

Encourage or Stifle

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Everyone agrees that "war is hell." Miguel de Cervantes said, "Love and war are the same thing, and stratagems and policy are as allowable in the one as in the other." Many people who have fallen in love and gotten married agree—especially after teenage children expanded the scope of the warfare.

Often couples divorce after the bliss of courtship turns into the drudgery of marriage but they don't learn. They repeat the cycle of love-to-hell and lean to Samuel Daniels' belief that love is "a sickness full of woes, all remedies refusing."

Cynics believe that love is sick and brings hell instead of happiness. People who are cynical about love don't have a clue about real love, nor have they ever tasted it. They have only experienced inadequate, selfish feelings masquerading as love—the grand basis of living.

Real Love

The Bible gave us three great commandments. One, love God more than anything. Two, love your neighbor as yourself. Three, love God's people as Jesus loves them. The Bible teaches that God is love and we live by love if we want real life, life worth having. Jesus told us, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," and showed us how real his love was when he gave himself up to a kangaroo court to be killed.

Jesus endured a long day of brutal interrogations, beatings, humiliations, and torture ending in death to fulfill his task on Earth. Shortly before he died, he made sure that one of his friends would take care of his mother. He loved to the end. I don't know many—if any—people who could stand up to the physical or emotional demands of such a task. Only real love could sustain a person through such a day. Since Jesus loved to the fullest, we can fully love.

Love has many facets and defies a simple, precise definition. Love is primarily a matter of choice and should not be confused with sentiments such as falling in love which is really infatuation. Love often involves emotion such as romance leading to marriage, but love is not romance. By love a person decides to romantically love one person instead of others. Love controls the expression of such emotions which are parts of the overall concept of love.

M. Scott Peck defines love as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." He considers the mind and the spirit to be the same and makes no distinction between mental and spiritual growth, and I agree. Abe Burrows says that you love "when another person's needs are as important as your own." Notice that by any valid definition of real love, Jesus is the supreme example.

Love has many forms that are expressed in English by phrases such as brotherly love, friendship love, dedicated love, sacrificial love, companion love and romantic love. Regardless of the form, real love always includes the aspects of spiritual growth and importance of people expressed by Peck and Burrows.

Dependence is a sentiment that is often confused with love between two people—especially mates. I am not referring to healthy reliance on the skills and abilities of others to do what we can't. I mean unhealthy dependence in which we think our happiness is dependent on another person. The current fad word is co-dependence.

Dependence and Dominance

People often marry because of unhealthy dependence on each other. One or both of them believe that they need and can't live without the other. This dependence is actually fear or insecurity—not love. Their relationship is unhealthy because its foundation is unhealthy. The basic fear underlying such dependence can manifest itself in dependent or dominant actions. Dependence and dominance are opposite ends of the same reaction to insecurity. Consider a couple who jog together.

If the wife says that she just can't run without her husband, she is dependent. She might try various things to cajole or manipulate him into running with her when he doesn't want to run. She feels frustrated because she isn't getting the exercise she needs and doesn't feel like her husband really loves her.

If the husband demands that his wife run with him, he is being dependent. He may dominate her and use domineering ways to get her to run, but he is still dependent on her. She must do what he says for him to feel good about himself.

In either case, the spouses are dependent on the other to be happy, feel good and do what they want. They usually say they are loving the other when they are actually filling their own needs and denying their underlying insecurities. They are not helping the other person grow or accepting the importance of the other person's needs.

Domineering supervisors—the ones we think of as little tyrants—also are meeting their needs of insecurity while explaining their actions by saying they are strictly following the book or some other rationalization. They demand that their subordinates do everything exactly as they say it should be done. They don't care about the mental growth of subordinates nor their needs. They are merely indulging their fears.

Encouragement

One person said, "Exuberance is running in the dark." We see officers in new assignments that are full of enthusiasm and are ready to run without knowing everything first. No one knows everything at first and must learn by experience.

Far better to let people run in the dark than to sit in the dark till everything is clear.

One problem when people run in the dark is that they stumble. Too often supervisors, parents, friends, and mates react to a stumble by kicking the person in the dark. After a person has been kicked a few times without clearly understanding why or what he should be doing, he learns to be still in the dark and accomplish nothing.

The better approach is to give light to an exuberant officer stumbling in the dark. Teach her and show her better ways to handle situations. Shed light on her job from your experience and knowledge. Commit yourself to her mental growth instead of kicks that do no good. If you teach and encourage an exuberant officer who is making mistakes, you develop an officer who will effectively serve the community for an entire career.

Love encourages people to grow and be all they can be. Fear stifles growth and individuality through dependence or dominance.

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