

LOVE

THE LAST CHAPTER

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR
SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS



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Written to accompany the feature-length version of “Love: The Last Chapter” (2021, Keller Media and the National Film Board of Canada).

INTRODUCTION

Social support, connection, love, and intimacy are central forces in enhancing the lives of older adults and are also viewed as a basic human need. Yet, Western society’s portrayal of love and intimacy often targets the young, attractive, and able bodied. Such representations have stigmatized concepts of sexuality in old age, resulting in ageist ideologies. As a social work student or social worker, overcoming the negative attitudes and beliefs directed towards vulnerable populations, such as older adults, requires you to understand the emotional, intimate, and sexual expression across one’s lifespan. By recognizing your own personal biases, you can better support older adults by exploring stigmatized topics to enhance an aging population’s quality of life.

In the field of social work, the primary mission is to enhance well-being and help individuals meet their basic needs. Theoretical frameworks such as relational-cultural theory and existential theory are critical in improving the understanding of older adults and have been illuminated in the film, ‘**Love: The Last Chapter**’. In particular, the relational-cultural theory proposes that throughout a lifespan, people grow and aspire for connection. The need for relationships and connectivity is important for supporting our psychological growth, overall health and general well-being. This theory strongly relates with ‘**Love: The Last Chapter’s**’ depiction of the lived experiences of the older adults presented, which we can discuss in the section outlined below.

The existential theory emphasizes the importance of personal freedom and choice. Because our life course is continuously evolving and changing, making choices about how we age brings certain kinds of purpose and meaning. As portrayed in the film **'Love: The Last Chapter'**, older adults formed new relationships and were able to express their emotional and physical needs, and alleviate feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Feelings of social connection, love, support, and intimacy are essential components and crucial for one's social functioning. Through both relational-cultural theory and existential theory, social workers can help older adults live their most fulfilled life. The film **'Love: The Last Chapter'** provides a snapshot of what love and intimacy means to older adults and how it significantly influences their livelihood. Without addressing the stigma held about such topics like sexuality in old age, many older adults, particularly those living in long-term care facilities, will continue to experience adverse health outcomes. Therefore, as a social work student or social worker, there is an important role to play in advocating for and supporting vulnerable populations like older adults. The task is to help create dialogue that will destigmatize such taboo topics and enhance the quality of life of older adults.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What barriers did you witness in the film that affected the ability of older adults to socialize and increase their social connectedness in long-term care facilities?
 - a. Are there any interventions that come to mind to increasing opportunities for love and intimacy?
 - b. As a social worker, how can you advocate for older adults?

2. As a social worker, how can you create a safe environment for older adults to communicate about topics like intimacy?
 - a. What are some ways in developing a comfortable approach for discussing romantic relationships?
 - b. What respectful and straightforward language choices can you implement into your vocabulary when speaking on such taboo topics?

3. Family members and adult children may not always accept their aging loved one's new romantic relationship. How can you facilitate a discussion in supporting older adult and their families?
 - a. In what ways can you help family members deal with their own concerns and biases?

4. Using the film as a reference: What action items do you plan to implement into your social work practice in advocating concepts of love and intimacy in old age?
 - a. How will you support intimacy and the expression of sexuality?
 - b. Are there any obstacles you may face?
 - c. How will you overcome such obstacles?

EXERCISES

1. Research suggests that older adults who remain active and interact with others tend to live longer, happier and healthier lives. With this knowledge, write a reflection on how the film informs your knowledge and feelings about love and intimacy in old age. How does the film challenge your personal biases, and what can you do to support and advocate for older adults on topics like love and intimacy?
2. Imagine yourself as a social worker at a long-term care facility. A client is feeling embarrassed to speak about their emotional and physical health needs. How can you debunk ageist ideologies? What can you do to create a supportive and safe environment for the client to open up about these topics?
3. Aging can change the way intimacy is expressed. As a social work practitioner, you can promote healthy romantic experiences for your aging clients. What are some interventions that you can implement? How can you address ageist ideologies surrounding feelings of social connection, support, love and intimacy? What about initiatives for those living in acute care or long-term care facilities?



ADDITIONAL READING

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DISCUSSION SHEETS MADE POSSIBLE BY



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