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1 2 : warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion 3 4 5 : a god (such as Cupid or Eros) or personification of love 6 7 : the sexual embrace : copulation 8 : a score of zero (as in tennis) 9 capitalized Christian Science : god Psychology of loveTriangular theoryTypes of loveWhat is love?RecapLove can be complex due to differences in the type of love you can experience. For example, the bond you create with a romantic partner will differ from your bond with a close friend.Love is a powerful, complex emotional experience that involves changes in your body chemistry, including your neurotransmitters (brain chemicals). It impacts your social relationships in varied ways, affecting how you relate to others around you.There are many types like the love you share with your partner, family, and friends and each version you feel is unique. It can fill you with emotions ranging from joy to heartbreak.Attachment theory is a component of love. Strong attachment bonds set mammals apart from many other types of animals, though other groups including fish and birds also form strong social connections to help them survive.A 2017 review describes four types of mammalian attachment bonds as:Most instances of human love fall into one of these categories. For example, the love you feel for a close friend could be classed as a peer bond.A romantic relationship is a type of pair bond. It can start as mutual attraction and evolve into love over time.When you like someone, you enjoy their companionship and care about their well-being. When you love them, those feelings are unconditional.intimacy (emotional)commitment (cognitive)passion (physical) Each domain represents a triangle corner in Sternbergs triangular theory of love, which is still used today to help researchers better understand the complexity of love. The theory accounts for seven different kinds of love, based on which domains are involved. We look at these types of love below.The seven kinds of love in Sternbergs triangular theory cover a range of relationship types:Liking: You share emotional intimacy, but theres no physical passion or commitment. Friendship falls under this category. Infatuation: Passion is the key component of infatuation. If youre physically attracted to another person but havent developed emotional intimacy or established a commitment, this is infatuation.Empty: What Sternberg calls empty love is a committed relationship that lacks passion or intimacy. Examples include an arranged marriage or a previously emotional or physical relationship thats lost its spark.Romantic: When youre romantically involved with another person, you share physical passion and emotional intimacy, but you havent made any long-term plans or commitments.Companionate: Youre committed and emotionally connected, such as best friends or family. Marriages can also be companionate if the passion is gone, but you still share the commitment and emotional bond. Fatuous: If youve been swept up by passion into an engagement or marriage without emotional intimacy, this is fatuous love.Consummate: Consummate love is the goal for many when they envision marriage or a spousal partnership. This kind of love includes commitment, passion, and emotional intimacy.Love is an emotion of strong affection, tenderness, or devotion toward a subject or object. When you love a person, you experience pleasurable sensations in their presence and are sensitive about their reactions to you.Research from 2022 indicates that the dopaminergic system in the brain is the source of love.Its suggested that areas of the brain, particularly the ventral tegmental area (located in the middle of the brain), responsible for motivation and emotional regulation are associated with maternal and romantic love.Feelings of love help us form social bonds with others. As social creatures, these natural chemicals developed to help us survive by encouraging:nurturancecooperationreproductionmutual supportIt seems like so much more, though. Calling love an interaction of brain chemicals doesnt quite describe how it can warm your heart and captivate your soul. Love can do more than help you bond with another person. It can even impact your physical health.Love may affect your immune system. A 2019 study found that falling in love resulted in immune system changes similar to protective viral infection responses.It might also safeguard against cancer, according to a 2021 study that found tissue from pair-bonded mice was less likely to grow tumors than tissue from mice with disruptions to their pair bonds.You might feel like you have no control over the love you feel, but research says otherwise. Love is like an emotion that you can regulate by generating new feelings or changing the intensity of the feelings you have.Emotional regulation strategies include:So, if youre disappointed because the love you feel isnt reciprocated, you may be able to take your mind off it.Love comes in many forms. You can love more than one person simultaneously, in different ways.Emotional intimacy is present in many relationships, but not all. The same is true for passion and commitment.Attachment is another relationship element that may be present in love. Positive attachments are emotionally supportive and provide you with a feeling of security. When it comes to love, some people would say it is one of the most important human emotions. Love is a set of emotions and behaviors characterized by intimacy, passion, and commitment. It involves care, closeness, protectiveness, attraction, affection, and trust. Many say it's not an emotion in the way we typically understand them, but an essential physiological drive. There are countless songs, books, poems, and other works of art about love (you probably have one in mind as we speak!). Yet despite being one of the most studied behaviors, it is still the least understood. For