



## **The Important Things**

### **About Love**

By Dr. Linda Hancock

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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Over the centuries many have tried to define and write about love. Some authors approach it from a spiritual perspective whereas others focus on the romantic aspects. Valentine's Day, of course, commercializes the idea of love and offers opportunities to express it with gift-giving. But love is more than a gift and much more complex.

Most of us know that love should not be abusive yet many live in physically or emotionally harmful situations. Competition between partners can lead to divisiveness and stress but that doesn't stop some couples from always trying to do better than the other person.

Those who enter relationships thinking that love is perfect or that love will cover all sins quickly become disappointed because that's not the way it is.

But what is love? Love is:

1. A commitment that goes beyond feelings and lasts over time. Anyone can say they love someone, but it is not enough to just make promises or declarations. Words and actions need to match, and it is very important to use both in order to communicate your devotion accurately. Also, commitment is not just a temporary situation, but something that lasts long-term.
2. Mutually beneficial - If both of you truly want to help each other meet your needs and reach your goals, then you will both feel satisfied in the relationship. True love provides an environment where you can grow as individuals and as a couple. It also means having good, healthy boundaries so that you are interdependent and not enmeshed or disconnected.
3. Companionship - I always enjoy hearing couples who have been married for several decades talk about what held them together through both good and bad times. None of them describe problem-free lives. In fact, they usually talk about how they handled their struggles by having at least one shared interest. Some danced. Others played cards. Each couple that stays together for many years is usually able to clearly identify things that they enjoyed doing together.
4. A Challenge - Author Florence Littauer says, "After the wedding comes the marriage". Being in an intimate relationship is like having a mirror held up to you. You might not like what you see or are reminded of some of your weaknesses. Because the two of you are not identical, there will likely be some times of conflict. Differences, however, if handled in a mature manner can lead to positive change, compromise or even agreeing to disagree.

It is almost Valentine's Day and you are likely thinking about what to purchase that will show your love. This year consider giving more than the usual flowers, candy or card. How about making a serious commitment that your partner can depend upon? Would you be willing and able to help your partner realize a dream? Could you plan an activity that you could enjoy together? Better yet, perhaps you could make a positive change in your own behaviour so that you are easier to get along with.

You see love is about being lovely and loveable.

Happy Valentine's Day!

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