

Let's look at what love is not before attempting to explain love.

It is not an emotion which anyone can indulge in, regardless of age, background, or life style at any time the person wishes.

A basic understanding of the characteristics which make up love reveal that Love is not any easy game to play.

Love is an art which requires work, time, and effort to achieve, and at that only in an incomplete way.

It must grow in depth and meaning during a person's life. It is a process of growth and development.

The media has affected peoples' ideas of love. It presents love in the following ways very often:

1. As that of being loved

a. By winning friends and influencing people

If you use the proper deodorants, mouth washes, drive the right car, smoke the right cigarettes, or say and do the right things for people, you will have sex appeal, belonging appeal, or need appeal, and you will be popular and accepted. Result: According to society--instant love?

b. By having sales appeal

Too often people become objects to be bought and sold on the open market. Also, prizes to be won in a game. If we win the prize or bid the highest price, we have love and happiness. What am I bid for this thing/person? She gives herself to get him. He gives himself to get her. He has the car and sells himself to get her. Result: This compromises our integrity as human beings and makes us look upon ourselves and others as "things."

2. As that of falling in love

Too many people think of love as just a "nice feeling." Yet, this is infatuation. It lacks depth, and more often than not, feelings change quickly.

In this case, physical attraction, a warm feeling in a person's stomach, or the other person's presence in a room, is called--love. This warm feeling could just be perspiration, hives, or the result of eating hot peppers. Feelings awaken emotional reactions in us. They produce a change in awareness or attitude. Emotions are strong, spontaneous movements of the feelings which can bring out impulsive or rash actions and inhibit the intellect and will.

Love must be a standing in, a knowing--a certain surity in involvement--which demands sacrifice and hardship at times, but which is rooted in a relationship that will be the source of joy, peace, and happiness. It is a deep awareness intellectually, based on knowledge of time, depth, fact, truth, and rooted in stable ground, regardless of the situation or the feelings at the time.

If not cultivated properly, love can become static and die. We can grow out of love with someone or a group of persons. If this happens, it is because the love may have been based solely on feelings, rooted in sand or just the good times, based on a myth, or due to a lack of continued communication and trust, or because one person grows beyond the other and compatibility is no longer possible.