

DO COUPLES WHO HAVE MANAGED TO STAY IN LOVE BEHAVE IN SPECIAL WAYS?

While a great deal of work remains to be done in this area, our own research and that of others disclose the following patterns as fairly representative for couples successful in love.

1. They express love verbally. This simply means saying, "I love you," or something in the same mood, frequently. (In contrast to the attitude best summarized by "What do you mean, do I love you? I married you, didn't I?")
2. They are physically affectionate with hugging, kissing, cuddling, and comforting -- with a drink, a pillow or a woolly blanket.
3. They express love sexually. People who are happily in love invest a good deal of energy in the sexual aspect of their relationship. They make love more frequently than the average couple, and sex is important in their relationship.
4. They express their appreciation and admiration. Happy couples talk about what they like, enjoy, and admire in each other. As a result, they feel visible appreciated, and valued.
5. They participate in mutual self-disclosure. This is a willingness to share more of themselves and more of their inner lives with each other than with any other person. They share thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams, aspirations; hurt, anger, longing; memories of painful or embarrassing experiences. Such couples are far more comfortable with self-disclosure than the average and, as a corollary, more interested in each other's inner life.
6. They offer each other an emotional support system. They are there for each other in times of illness, difficulty, hardship, and crisis. And are best friends to each other. They are generally helpful, nurturing, and devoted to each other's interest and well - being.
7. They express love materially with gifts, big or small, but given on more than just the routine occasions; or tasks performed to lighten the burden of the partner's life, such as sharing work or doing more than the agreed upon chores.
8. They accept demands or put up with shortcomings that would be far less acceptable in any other person. Demands and shortcomings are part of every relationship. So are the benevolence and grace with which we respond to them.
9. They create time to be alone together. This time is exclusively devoted to themselves. Enjoying and nurturing their relationship rank very high among their priorities, for they understand that love requires attention and leisure.

These characteristics are not equally present in every happy marriage. Each partner does not exhibit them equally at all times. We strongly doubt that anyone could point to a happy relationship that did not show most of these traits.

Taken from Nathaniel Branden's "The Romantic Love Question and Answer Book."