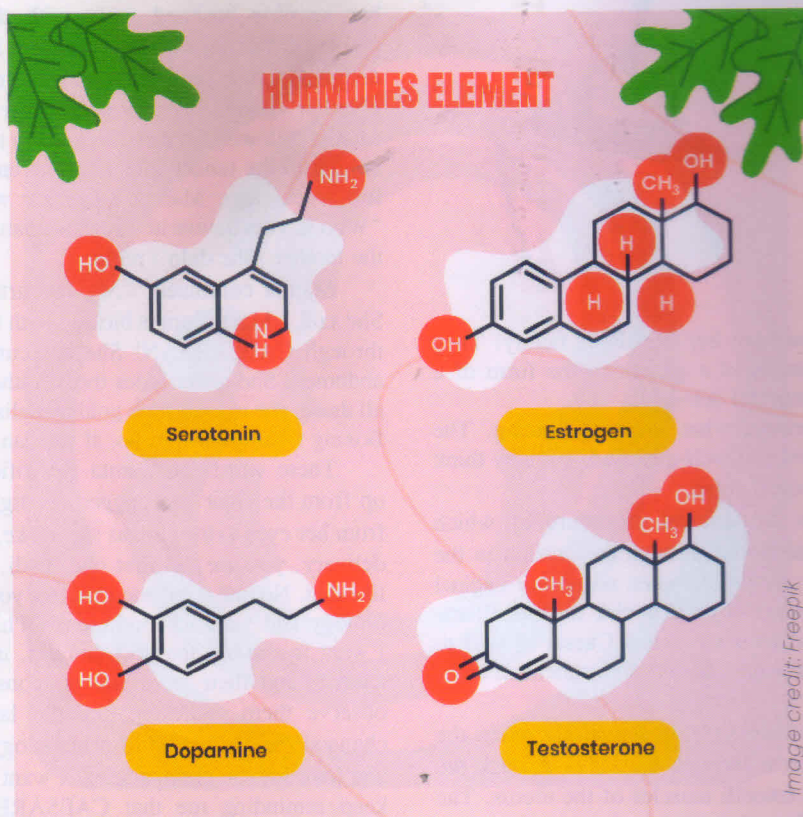


Beyond the Heart

The Chemical Cocktail of Love

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REMEMBER those magical moments of “La La Land” when Mia and Sebastian’s eyes meet, and the world suddenly seems to freeze, the crowd fades away, and the most mystical connection happens? The thrill of falling in love, the warmth of a tight hug, and the comfort of companionship are emotions beyond words can describe. But have you ever wondered what ignites this magical feeling? Is it the smile, the voice, the way they connect with you, or something else? What makes our hearts skip a beat when we are with the person we love? The answer lies in the intricate interplay of numerous signalling molecules that modulate the chemistry of our brains. At the heart of this complex network are three key players — a dash of dopamine, a sprinkle of oxytocin, and a pinch of serotonin that creates the intoxicating feeling of love.

Imagine you are on your first date. A candlelight dinner at a fancy place, a bunch of orchids, and conversation flowing. Your heart beats fast. Your pulse quickens, cheeks flush, and breathing gets shallow. You can’t help but feel a spark of attraction. That’s dopamine at work! It is a neurotransmitter

that transmits signals between the nerve cells and the brain. Dopamine holds the key to the joy and reward system of the brain, reinforcing motivation and attraction-driven actions. The attraction you feel on your first date motivates you to go for another, and then another. And suddenly you crave to be in touch as much as you can. This euphoric state, when we first fall in love, is triggered by a spike of dopamine in the brain. This is coupled by a release of cortisol and norepinephrine that makes us think about our romantic partner all the time. However, it’s not only about love. Dopamine release is also triggered in response to addictive substances like alcohol, cocaine, and opioids, causing a state of “high”. That’s why dopamine is called the pleasure molecule of our brain. This initial period of love is also linked with lust, and there is a surge in testosterone and estrogen along with dopamine. This chemical cocktail works together to trigger sexual desire between romantic partners.

Now what’s beyond this honeymoon phase? As the relationship matures, the initial euphoria subsides. The surge of dopamine is no longer there. This is the time the feeling