

# **LifeSkills: How to keep loving feelings strong in everyday life.**

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Have you thought of this?

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 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 behaviors 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, be it flowers, a piece of jewelry, or a surprise weekend getaway.

These behaviors, 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.

## **The relationship enters a new phase**

Anyone who has fallen in love is familiar with these intense feelings that come at the beginning of an intimate relationship. 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 a couple got together, it was usually a special occasion and both partners were on their best behavior.

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 behaviors 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 behaviors**

How you behave affects how you feel. It may be you associate the loving feelings only with the other person rather than with your behaviors and that person. If the loving feelings were only associated with the other person, and that person was still in the picture, the loving feelings would also be present.

If the feelings are no longer present, perhaps your behaviors have changed.

The good news is that if you have changed your behaviors once you can change them again.

Loving behaviors lead to loving feelings; they do not come out of thin air. By the same token, loving feelings lead to loving behaviors. 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 should work again. And there's nothing wrong with trying something new.

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

If you have tried these suggestions and you find it difficult to apply the strategies or would like more ideas, you might benefit from professional help.