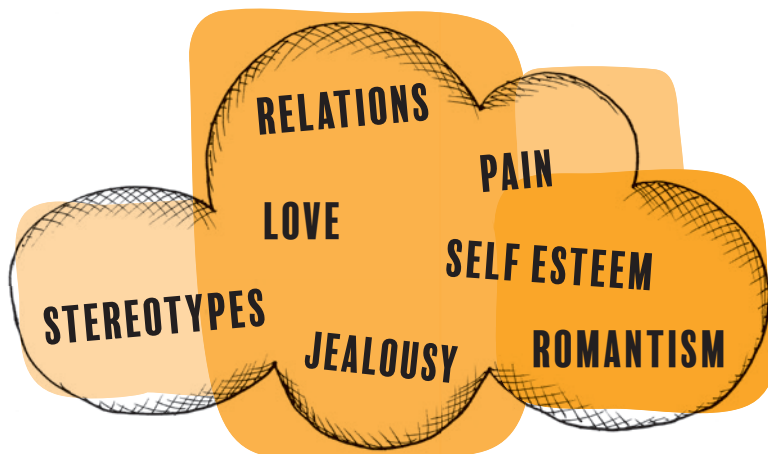


The myth of romantic love



Objectives

The aim is to reflect critically on the myth of romantic love that is present in our everyday lives (jokes, songs, phrases, etc.) and its effect on our lives, as well as to encourage a process of constant self-reflection on romantic love.

Content description

Recognising that romantic love is a construct that upholds and reinforces gender stereotypes and sometimes even violence against women. Certain jokes, songs, phrases, however innocent they may seem, can be the result of a patriarchal and oppressive mental framework.

To do this, we propose to look at the love stories we were told as children and those we tell our daughters: Snow White and Romeo and Juliet, for example, reproduce gender stereotypes.

Romantic love is not the healthiest way of showing love. In the workshops, we reflect on the different forms of love: self-love, love for our children, our family, our friends and our partners. We reinforce the idea of knowing how to preserve our ties (with family and friends).

Practical use

Let's start with a few tips

The laughter generated by the group encourages a climate of empathy and trust.

This workshop depends very much on the participants, on the confidence and freedom they have to express their ideas freely. **The recommendation is that this is not the first session** (as part of a pedagogical process).

Let's get started!

> **When the participants arrive, a few popular songs about romantic love will be played.** Participants who arrive early can also suggest new songs to add to the list provided by the facilitator.

Based on these songs, the participants are invited to reflect on their content. The facilitator guides the reflection with questions such as :

- How is love described in this song?
- How does this song make you feel?
- Does this song describe the relationship you have / would like to have?

This encourages questioning and reflection on other situations, phrases, or songs. This first sequence also enables participants to become aware of the extent of stereotypes in relationships.

> **After this first sequence,** the facilitator is invited to introduce the topic and the workshop. Given the highly personal nature of this workshop, it is strongly recommended that the facilitator encourages participants to show a great deal of patience and empathy in their discussions, in order to create a climate of trust.

> **To kick off the workshop,** the facilitator gathers the participants' previous ideas on «romantic love», and writes them on a blackboard or flipchart that can be viewed throughout the session.

> Participants **then** receive cards cut in half with phrases about romantic love. *For example:*

- *I've found / my other half*
- *Love will / tear us apart*
- *I love him / to death*
- *Love is / blind*

These phrases can be adapted to suit each context, drawing on local proverbs, expressions, and songs.

Once they have seen their cards, the participants have to look for the other half (the person holding the other half of the cut card) in the room. Once the pairs have found each other, they come together and discuss the sentences. The facilitator asks the participants if they have heard them before, what they think of them and if they have used them before.

Each pair is encouraged **to share their impressions and thoughts on these phrases.**

> **Based on these phrases,** the facilitator suggests a debate, by splitting the room in two: one side «I'm for it», one side «I'm against it», in the middle «I'm not sure».

This activity **creates a collective debate around these adages and phrases.** The participants explain their positions, and a debate takes place between the different visions of romantic love.

What is the final word?

The facilitator explains that **our representations of machismo are not always accurate**. It is expressed not only in extreme forms of violence (such as femicide) but also in familiar, everyday phrases that we ourselves have uttered.

The facilitator introduces the concept of self-love. The idea is to encourage participants to stop idealising romantic love, and that each woman should question her active role in reproducing these stereotypes (*e.g. making disparaging judgements about single mothers, women who don't have children, women who don't want relationships, etc.*).

Key words

LOVE
GENDER STEREOTYPES
EMPOWERMENT