example, researchers debate whether love is a biological or cultural phenomenon. What are some of the signs of love? Researchers have made distinctions between feelings of liking and loving another person. According to psychologist Zick Rubin, romantic love is made up of three elements: Attachment:Needing to be with another person and desiring physical contact and approvalCaring:Valuing the other person's happiness and needs as much as your ownIntimacy:Sharing private thoughts, feelings, and desires with the other person Based on this view of romantic love, Rubin developed twoquestionnairesto measure these variables, known as Rubin's Scales of Liking and Loving. While people tend to view people they like as pleasant, love is marked by being devoted, possessive, and confiding in one another. Yupnot all forms of love are the same, and psychologists have identified a number of different types of love that people may experience. These types of love include:Friendship: This type of love involves liking someone and sharing a certain degree of intimacy.Infatuation: This form of love often involves intense feelings of attraction without a sense of commitment; it often takes place early in a relationship and may deepen into a more lasting love.Passionate love: This type of love is marked by intense feelings of longing and attraction; it often involves an idealization of the other person and a need to maintain constant physical closeness.Compassionate/companionate love: This form of love is marked by trust, affection, intimacy, and commitment.Unrequited love: This form of love happens when one person loves another who does not return those feelings. Specifically, psychologist Robert Sternberg developed his well-regarded triangular theory of love in the early 1980s. Much research has built upon his work and demonstrated its universality across cultures. Sternberg broke love into three componentsintimacy, passion, and commitmentthat interact to produce seven types of love. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of LoveType of LoveComponentsFriendshipIntimacyInfatuationPassionEmptyCommitmentRomanticIntimacy, passionCompanionateIntimacyFatuousCommitment, passionConsummateIntimacy, compassion, commitmentLove is most likely influenced by both biology and culture. Although hormones and biology are important, the way we express and experience love is also influenced by our own conceptions of love. Some researchers suggest that love is a basic human emotion just like happiness or anger, while others believe that it is a cultural phenomenon that arises partly due to social pressures and expectations. Research has found that romantic love exists in all cultures, which suggests that love has a strong biological component. It is a part of human nature to seek out and find love. However, culture can significantly affect how individuals think about, experience, and display romantic love.Psychologists, sociologists, and researchers disagree somewhat on the characterization of love. Many say it's not an emotion in the way we typically understand them, but an essential physiological drive. On the other hand, the American Psychological Association defines it as "a complex emotion." Still, others draw a distinction between primary and secondary emotions and put love in the latter category, maintaining that it derives from a mix of primary emotions. There is no single way to practice love. Every relationship is unique, and each person brings their own history and needs. Some things that you can do to show love to the people you care about include: Be willing to be vulnerable.Be willing to forgive.Do your best, and be willing to apologize when you make mistakes.Let them know that you care.Listen to what they have to say.Prioritize spending time with the other person.Reciprocate loving gestures and acts of kindness.Recognize and acknowledge their good qualities.Share things about yourself.Show affection.Make it unconditional. Love, attachment, and affection have an important impact on well-being and quality of life. Loving relationships have been linked to: Lower risk of heart diseaseDecreased risk of dying after a heart attackBetter health habitsIncreased longevityLower stress levelsLess depressionLower risk of diabetes Lasting relationships are marked by deep levels of trust, commitment, and intimacy. Some things that you can do to help cultivate loving relationships include:Try loving-kindness meditation. Loving-kindness meditation (LKM) is a technique often used to promote self-acceptance and reduce stress, but it has also been shown to promote a variety of positive emotions and improve interpersonal relationships. LKM involves meditating while thinking about a person you love or care about, concentrating on warm feelings and your desire for their well-being and happiness.Communicate. Everyone's needs are different. The best way to ensure that your needs and your loved one's needs are met is to talk about them. Helping another person feel loved involves communicating that love to them through words and deeds.Some ways to do this include showing that you care, making them feel special, telling them they are loved, and doing things for them.Tackle conflict in a healthy way. Never arguing is not necessarily a sign of a healthy relationshipmore often than not, it means that people are avoiding an issue rather than discussing it. Rather than avoid conflict, focus on hashing out issues in ways that are healthy in order to move a relationship forward in a positive way. As Shakespeare said, the course of love never did run smooth. Love can vary in intensity and can change over time. It is associated with a range of positive emotions, including happiness, excitement, life satisfaction, and euphoria, but it can also result in negative emotions such as jealousy and stress. No relationship is perfect, so there will always be problems, conflicts, misunderstandings, and