt you.

However it seems safe to argue that love from afar may have a different quality to the love one has for a person who they live with day to day. Perhaps like anger or sadness we can have alternate types of love. Also the attachment that comes with romantic love from afar is quite different but a very real form of attachment none the less.