



*A Complimentary Newsletter From The Desk of: Michael J. Alicea, M.S., M.S.W.*

## ***Is This Love? A Closer Look***

*How do you know when you've found the right person for you?*

*By Michael J. Alicea, M.S., M.S.W.*

### ***How do you know if it is really love?***

One of the most common questions I get from the couples I treat in therapy with respect to their relationship is: "How do you know if it is really love?" Well, as you can imagine, this also happens to be one of the most difficult questions to answer! Love is such a strange, wonderful thing that nobody really has codified what it is yet. And to further complicate matters, there are so many different kinds of love: the love you feel for a friend, a family member, a sport or even a pet. This is such a crazy emotion that there is absolutely no way that I can definitively answer how you know it is love... but I am going to give it a try!

### ***Do you want to be with them?***

Now, in order to find out if you love someone, the basic place to start would be to ask yourself, do you want to be with them? If the answer to that question is no, then it really can't be love. When you love someone, you want to be with them. Not just be with them, but share everything with them. You have a great day at work and want to rush home and tell them every wonderful thing that has happened. You feel excited at the prospect of just being in their company, just being close to them isn't enough, you want to be a part of them, a part of their life forever. You can't stand the thought of being away from them yet, when you are, you still feel that ever-present bond that ties you together wherever you go. You can almost feel what they are feeling. You feel like, with a little bit of effort, you can see what they are seeing and think what they are thinking. It is almost as if you both can occupy each other's bodies with complete trust and harmony. That to me is love.

### ***Emotions can be confusing.***

Now, on the other side of the spectrum, there are a host of emotions that people confuse with love. One of the most common is lust. There is a difference between wanting to sleep with someone and wanting to spend the rest of your life with someone.

Being overly dependent on the other person is also not a part of love. Some people fall into the trap of thinking they love someone just because they are afraid to be alone. They have become dependent on the other person for so much that they don't know how to make it on their own, or they would much rather be with someone than no-one.

*First things first, love yourself.*

This leads to the old cliché, in order to love someone else; you must first learn to love yourself. Well, we've all heard that before, but what does it really mean? It means that you have to be confident in your own ability and your own judgments. You really have to like yourself and know what you have to offer another person. There is no way that you can love another person if you are so stuck in your own hang-ups that you bow down and propitiate to the other person. That is, you do anything they ask and agree with everything they say out of fear that they will love you less because you don't do those things.

*You either are or you aren't*

Basically, the question of whether or not you are in love with someone is pretty cut and dry: you either are or you aren't... and deep down, you know the answer. You just have to trust yourself to recognize it.

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