disappointments that can lead to distress or heartbreak. Some of the potential pitfalls of experiencing love include: While people are bound to experience some negative emotions associated with love, it can become problematic if those negative feelings outweigh the positive or if they start to interfere with either person's ability to function normally. Relationship counseling can be helpful in situations where couples need help coping with miscommunication, stress, or emotional issues. Only fairly recently has love become the subject of science. In the past, the study of love was left to "the creative writer to depict for us the necessary conditions for loving," according to Sigmund Freud. "In consequence, it becomes inevitable that science should concern herself with the same materials whose treatment by artists has given enjoyment to mankind for thousands of years," he added. Research on love has grown tremendously since Freud's remarks. But early explorations into the nature and reasons for love drew considerable criticism. During the 1970s, U.S. Senator William Proxmire railed against researchers who were studying love and derided the work as a waste of taxpayer dollars. Despite early resistance, research has revealed the importance of love in both child development and adult health. Our fast and free love quiz can help you determine if what you've got is the real deal or simply a temporary fling or infatuation.This love quiz was reviewed by Ivy Kwong, LMFT. Imagine meeting someone who understands you completely, supports your dreams, and stands by you through every challenge. They respect your individuality while nurturing a deep connection, where trust and affection grow stronger over time.This is the essence of true lovean authentic, enduring bond that feels safe, uplifting, and fulfilling.But what is the meaning of true love, really? Unlike infatuation or fleeting attraction, true love embodies mutual respect, empathy, and unwavering support.The definition of love in a relationship goes beyond just feelings; its a choice to prioritize and commit to each others happiness and growth. In this article, well explore what true love feels like, its different forms, key signs, and ways to foster and protect it for a lasting relationship.What is the real meaning of love? If you want to define love in one sentence, love is one of the most profound emotions humans experience. It is a combination of attraction and closeness. The person we feel attracted to or close to is the person we are usually in love with.Such a person can be a friend, parent, sibling, or even our pet. Such love is based on a feeling of attraction or affection.The full meaning of love can be seen in different ways because there are different types of love. The answer to the question, What is the meaning of true love? can differ for everyone, depending on the relationship in context.As per the Cambridge dictionary, love is defined as liking another adult very much and being romantically and sexually attracted to them or having strong feelings of liking a friend or person in your family.While this is a more literal definition, love can be defined in many other ways.Feelings of love can be defined as an amalgamation of various other emotions. Love is caring, compassion, patience, not being jealous, not having expectations, giving yourself and other people a chance, and not rushing.What does love mean, then? You ask. Love has often been used as a noun, but love is a verb in practice. It is about what we do for others and how we make others feel loved and cared for.What does real love feel like? Love is a holistic feeling. It involves many elements, words, and actions which define love. What love means to you depends on how it makes you feel and the experiences it brings into your life.Experts have proven that while love has emotional components to it, there are biological components to it that are often overlooked.Many people may wonder, What is the meaning of true love? The answer lies in the elements of love.1. CareCare is one of the primary elements of love.If we love someone, we care about them, their feelings, and their well-being. We may go out of our way to ensure they are okay and even compromise and sacrifice our needs and want to give them what they need.2. AdmirationAdmiration is very crucial in love and relationships.Admiration can be for their physicality or even for their mind and personality. Liking someone for their external and internal self and respecting their thoughts are essential elements of love.3. DesireDesire is both sexual, physical, and mental.Just wanting to spend more time with someone, being around them, and wanting them are all parts of the desire you feel when you are in love with someone.8 different types of love Research shows that back in the day, love was secondary or not even considered when it came to a union between two people. Marriages, which in some cultures and parts of the world are known as the ultimate goal of a romantic relationship, were mostly transactional.Studies have shown that people can love two people at the same time. One in six people interviewed in the study admitted to feeling attracted to and attached to more than one person simultaneously.However, there are eight different types of love, according to Greek mythology. These include 1. Family love or StorgyThis refers to the type of love we share with our family parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins, and others.2. Marital love or ErosThis is the type of romantic love we feel with a partner who we wish to marry or have already married.3. Love by the principle AgapeThis love is not based on emotions but on principles. It is referred to as the love for people we do not like, the love for the unlovable.4. Brotherly love Phileo/PhiliaAs the name suggests, brotherly love is love for our close ones, whom we hold as dear as family. These people, however, are