

Security & Novelty

THE ANCHOR AND THE WAVES

Psychotherapist Esther Perel describes love and desire as two forces that pull in different directions — one seeking safety and closeness, the other seeking mystery and aliveness. Healthy relationships don't resolve this tension; they learn to hold both.



Security



the paradox to hold, not solve



Novelty

Security

The need for closeness, predictability and a steady, reliable connection — the ground that makes commitment possible.

Safety

Predictability

Reliability

Closeness

Permanence

Novelty

The need for surprise, autonomy and a sense of aliveness — the spark that keeps a relationship from feeling static.

Adventure

Mystery

Playfulness

Autonomy

Surprise

Holding the Paradox

PROTECTING SECURITY

Consistent rituals, honest communication, and following through on commitments help build the steady ground a relationship needs to feel safe.

PROTECTING NOVELTY

Trying new experiences together, maintaining some separateness and individuality, and staying curious about your partner can help keep a sense of aliveness.

REFLECTION

- Where does your relationship (or you individually) currently sit — closer to security, or closer to novelty?
- What's one small way you could bring more of what's missing, without giving up what already feels steady?
- Is there a routine or ritual that feels grounding? Is there a source of surprise or playfulness that feels alive?

A Living Balance, Not a Fixed Point

IT SHIFTS OVER TIME

Where a relationship sits on this spectrum isn't fixed — it can shift with life stages, stress, parenthood or simply time spent together. Noticing the shift is more useful than judging it.

BOTH MATTER, ALWAYS

Perel's view is that neither pole "wins" — a relationship built only on security can feel stagnant, while one built only on novelty can feel unsteady. Both are ongoing needs.

"Love enjoys knowing everything about you; desire needs mystery." — Esther Perel

SOURCES

Perel, E. (2006). *Mating in Captivity: Unlocking Erotic Intelligence*. HarperCollins.
Perel, E. (2017). *The Secret to Desire in a Long-Term Relationship*. TED Talk.