

How to Determine Love from the Counterfeits of the Heart

Understand the Nature of Love

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A powerful emotion, love transcends time and space, moves mountains and often defies reasoning. Love is what lets us accept others for who they are, in spite of flaws or shortcomings. When you find love in your life, you'll strive to keep it but it's only natural that you'll also want to know the experience is both real and enduring. "Counterfeit" refers to the experiences that may seem real but are in reality insincere or feigned expressions of love, illusions that can deter you from finding and sharing real love. To avoid the pitfalls of counterfeit love in your relationships, this article will help you explore the ins and outs of real love, in all its glorious forms.

Method 1 of 2: Understand the Nature of Love

1 Look for trust. Trust is the most basic foundation of love; it ensures that a relationship stays strong. Trust needs to be earned to establish ongoing confidence; it's not a given just because of who you are or what you've professed.

- True lovers both give and receive trust. Although trusting can be scary, it is only by opening yourself up to love (and thus by letting yourself become vulnerable and *trusting* that the other person will not hurt you) that you truly discover the beauty in letting another person into your inner world. It's a feeling that lets you close your eyes and know that someone believes in you and will catch you when you fall. In other words, trusting fully allows you to fully feel love.
- On the other hand, **distrust is never part of true love.** Henry Stimson once said that "The only way to make a man trustworthy is to trust him"—remember that distrust cannot hold a love relationship together for long. If you find distrust and lies at the heart of your relationship with a person, it's counterfeit love.

2 Realize that love always protects. When you love someone, you open your heart and start to care. You *want* to remain connected. Anything that concerns the other person will concern you too, even if you can just offer a shoulder to cry on or be a sounding board to bounce ideas off. The littlest pain and struggle of the the person you love troubles you, yet you also know that your love is strong enough to help and to protect the other person—you simply need to be there for him or her.

- Love makes you protective without being invasive or controlling—you want to help when you can, reach out when it's needed and help guide to prevent unwanted outcomes for those still learning at any stage in life. Love causes you to get up at 3am in the morning to collect your exhausted partying teens instead of letting them travel home alone; love causes you to leave your huge pile of work early because your spouse sounded down over the phone that afternoon; love causes you to tell the local school that you've seen cars making dangerous turning maneuvers where children are crossing the road because you don't want to see children hurt; love causes you to send letters to your local representative complaining about damage to the local environment because you don't want your community to be hurt. Love brings out the protective self in you.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love is shown through a control or neglect.** When one person couldn't care less whether the other person is truly safe, healthy or happy, they are in a counterfeit relationship. Counterfeit love is also shown when a person simply ignores troubling signs and refuses to discuss helpful solutions because he or she fails to see it as any of his or her business. It's a way of pushing aside both relationships and community in favor of oneself. Lastly, counterfeit love often ascribes to the blame culture, where it's everyone else's fault and responsibility, not that of the person in question.

3 Know that love is kind. Kindness enables you to see beyond what the biological eyes take in. Kind people look at happenings in life with sympathy and empathic understanding. Likewise, love is kind and encourages you to respond to life with goodness and thoughtfulness.

- Being gentle and comforting, as well as taking a loving, kind approach in your relationships, will help to establish mutual respect and a realization on both sides. Each person will feel fully listened to and taken into account.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love tends to be impatient and rude,** always demanding and frequently abrupt. If there is little kindness in your relationship with another person, there is no true love either.

4 Be aware that love is never selfish. Instead, love is about knowing how to give and to receive. When you love, you give yourself, unconditionally, to someone else. In return, you're given time, consideration and support. You find pleasure in reaching out. You want to be there for your loved one, and you expect nothing in return.

- Your expression of love will differ according to your individuality; each expression will be unique and worthy in its own right. It's not the amount or the value of love that really matters, but the way that it motivates you to do all that you do.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love exists when one person does all the giving** and the other person does all the taking. It's selfish when one person insists on being supported without being willing to also give support.

5 Give love credit for being smart. Love might be blind, but it's not corrupt or stupid—love reminds you how to behave. Love helps you truly understand the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do to you") that runs through many religions and secular traditions. Just as you model better behavior by being better behaved, you model loving behavior by being loving. Love inspires you to spread loving behavior by demonstrating it in all that you do. Give love the credit for being a smart approach to living your life.

- For some people, a "smart approach" includes a faith-based approach to life, while for others it is more about being a good human based in sound/non-religious morals. Either way, love is deeply entwined with treating others right, whether they are lovers, coworkers, strangers or neighbors.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love isn't smart.** It seeks to constrict the world to a single viewpoint. It does not accept the ideas and beliefs of others. It excuses bad behavior from itself, but expects exemplary behavior from others.

