
Real love

So, you are beginning a relationship (or already in one) and you don't know how it will work out. Are you in love?

Sometimes it can be difficult to identify what love, within relationships, looks like. An excellent definition is 1 Corinthians. 13. However, outlined below is a practical list of 14 core differences between *agape* love, the highest form of love – much deeper than affection, and *toxic* love, where those in a relationship are constantly hurtful to each other. The list can be useful in helping to choose a partner and can provide discussion points when already in a relationship.

Love: Development of self first priority.

Toxic love: Obsession with relationship.

Love: Room to grow, expand; desire for others to grow.

Toxic love: Security, comfort in sameness; intensity of need seen as proof of love – may really be fear, insecurity, loneliness.

Love: Separate interests; other friends; maintain other meaningful relationships.

Toxic love: Total involvement; limited social life; neglect old friends, interests.

Love: Encouragement of each other's expanding; secure in own worth.

Toxic love: Preoccupation with other's behavior; fear of other changing.

Love: Appropriate Trust (trusting partner to behave according to fundamental nature.)

Toxic love: Jealousy; possessiveness; fear of competition; protects "supply."

Love: Compromise, negotiation or taking turns at leading. Problem solving together.

Toxic love: Power plays for control; blaming; passive or aggressive manipulation.

Love: Embracing of each other's individuality.

Toxic love: Trying to change other to own image.

Love: Relationship deals with all aspects of reality.

Toxic love: Relationship is based on delusion and avoidance of the unpleasant.

Love: Self-care by both partners; emotional state not dependent on other's mood.

Toxic love: Expectation that one partner will fix and rescue the other.

Love: Loving detachment (healthy concern about partner, while letting go.)

Toxic love: Fusion (being obsessed with each other's problems and feelings.)

Love: Sex is free choice growing out of caring & friendship.

Toxic love: Pressure around sex due to fear, insecurity & need for immediate gratification.

Love: Ability to enjoy solitude by being alone.

Toxic love: Unable to endure separation; clinging.

Love: Cycle of comfort and contentment.

Toxic love: Cycle of pain and despair.

Love: Conversations based upon intent to Understand, Help, or convey affection.

Toxic love: Conversations based upon intent to blame, defend, or manipulate.