



# MODERN ROMANCE

**W**hat on earth is one of the medical editors of *CRST Europe* writing about now? A leading eye care publication tackling the topic of modern romance? It can't be.

Bear with me, as I think by the end of this short editorial you may find the relevance of modern romance to ophthalmology.

...

**FLICKING THROUGH** *The Economist* recently, I found an article briefly summarizing the book *Modern Romance*, by the American comedian Aziz Ansari and the New York University sociologist Eric Klinenberg.<sup>1</sup> It's about how romance in the 21st century is dying—how divorce rates are increasing in nine of every 10 countries and how some people are more reluctant than ever to commit to a potential partner because “something better” may just be around the next corner or on the next dating app or social networking site.

I felt compelled to comment on the article after I had read it, and I wrote the following on the webpage: “Better chance of success if you're lucky enough to *pick* the right partner? Isn't a better approach trying to *be* the right partner? We are collectively guilty of seeing what we can *get* rather than focusing on what we can *give*.”

...

**AS ANYONE WHO KNOWS ME CAN ATTEST**, including (or perhaps especially) my beloved wife, I am no expert on dating. But I am considered by some an expert on owning and leading an eye clinic, as I have been in the business for a while. I have seen the Wellington Eye Clinic through many challenging periods, none more gruesome than when the economic downturn in Ireland was at its worst. Far more accurately and truthfully, the team saw the clinic through

these choppy waters. It was then that I saw just how the *giving mentality* beats the *getting mentality* in all aspects of business and life.

In my professional life, nothing provides me with more satisfaction and genuine pleasure and pride than when a patient says to me, “You have a wonderful team around you.” The greatest single attribute about this team is that they give, and they do so without expecting anything extra in return. They give great eye care; they provide the human touch, a warm and genuine smile, and a friendly and encouraging word or two, and they do so just because it's the right thing to do. Whether they do this or not, what they receive in monetary terms does not change. However, what they receive in personal satisfaction—in personal growth and development—is amplified beyond anything that *getting alone* could achieve.

...

**IN A CIRCUITOUS FASHION**, we all receive more by giving more. Some may see that as a perverse motivation, but I contend that, if we are all to get more, wouldn't the world be a better place if, in the process, we were also giving more?

In the end, whether we are talking about love and long-term relationships, about business, or about eye care, it all comes down to relationships. And in my personal experience, seeing how much you can give is always more rewarding than seeing how much you can get. ■

1. 21st century mating. Luv u l8r. [www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21657362-luv-u-l8r](http://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21657362-luv-u-l8r). Accessed January 3, 2018.

**ARTHUR B. CUMMINGS, MB ChB,  
FCS(SA), MMed(OPHTH), FRCS(Edin)**  
ASSOCIATE CHIEF MEDICAL EDITOR