

Love is not ...

Dependency:

1. Needing to be with or live with another in order to be actively cared for by them, and feeling at sea, alone, without that other person. Feeling that our needs for love are the responsibility of another to supply won't bring us love.
2. Needing to be loved so much that we identify with ourselves by means of the relationship with the other. If reliant on another to feel good, we will drain them and expect them to rescue us from ourselves.
3. Being concerned solely with what another can do for us, to the exclusion of what we can do for the other. Depending on the other for love, without putting energy in to actively loving the other will exhaust the relationship. Relying on, or using, the other as if they were a parent isn't balanced or sustainable.
4. Having a sadistic or masochistic relationship where one person needs to be controlled and passive, and the other needs to be controlling and aggressive. Love is never possessive, demanding or controlling.

Experienced in relation to objects:

The feeling we experience in relation to our sport, hobbies, job, our pet, success, wealth, an attractive body, an attractive or sexy personality. All these relationships are "love" towards an object, and don't involve the fullest expression of ourselves and our capacity to love. Even our pets are only loved so long as they don't become aggressive or totally ignore us or in some way interact with us more than just passively.

6. An accurate word to describe how we feel towards those things we would prefer above others. Love is not about how we relate to objects, but is an inner process, a way of functioning, and is evidenced by loving actions.
7. An intense emotion towards one person exclusively, with no love for others. This is "love" for an object, not the existence of the loving function. We must learn to distinguish between behaving loving toward self and others, and reliance on someone else to pick us up from our own emotional reactions.

Totally determined by feelings:

Feeling loving, but offering no caring or commitment to the welfare of the other is not love. Feelings of love are meaningful when acted on providing an action that benefits another, possibly even at the expense of self.

9. Feeling loving, but also having, or using power over the other, such as using them to meet one's own sexual gratification without taking account of their needs or feelings. Genuine love gives without assessing the gain from the transaction.

10. Expressing one's impulses (because that is what I truly feel like right now) in ways that will hurt another. Genuine love towards another translates into self-management that is not injurious of others.

11. Acting from feelings originating below the rib-cage. Love is an energy felt in the chest. Any emotion that is felt in the body below the heart is not love.

Rescuing or Martyring:

12. Nurturing to the point where the other cannot become autonomous. Helping others so that the helper meets his or her own needs is a common behaviour which feels like, but is not, love. It does not add to the growth of the person 'helped'.

13. Sacrificing self for the supposed benefit of others. Doing this simply enables us to feel superior, and avoids giving others the chance to be autonomous, or responsible, or both. It is also colluding with the dysfunction, and thus is an example of behaving co-dependently.

14. Looking after the needs of another at one's own expense, no matter whether these needs are legitimate or based on child-hood conditioning. Rescuing is even more likely when the partner has a disorder such as anxiety, paranoia, depression or a process that impinges on 'normal' interactions. Martyrdom is not love in action.

15. Martyring behaviours could include withholding expression of own needs, putting others first as a matter of course, allowing others to be dysfunctional and putting up with it, supporting the development of one's partners talents at the expense of one's own. This is co-dependence, and is not love in action.

16. The reluctance of martyrs to express legitimate needs prevents openness and intimacy, and so damages the relationship. True love is honest and expressive in a transparent and owning way.

Manipulation/control or aggression:

17. Being manipulating, controlling, or even aggressive so that your partner's feelings, attitudes or behaviour are channelled into desired directions. Genuine love always seeks freedom and autonomy for the person loved.

18. Manipulators assume that if their partner loved them, then that person would be pleased to accommodate the controller's requests or demands. The controller wants to do things with their partner, and so may expect their partner to alter their chosen thoughts or feelings in order to be accommodating. Love acquired in these ways is acquired by coercion – which is not loving.

19. Manipulators may be testing their partners to see if they really do love them. This may arise where an underlying doubt about one's self-worth, or love-ability is present. Manipulation and coercion of any type shows insecurity, not love, is driving one's behaviours.

20. This way of being is unable to meet a basic requirement of love – that is to accept the other person realistically and for who they are.

Victim, surrendering one's power:

21. Those with a very passive or submissive personality consider that it is being loving to allow their partner to have their own way, and to be compliant and non-complaining.

22. This approach assumes that love is giving up on one's own needs entirely – as a way of showing affection and love to another. Unlike rescuing, here the person is clearly one-down, either as a badge of honour, or because they have no skills to get their own needs met.

23. This is not being loving, because it lacks self-love. If a person doesn't value, respect and love the self, to that same extent they can't truly adopt a loving perspective of anyone else.

24. This approach annihilates any chance of a relationship being equal. The one-down person can never fully experience love which is always self-empowering and self-sustaining. Self-support and self-honouring is necessary if self-love is happening, and without self-love, genuine love from another is unlikely. Who is going to love someone who doesn't even love themselves?