not our family by blood.5. Obsessive love ManiaObsessive love, also known as Mania, is an obsession with one person or a certain way of loving them. Such love hinders your growth and can interfere with your personal and professional life. 6. Enduring love PragmaEnduring love is the kind of deep, true love that people in long, meaningful relationships experience.7. Playful love LudusPlayful love, also called young love, is what you feel when you think the whole world has conspired for the two of you to be together. This love, however, comes with an expiry date and might die down with time.8. Self love PhilautiaThis type of love has been talked about quite a bit, especially recently. It talks about appreciation and care for yourself before you set out to give it to someone else.12 telltale signs of loveLove is an emotion, but people do show signs of being in love. You can tell if someone is in love with you by the things they do for you, their words, and how they behave with you.Here are some characteristics of true love that can explain the various aspects of love in an informed manner:1. Love is generousIn a truly loving relationship, we give to the other without an expectation of return. We need to keep an account of who did what for the other. Giving pleasure to our partner gives us pleasure, too.2. We feel what our partner feelsThe true meaning of love is to feel a sense of joy when we see our partner happy. When we see that they are sad or depressed, we feel their blue mood, too. With love comes empathy for the other persons emotional state.3. Love means compromiseThe real meaning of love in a relationship is to willfully compromise your needs to accommodate your partners needs or desires.But we dont sacrifice ourselves in doing this, nor should the other person require us to sacrifice ourselves for their gain. Thats not what love is all about in a relationship; thats control and abuse. 4. Respect and kindnessWhat is the meaning of true love? When we love, we act respectfully and kindly toward each other.We do not intentionally hurt or denigrate our partners. When we talk about them in their absence, it is with such warmth that the listeners can hear the love in our words. We do not criticize our partners behind their backs.5. We act with ethics and moralsOur love for the other person enables us to act morally and ethically with them and in our community. Their presence in our lives makes us want to be better people so that they will continue to admire us.6. We guard each others solitudeWith love, we never feel lonely, even when alone. The very thought of the other person makes us feel as if we have a guardian angel with us at all times.7. Their success is yours as wellWhat is true love in a relationship?When our partner succeeds at something after a long effort, we beam with joy as if we were the winner, too. There is no feeling of jealousy or competition, just pure pleasure at seeing our beloveds success.8. They are always on our mindEven when separated for work, travel, or other commitments, our thoughts drift towards them and what they might be doing right now.9. Sexual intimacy deepensWith love, sex becomes sacred. Unlike the early days, our lovemaking is now deep and holy, a true joining of bodies and minds.10. We feel safeThe presence of love in the relationship allows us to feel protected and safe as if the other person is a safe harbor for us to come home to. With them, we feel a sense of security and stability. 11. We feel seen and heardOur partner sees us for who we are and still loves us. We can show all our positive and negative sides and receive their love unconditionally.They know who we are at our core. Love allows us to bare our souls and feel grace in return.12. Love helps fight without fearWhat is the meaning of true love? It is a sense of security.If we are secure in our love relationship, we know we can argue and that it will not break us apart. We agree to disagree and dont hold grudges for too long because we dont like to hold bad feelings toward our partner.Positive and negative impacts of being in loveLove is a very powerful emotion. Therefore, it can have both positive and negative impacts on us. These effects of love can range from physical, emotional, and even psychological. True feelings of love can change us.1. The positive impact of loveLove is known to have a very positive impact on our well-being, body, and mind.The feelings of unconditional love, non-judgment, independence, and security that come with a healthy relationship can boost self-esteem and confidence. It also reduces stress, which is a common denominator for various mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression.Couple therapy shows that some of the positive impacts of love include the following 2. The negative impact of loveUnhealthy, unrequited love and bad relationships can negatively impact your body, mind, and well-being.Bad relationships that are toxic from the beginning or turn toxic with time can lead to insecurities that develop deeper than just the relationship and affect a persons mental health and future relationships.The feelings of not being good enough, not doing things right, and being unable to meet expectations can make one feel less of themselves. People leaving without explanations, cheating, and lying can lead to abandonment issues that last longer than the relationship.The negative impacts of love can be as follows.Increased risk of heart diseasesSpiked risk of heart attacksHigh levels of stressSlower disease recoveryPoor mental healthHow to find and promote true love: 12 ways Finding true love is a journey that starts with self-awareness, patience, and an open heart. But once youve found it, fostering that love becomes equally important. What is the meaning of true love for you? Its often rooted in respect, understanding, and acceptance.Here are some ways to learn how to find and promote a lasting