

CAN YOUR LOVE LAST? YES, AND HERE'S HOW.

1. Build and manifest your emotional STRENGTHS:

- To honour and love yourself. To know you can always give and receive love.
- To face life's challenges with equanimity, even cheer. To share your concerns, but not dump them on partner.
- To be there for partner when necessary, and to step back when necessary.
- To gently suggest options, but not coerce or manipulate.
- To encourage partner to follow his/her interests. (The extent to be negotiated.)
- To plan your life (acting, not reacting) both individually and mutually.
- To say no – and remain firm – when appropriate. To refrain from gratuitously hurtful statements or actions.
- To consider carefully before making commitments, and keep them when made.
- To maintain your physical and mental health and weight: diet, exercise, meditation and an attitude of gratitude.
- To abstain from life's destructive temptations: (low-quality high-calorie food, excess alcohol, legal/illegal drugs, workaholism, extracurricular sex.)

2. Be CHARMING and playful toward each other. (If need be, on occasion, act as if.) Be kind to all.

3. Be AFECTIONATE and nurturing. Express your affection frequently.

4. Share mutual VALUES.

5. Share mutual INTERESTS, in addition to pursuing individual interests.

6. Share mutual GOALS. (Which develop organically out of the above.)

All six of these behaviours are essential for lasting love: a quality long-term relationship. And this is why love often fades quickly. Building and manifesting your emotional strengths – being consistently charming and affectionate – and sharing your interests, values and goals – is ongoing work. There are times when all of us feel: “it's too hard; I give up.”

And if we give up? We settle for a lower-quality relationship with the same partner (which can go on for the remainder of our lives), or we seek to create a love with a new partner (which can require years of searching, even the remainder of our lives). Or we resign ourselves to a solitary existence.

As a character stated in “Thelma and Louise”: “Life is what you settle for.”

You choose positive behaviours, or you settle – every moment of your life.