

WHY SOME PARTNERS LOVE EACH OTHER, YET DON'T FEEL LOVED



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Does your significant other vow to love you, yet for some reason you do not really feel loved? I hear this complaint so frequently when working with couples that I have decided to inform our readers on some of the ways this situation develops.

MEN AND WOMEN MISUNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

Male and female children are generally socialized differently! Boys and girls are subjected to different societal, cultural, and parental training and expectations. This discrepancy in the way boys and girls are treated causes the two sexes to perceive the world and each other in dissimilar ways. A result of this is the development of different communication styles of men and women. I often tell a couple, "It is no wonder you don't understand each other because you seem to be speaking two different languages." (The man sounds as if he comes from

Mars and the woman sounds as if she comes from Venus).

The different communication styles (that are rooted in the socialization process), and the fact that the genders differ more than they realize are common causes of misunderstandings between men and women. These misunderstandings (also called "gender illusions") affect how each gender views and reacts to the other. The sexual and emotional consequences of these (misunderstandings) are what often propel couples into counseling. Part of the counseling process is to undo individuals' inaccurate or faulty perceptions and open roadblocks to communication so those partners can learn to "speak the same language." When one partner reports not feeling loved even though the significant other insists that he or she is demonstrating love, it often is a consequence of these misunderstandings. An example of how this scenario can be recycled between partners is presented in the following case:

A woman (with low sexual desire) complained that her husband was affectionate only when he had sexual intercourse in mind. She felt unloved for herself and used

sexually. Her husband stated that he loved his wife, and he could not understand why she didn't feel his love. Furthermore, he reported that he didn't (always) have sex in mind when expressing affection. However, their touching was so infrequent (because she wouldn't allow it, fearing it would end in sex, and he was uncomfortable with non-sexual touch) that he would inevitably become sexually excited. The wife then judged her husband in terms of the final outcome and the cycle started again. Neither partner understood the other! It is worth mentioning that the husband in this case also felt unloved (even though his wife said she loved him), because he felt undesired by his wife who had turned off to him sexually. He erroneously believed, "If she really loved me, she'd be more sexual!" She erroneously believed, "If he really loved me, he'd be more (non-sexually) affectionate!"

PASSION IS USED AS A BAROMETER FOR LOVE

Another reason a partner may be loved, but not feel loved is because one or the other may falsely assume that loss of passion (in one or both) equals loss of love! Such couples may experience dwindling passion and sexual intensity (not unusual over the course of time) and

use this perception as a barometer for their level of love, thereby feeling unloved or unlovable. Often a loss of passion can cause couples to worry that something has gone wrong between them and then become sexually indifferent toward each other. Individuals should not judge their partner's love based on the level of sexual intensity and frequency of sexual encounters. It is sad when couples end long-term relationships because of this false assumption and misunderstanding.

COUPLES HAVE DIFFERENT LOVING STYLES

There is an interesting theory about love that states: There is not one kind of love but rather six distinct styles. Moreover, we each develop a unique combination of these different styles, which have been labeled with the Greek words--Storge, Agape, Mania, Pragma, Ludus and Eros. Storge lover base love on friendship. Agape lovers give and forgive. Mania lovers fall madly in love. Pragma lovers are practical, falling in love with their heads rather than their hearts. Ludus lovers are game players. Eros lovers are the romantic lovers who value affection, emotional and erotic

intimacy. If we accept the assumption that love is really a combination of six different styles, and remember that men and women have different styles of communication that are subject to misunderstandings, we can start to understand how men and women can love each other, yet neither feels loved.

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