

## IS IT LOVE OR INFATUATION?

In today's Insight I am going to look at an old cliché that I think is destructively over-used. I am sure you have heard it or perhaps even said yourself, when you saw a member of your family 'fall head over heels in love' with someone you just did not like. 'Love is blind' you say, well love is not blind. Being infatuated with, hooked on, possessed by, or identifying who you are with another may cause emotional blindness but authentic love not only does not cause blindness but rather opens the eyes and heart to see more clearly.

Because of our limited English language, we only have one word 'love' to describe a wide variety of relationships. The word love is used when talking about a couple that has grown together in marriage for many, many years and when a teenager is talking about his or her designer jeans. Young people do seem to have realized, however, that the word love is much overused and abused. Why else would they feel the need to develop their own language? Instead of saying, 'I love it' or 'you', teenagers prefer to use such terms as totally awesome or perfect, or groovy to the max. Somehow they just know that the word 'love' does not capture their feelings.

Perhaps the most confused blurring of the word love is when we are actually describing an infatuation. Love and infatuation are not the same experience. The differences are striking.

Love is built on one's ability to see the other person clearly, recognizing their faults, weaknesses and problems as well as their talents, gifts and potential. When someone is infatuated with another person the emotions of insecurity and the need to please rise up to blind one's clear vision.

Love is a friendship that grows day by day, sinking its roots deep in care. When infatuation grabs you, desire is instant. You can be sure that if you see someone across a crowded room it is not love you feel but the spark of infatuation.

Love does not demand that one person in the relationship must change dramatically to please the other. When love is present a deep respect for the other's likes and dislikes, ups and downs is also present. In contrast, a couple riding the roller coaster of infatuation tends to expect to change one another.

Love is constantly developing and maturing toward commitment, which may one day be expressed sexually. Infatuation uses sexual activity as though through sex the commitment and love will be established. Love is built on friendship to grow from the involvement.

Love is expressed in trust. There is a calmness, a sense of security and confidence about the relationship. Love is not threatened by necessary physical separations whereas with infatuations, lack of confidence leads you to think that when you are not together he or she is cheating, or at least not thinking of you.

Love lets the other be, infatuation needs the other to be for, with and dependent upon.

Love is patient enough to wait and grow. Infatuations are so insecure the couple needs a commitment yesterday. If we don't get married immediately we just may lose each other.

The experience of love is seen in patience, kindness between the two people who are honest enough not to put on airs with one another, faking it in order to make it.

The experience of infatuation is puppy love gone mad, marked by possessiveness and need. A person infatuated with another has become an addict, hooked on the feeling of love, as though it were a drug.

The difference between a relationship building in love and a relationship blinded by infatuation can be determined to some extent by one's direction of concern. Love is an attitude of concern and care for the other. When infatuated, it is my needs that must be met and satisfied.