



Keeping Your Love Alive

When two people first fall in love, their feelings for each other are strong, almost overwhelming. When this emotional rush begins to fade over time, there is still plenty of room for continuing love and affection.

Sometimes, partners in a relationship are disturbed and upset by this natural evolution of their relationship. They feel the magic is gone and the relationship is changed for the worse. Here is some information about the ways loving feelings evolve in a relationship and strategies other couples have found useful to keep the loving feelings in their relationship strong.

The magic of the early days

The initial emotional rush that comes with falling in love is triggered by the fact the relationship is new as well as the excitement of being in a relationship in which each partner's strong feelings of love and affection are reciprocated. It seems as if the two people literally cannot get enough of each other.

The "magic" of these early days is reinforced by a variety of behaviours by both partners. These could include the way the two people look at or casually touch each other

in public, spontaneous gestures of affection such as a surprise phone call, or an unexpected gift such as flowers, a piece of jewelry, or a surprise weekend getaway.

These behaviours, as psychologists call them, are all rightly seen by both partners as expressions of love and serve to feed the emotional intensity of the early days of a courtship. Anyone who has fallen in love is familiar with these intense feelings that come at the beginning of an intimate relationship.

The relationship enters a new phase

If the relationship grows and develops the couple may well decide to commit to spending their lives with each other. When this happens their relationship enters a new stage. While their love for each other remains strong, the intense feelings they experienced during their courtship subside somewhat.

The routine of everyday life

Once a couple set up housekeeping and begin to live together, life usually settles into a routine. In the early days of the relationship, when the couple got together, it was usually a special occasion and both partners were on their best behaviour. Living together, though, allows each partner to see the other through every part of the day, and through the gamut of their reactions to events big and small.

Everyday life has its special moments. However, everyday life is also going to work, washing the dishes, shopping for groceries, and fixing the leaky faucet in the bathroom.

Many couples manage the transition to this new reality without any serious problems. Others, however, when they feel the early magic is gone, decide that it was all a big mistake. Maybe they don't love each other after all. Maybe what they thought was love was just a temporary infatuation, and the best thing to do is to call it quits and end the relationship.

What to do

If your relationship is at this stage, before taking any action, take the time to review your situation. Consider the following:

- It is not realistic to expect the high emotional level of the courtship period to last forever.
- While the early emotional high of the relationship may fade, there is still plenty of room for loving feelings.
- What may have happened is that one or both partners no longer practice the spontaneous loving behaviours of the courtship days. No more little surprise gifts, no more unexpected phone calls at work to say "I'm thinking of you."
- What is realistic is the desire to continue to give and to receive these spontaneous loving attentions that were so important during the courtship.



Maybe I should look elsewhere

Some people think that the only solution is to try to recapture the "magic" in another relationship. While a new relationship may provide the excitement your present relationship had in its early days, it will last only a short while, and you will be left having to find another exciting beginning.

Consider changing your behaviours

How you behave affects how you feel. Loving behaviours lead to loving feelings; they do not come out of thin air. By the same token, loving feelings lead to loving behaviours. Few of us are mind readers. Express those feelings of love and affection you have for your partner.

What worked before will work again

Think back to your courtship and the many ways you showed your love for each other—the spontaneous gestures of affection, the unexpected phone call or small gift, the weekend getaway. What worked before will work again. And there's nothing wrong with trying something new.

Nurturing your loving feelings is a lifetime commitment. Just as a houseplant flourishes if watered regularly, your relationship will grow and develop to the extent it receives the care and attention of both partners.