


What's Love Got to Do With It?



 By Paul N. Weinberg

Here's the myth: Cupid's arrow strikes you in the heart, you fall in love and you live happily ever after.

But we all know that real life doesn't quite work that way. A more familiar story goes like this: You meet someone. The two of you have great chemistry, and you really hit it off. You jump into a relationship and you fall in love. This seems like "the one" ... except that six months or a year later, you're no longer together and you are once again single. Now repeat until emotionally exhausted.

Does this pattern of falling in and out of love sound familiar? I've observed it in singles for years so I'm no longer surprised each time I hear that a friend who was in love the last time I saw them is no longer with their partner. And very often, he or she is already in love with someone new.

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So if love often condemns us to a series of relatively short-term relationships – and with all due respect to Tina Turner – the obvious question is: "What's love got to do with it?" In other words, why isn't falling in love enough to establish an enduring, long-term relationship. And what does it take to keep us together after the emotional thrill is gone and the sexual excitement has faded?

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The simple answer is that for most people, the long term glue that binds together our personal relationships is emotional intimacy.

What is Emotional Intimacy?

Although intimacy and love often go together, love is not intimacy, and love in a relationship does not guarantee intimacy. And although a sexual relationship may lead to an emotionally intimate one, you can have sex without intimacy and intimacy without sex. So sex is not intimacy either.

Put simply, emotional intimacy is about connecting and being connected on an emotional level to your partner. It's the sharing of your innermost thoughts and feelings, coupled with all the ways of being together – a glance, a touch, a silent moment, a laugh, or just being present and attentive – that provide the foundation for an emotional connection in a personal relationship.

Intimacy is the complement to love that requires trust, openness, vulnerability, safety, empathy and honesty and involves deeper levels of communication that are conveyed through the sharing of feelings and emotional needs. Intimacy exists at the deepest level where each of you is able to not only feel and understand the other but also be felt and understood by the other.

So love is just one part of the larger landscape of connection in personal relationships. And it is intimacy rather than love that brings emotional depth to the connection, permits a deeper knowing of yourself and your partner, and adds longevity to your relationships.

*Paul N. Weinberg is the coauthor of **The I Factor**, a new book about intimacy and connection in personal relationships. Available in print and ebook versions through Amazon and the Apple iTunes Bookstore. www.theifactor.com*

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