6 Learn perseverance as love's virtue. Perseverance is the virtue of standing and pressing on despite the odds. When you love someone truly, you enter into a deep commitment and a very close friendship. No matter what happens, you remain there for the one you love. In return, this person will stand by you when *your* chips are down. You will begin to understand one another even more deeply. As a result, your love will grow.

- Paradoxically, in persevering, you also learn the art of letting go: you let go of petty worries and silly little concerns in order to be supportive of the person you love and to stand up for his or her needs. Ultimately, perseverance allows you to fully embrace your loved one for who he or she truly is, a quality more valuable than any other.
- On the other hand, **a lack of perseverance can be a sign of counterfeit love.** A person who turns away from you when things are hard and refuses to be supportive is either a fair-weather friend or has simply been pretending to be loving you all along.

7 Know the difference between jealousy and envy as one of love's expressions. Jealousy and envy are closely related in meaning but they're definitely different in outcome. Love can be jealous at times, but it's certainly never envious.

- *Jealousy* is an occasionally legitimate emotion in response to the fear of losing someone you love. As long as its kept under control, it is a harmless emotion. However, do not let it grow because, like fire, it can result to mass devastation and loss when misused. Only use jealousy as driving force to challenge yourself to be a better lover.
- *Envy* denotes a longing to possess something awarded to or achieved by another. It is often felt when you become bitter and resentful of someone's success and achievement. This makes you feel uneasy at the sight of another person's excellence or good fortune. It is accompanied with some degree of hatred and a desire to possess equal advantages. Love is never envious.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love is awash with envy.** If you're in a relationship where competitiveness and one-upmanship seem to rule the roost, then you're not sharing a loving relationship. Stop seeking to possess what other people have and start trusting in what you already have, and you'll be able to find true love.

8 Look for endurance. Love is not easily angered. It can survive through times of suffering. If you're truly in love with someone, you'll learn to endure difficult situations, including times when it seems as though your relationship cannot last. Endurance allows you to ignore the challenges that are raised when a loved one acts thoughtlessly or unkindly. Endurance lets you look beyond out-of-character behavior, difficult attitudes and challenging transition periods. Endurance allows you to always stand by the people you care about.

- Suffering in love teaches you wisdom. It widens your understanding of how people can change over time while still being same person you have always loved. It teaches you to listen without judgement to your loved ones despite their mindset, cultural upbringing, values and principles. Through love, you learn to let people be who they are rather than seeking to change them. Instead, *a loving relationship is based on acceptance.*

- On the other hand, **counterfeit love seeks to control, manipulate and change people**. It tries to force one preferred viewpoint on others, playing down the importance of diversity and differences. Moreover, counterfeit love does not endure—when things go wrong and the single viewpoint cannot be enforced, the relationship tends to disintegrate.

Method 2 of 2: Learn to Love

1 Use love to sidestep perfectionism. Love is often referred to as being "blind". This adage exists because it connotes acceptance of a person in spite of imperfections. Love is a realization that no one is perfect, and allows you to love someone *for* his or her flaws and shortcomings. Love motivates you to look for the good in a person and to encourage improvement.

- When you expect too much and your expectations aren't met, you feel disappointed. Avoid such disappointments by being resilient and flexible with your loved ones.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love concentrates too much on flaws and failures**, turning them into a reason to control, berate or be unkind toward another person. Counterfeit love is often conditional on a person behaving in a certain way. Seeking perfectionism in yourself and your relationships is like chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—it's never attainable.

2 Discover that love keeps no records of wrong, although it does have healthy boundaries. Healthy love is about setting boundaries to protect your relationships and yourself. Healthy love begins with self love (**not** self absorption) and radiates from loving yourself.

- Healthy love also learns to forgive and move forward, in the realization that harboring resentment is like holding a hot coal of anger—you are the only one who gets burned. *Forgiveness* is a big part of loving others, as is making it clear to people where your limits lay. It's not wrong or unloving to stand up to disrespect; it's a healthy sign of self-respect and setting boundaries for others to learn from.
- On the other hand, **counterfeit love does keep score**, with a person frequently returning to occasions when he or she felt you hurt or upset his or her feelings. This scorekeeping can reach back years in the relationships of some people, with bitterness and resentment the only thing keeping people close. Such unhealthy love never learns forgiveness and results in "lovers" with little to no self esteem.

3 Love even though you may lose. Love never fails, even you feel like it has. Break ups (whether it's a romantic, workplace, business, friendship, etc) can really hurt. Yet, love is worth the effort, even in those times when loss hurts you. For, as Alfred Lord Tennyson put it, *Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all*. Love is therefore also about experience. You cannot shut yourself off from the rest of the world, no matter how afraid you are of loss.

- By opening yourself up to the amazing possibilities of love, you open yourself up to all the beauty and wonder of the world too. Sometimes it won't work but on the law of averages, you'll experience more love than loss, especially if you don't tie down your notion of love to simple romantic love but embrace love as a way of being and thinking in all walks of your life.

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