connection.1. Embrace self-love firstBefore you can genuinely love another, its essential to nurture love for yourself. How can you explain love if you havent started with self-compassion? Self-love fosters confidence, resilience, and healthy boundaries, which create a strong foundation for finding true love.When youre at peace with who you are, youll attract someone who values you just as you are.Try doing this: Practice daily affirmations, set personal goals, and engage in activities that make you feel confident and fulfilled.RELATED READING : What Does It Really Mean to Be in Love2. Define what true love means to youTrue love looks different for everyone, so clarify what it means for you. Reflect on past relationships and consider what made you feel valued and fulfilled. Write down your core values, must-haves, and boundaries in a relationship.When you know what youre looking for, youll be ready for when true love comes along.Try doing this: List your relationship values, must-haves, and boundaries to create a clear vision of what true love looks like for you.3. Seek connections over surface-level attractionRather than focusing solely on physical attraction, seek emotional and intellectual connections. Engage in meaningful conversations, share personal experiences, and find common interests. When you prioritize deeper connections, youre more likely to discover true love based on mutual understanding and respect.Try doing this: Focus on meaningful conversations and shared interests when meeting new people, prioritizing emotional and intellectual compatibility.4. Be open to new experiences and peopleExpanding your social circles can open the door to unexpected connections. Join new groups, attend events, or take up hobbies youre passionate about. Meeting people with shared interests increases your chances of connecting with someone who aligns with your values and passions.Try doing this: Join social or hobby-based groups, attend events, and explore new environments where you might meet compatible individuals.5. Cultivate patience and resilienceTrue love doesnt always come quickly or easily. It requires patience and resilience, especially if youve experienced past disappointments. Avoid rushing into relationships just to avoid loneliness; instead, trust the timing of your journey.Developing emotional resilience will also help you handle the ups and downs of the search for true love.Try doing this: Accept that finding true love takes time. Focus on personal growth and avoid rushing into relationships out of loneliness.6. Practice vulnerability with trusted peopleVulnerability is key to establishing trust and intimacy. Share your thoughts, fears, and dreams openly with those you trust. Being vulnerable invites others to do the same, creating a safe space where true love can flourish.Just remember to be mindful of who you open up to and take time to assess mutual trust.Try doing this: Share your authentic self gradually with people you trust, creating deeper connections through honest conversations.RELATED READING : 5 Tips to Recover From the Fear of Vulnerability7. Show genuine interest in othersTrue love involves a deep curiosity about each others lives, dreams, and experiences. Show sincere interest by asking thoughtful questions, actively listening, and remembering important details about their lives. This attentiveness builds a connection and shows the other person that you genuinely care.Try doing this: Actively listen, remember details, and ask thoughtful questions to show you genuinely care about the other person.8. Communicate openly and honestlyClear, honest communication is a foundation of true love. Express your feelings, needs, and boundaries without fear. Good communication doesnt mean always agreeing, but it does involve understanding and respecting each others viewpoints. Practice active listening and keep the lines of communication open, especially during disagreements.Try doing this: Regularly express your feelings, needs, and boundaries, even during disagreements, to build a foundation of trust.RELATED READING : 11 Tips for Better Communication in Relationships9. Prioritize emotional compatibilityTrue love often thrives when both partners are emotionally compatible. Look for someone whose emotional values, communication style, and outlook align with yours. Emotional compatibility doesnt mean you wont face challenges, but it does make handling those challenges easier and more rewarding.Try doing this: Look for shared emotional values and mutual respect in relationships to ensure a stronger, more understanding connection.10. Let go of unrealistic expectationsUnrealistic expectations can sabotage potential relationships. Accept that no one is perfect, including yourself. Instead of expecting perfection, focus on building a relationship with someone who meets your core needs and is willing to grow alongside you. Embrace each others imperfections and celebrate progress rather than expecting perfection.Try doing this: Recognize that no one is perfect; embrace each others strengths and flaws, focusing on growth rather than perfection.RELATED READING : 35 Telling Signs of True Love in a Relationship 11. Respect each others independenceTrue love involves two individuals who respect and encourage each others personal growth and independence. Allow space for each person to pursue their interests, friendships, and goals. When you support each others independence, you create a balanced and enriching partnership.Try doing this: Support each others personal goals and allow time for individual interests, balancing togetherness with independence.12. Practice forgiveness and understandingHolding onto grudges or unrealistic demands can erode true love. Practice forgiveness to let go of past misunderstandings and focus on moving forward together. Show understanding during disagreements, and remember that mistakes are part of any relationship. A