

# Love, Chess

## The Chess Friends

The Man Benji, The Myth Sarang, and The Legend Vivi

<https://www.chessfriendsbooks.com/blog>

**H**owdy! It's the Chess Friends!  
It's February, and love is in the air. With Valentine's Day approaching, we explore what it's like to love chess.

There are so many aspects of love, but despite tons and tons of poems, songs, and novels about love, [social psychologists and neuroscientists are still debating](#) what love actually is. Several theories and models out there attempt to explain love, and how interpersonal relationships evolve, like the [Triangular Theory of Love](#), the [Knapp's Staircase Model](#), or [The Conception of the Long-term Relationship](#).

In this article, we reflect on how our love for chess changes with time, and propose our own model to describe the development of one's relationship with chess. With a tip of the hat to the great Hungarian-American chess master and scientist Arpad Elo, the creator of the Elo chess rating system, may we present...

### The Chess Friends' E.L.O. Model for Three Stages of Chess Love:

#### Enchantment

#### Labor

#### Odyssey

The Legend Vivi, 8, describes *Enchantment*. The Myth Sarang, 12, discusses *Labor*. The Man Benji, 14, explores *Odyssey*. Our friend Peshka travels back in time, to Ancient Greece, where chess doesn't exist yet, and illustrates each E.L.O. step in a game *Guess the Classical Mythology Character!* Let's get started!

### The Legend Vivaan: Enchantment

(Falling in Love with an Amazing Game)

I first fell in love with chess when I was a baby. I would lay down on my belly on the dining table, watching my brother do a chess lesson with uncle Josh. Until I was three, I loved chess as a toy. I loved the feel of the pieces. I loved playing with them. I loved knocking them down. Not going to lie, I also enjoyed seeing the reactions of everyone else when I did!

In my threes and fours, I fell in love with the game itself. How the pieces moved. The shapes. The patterns. The ideas. The thrill of checkmating the opponent's King! The joy of making friends while playing over-the-board. Everything was amazing! Even when I lost, though I got a bit upset, I would always chat with my opponent and learn from them and make a new friend.

In my fives and sixes, I loved medals and trophies. They were so shiny, so fun, and made me feel like I accomplished something every time I got one. In some

ways, all these awards helped fuel my love for chess. I also enjoyed seeing my rating shoot up after most tournaments because it felt like a confirmation that I was getting better and better.

In my sevens, much like I outgrew all my youth S clothes, I outgrew this love for awards and rating gains, though they are still fine. I coach chess now, help TD events, and study and play a lot more intentionally. My love for chess has evolved into a love for creative ideas and tricky patterns I come up with after a lot of thought and hard work. Much like a maze, sometimes you hit roadblocks, sometimes you run into a dead end, but how you move on from those moments becomes a lovely thrill.

### The Myth Sarang: Labor

(How Work Shapes the Game and the Player)

The longer I play chess, the more I realize it's less about talent and more about work. Real work. Hard work. The work that tests your patience and focus. When you're a beginner, progress comes fast. You learn to hang fewer pieces, spot tactics, castle early, etc. But after that first stretch of improvement, the climb gets way steeper.

When you get better, the game demands more from you. It's not enough to simply know openings, you need to understand them. Studying endgames changes from just memorizing a few positions to long, precise analysis that can take hours, months and even YEARS to master. The better you get, the more invisible the progress feels. But that's also what makes it relevant.

At some point, I learned that loving chess means loving the work behind





it. You can't just chase huge dubs or quick breakthroughs. Most days, for me, improvement arrives in very small steps: understanding one more detail in a position, figuring out a new defense, or realizing why an old mistake keeps on happening. Those examples of small gains may not look like much, but they will help immensely over time.

Eventually, the grind itself becomes part of the reward. If you find joy in reviewing bad losses, you are in for a bright future. In a way, chess teaches you how to keep trying even when results come slowly. It shows that lasting growth comes from steady effort; and that the real magic of the game is learning to love the work that makes you better.

## The Man Benji: Odyssey

(The Game Becomes Who We Are)

When we start playing chess, we get under its spell. The game enchants us: magic on the board, gifts for our brains, trophies and quick rises all fill us with good feelings. As we get better, the deep study and the grind enter the picture, which we learn how to love.

Is that all, then, a grind-grind-grind forever? No! After many months, or maybe years, of hard work and grinding, chess starts sticking with you. It becomes part of your everyday life; you think about chess, you think about the world around you like it's chess. When that happens,

congratulations! You have entered the third stage of your relationship with chess: Odyssey!

The word Odyssey, originating from [Homer's epic poem](#) about the Greek hero Odysseus, means journey. It's not your trivial road trip on a big Honda Odyssey though, but a long winding quest filled with adventures and trials. Trials that test your character, your smarts and resilience. That journey for us is chess itself.

We sail on this journey not for big prizes or big rating gains (though that would be nice!). We travel because that's who we are. Chess becomes our character. Our identity. *Hello, I'm The Man Benji, and I'm a chess player.*

Unlike the hero Odysseus, who traveled for years to reach his home, we, the heroes of our own epic chess journeys, are already home. What's that feeling you have when you enter the chess playing hall you've already seen thousands of times? *Ah, it's nice to be home.* The atmosphere, the chess friends, the new exciting positions on the board... *I am home at the chessboard, playing my favorite game.*

I only recently entered the Odyssey stage in my relationship with chess. I knew I was there when I stopped worrying about my opening prep or what my opponent would play, and whether I could win. I just go with the flow now, finding the enjoyment in every stage of the game. It feels like the joy of enchantment and labor all in one! And it's still just the beginning.



Would I eventually get bored and tired of chess to the point I quit? Don't think it's going to happen. I've had my tough moments, when after many hours of hard work, I felt like I couldn't go on any longer, then something would spark, and I would forget about all my struggles. It could be a brilliant position, or a cool

tactic. Or it could be the middle of a hard, intense game where both you and your opponent are playing your hearts out. That's when you realize, what fun it is! There is always something new to learn, something else to get better at. With chess odyssey, there are always ways to go even further. The sky is the E.L.O. limit!

Well, there you have it. The three stages of our love of chess. Before we let you go, how about some silly knee-slappers, Valentine's chess day edition?

**Why didn't Peshka solve the chess puzzle?**

**Because it was too heart!**



**Why do chess players use magnetic sets on Valentine's Day?**

**They find them attractive!**



**Two cookies played a chess game on Valentine's Day!**

**It was a match made in oven!**



**What Valentine's Day gift always forfeits their chess game?**

**Choco-LATE!**



**Roses are red, DGT boards are brown.**

**My trusted Sicilian will never let me down.**



**Roses are red, Peshka is wise,**

**If you read [Q&A Chess](#), your rating will rise!**



**Roses are red, violets are blue,**

**We all love chess, and Northwest Chess too!**



Three Cheers, Fellow Future Master Chess Friends!

The Man Benji,  
The Myth Sarang,  
The Legend Vivi