forgiving attitude can help you maintain a healthy, loving relationship.Try doing this: Address issues with empathy and let go of past grievances to maintain a positive and healthy relationship.To learn more about the real risk of forgiveness and why is it still worth it, watch this video: By following these ways, youll not only discover how to cultivate love but also strengthen your connection with your partner. And how do you know you love someone truly? When their happiness becomes as important as your own, youve found true love.The bottom lineTrue love is one of lifes most transformative experiences, so take time to recognize and nurture it in your relationships. Reflecting on what is the meaning of true love and understanding how love can be defined helps build a strong foundation for lasting connection.True love goes beyond fleeting emotions; it involves mutual respect, trust, and support that deepen over time. By fostering open communication, setting healthy boundaries, and genuinely celebrating each others joys and successes, you can create a relationship that thrives.Remember, love is both a feeling and a commitmenta partnership that requires care, patience, and dedication. Embrace true love as a journey, one that enriches both your life and the life of your partner. //dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/love //iep.utm.edu/love-his/ //heart.bmj.com/content/104/23/1937 12)00269-1/fulltext Want to have a happier, healthier marriage? If you feel disconnected or frustrated about the state of your marriage but want to avoid separation and/or divorce, the marriage.com course meant for married couples is an excellent resource to help you overcome the most challenging aspects of being married. Take Course Love is bigger than you are. You can invite love, but you cannot dictate how, when, and where love expresses itself. Love cannot be turned on as a reward. Nor can it be turned off as a punishment. Marriages, whether arranged or not, may have little to do with love. Love is a force of nature. However much we may want to, we can not command, demand, or take away love, any more than we can command the moon and the stars and the wind and the rain to come and go according to our whims. We may have some limited ability to change the weather, but we do so at the risk of upsetting an ecological balance we don't fully understand. Similarly, we can stage a seduction or mount a courtship, but the result is more likely to be infatuation, or two illusions dancing together, than love. Love is bigger than you are. You can invite love, but you cannot dictate how, when, and where love expresses itself. You can choose to surrender to love or not, but in the end, love strikes like lightning: unpredictable and irrefutable. You can even find yourself loving people you don't like at all. Love does not come with conditions, stipulations, addenda, or codes. Like the sun, love radiates independently of our fears and desires. Love is inherently free. It cannot be bought, sold, or traded. You cannot make someone love you, nor can you prevent it not for any amount of money. Love cannot be imprisoned, nor can it be legislated. Love is not a substance, not a commodity, not even a marketable power source. Love has no territory, no borders, no quantifiable mass or energy output. One can buy sex partners and even marriage partners. Marriage is a matter of law, for rules and courts, and property rights. In the past, the marriage price, or dowry, and in the present, alimony and the pre-nuptial agreement, make it clear that marriage is all about contracts. But as we all know, marriages, whether arranged or not, may have little to do with love. Sexual stimulation and gratification, whether by way of fingers, mouths, objects, fantasy play, whips and chains, or just plain intercourse, can certainly be bought and sold, not to mention used to sell other things. Whether sex should be for sale is another question entirely, but love itself cannot be sold. One can buy loyalty, companionship, attention, and perhaps even compassion, but love itself cannot be bought. An orgasm can be bought, but love cannot. It comes, or not, by grace, of its own will and in its own timing, subject to no human's planning.Love cannot be turned on as a reward. It cannot be turned off as a punishment. Only something else pretending to be love can be used as a lure, as a hook, for bait and switch, imitated, insinuated, but the real deal can never be delivered if it doesn't spring freely from the heart. This doesn't mean that love allows destructive and abusive behaviors to go unchecked. Love speaks out for justice and protests when harm is being done. Love points out the consequences of hurting oneself or others. Love allows room for anger, grief, or pain to be expressed and released. But love does not threaten to withhold itself if it doesn't get what it wants. Love does not say, directly or indirectly, "If you are a bad boy, Mommy won't love you anymore." Love does not say, "Daddy's little girl doesn't do that." Love does not say, "If you want to be loved, you must be nice," or "Do what I want," or "Never love anyone else," or "Promise you'll never leave me." Love cares what becomes of you because love knows that we are all interconnected. Love is inherently compassionate and empathic. Love knows that the "other" is also oneself. This is the true nature of love, and love itself cannot be manipulated or restrained. Love honors the sovereignty of each soul. Love is its own law. Excerpted from The Seven Natural Laws of Love, by Deborah Anapol and appears by permission of the publisher. This material is protected by copyright. All rights reserved. Please contact the author for permission to copy, distribute or reprint. Find a Relationship Issues Therapist Get the help you need from a therapist near youa FREE service from Psychology Today. 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