

Unconditional Love Isn't Enough

All you need is love, or so they say. People of faith would probably add, "All you need is unconditional love"; but I say even that isn't enough. Unconditional love is love that is expressed without limitations, conditions, expectations or demands.

- When you love someone unconditionally, you don't expect favors or anything in return.

- When you love someone unconditionally, you don't trade or barter.

- When you love someone unconditionally, you love them even when feelings of love might not be mutually felt at the time.

One of the best real-life examples of unconditional love is the love that exists between a parent and a child. However, is unconditional love in marriage practical or always safe? Is it really enough?

The marital oath is that you will love your partner in sickness and health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse. The expectation is that you'll face life together and see it through no matter what!

But what happens when one spouse doesn't do everything in their power to make the marriage work? What if one spouse harms or abuses their partner intentionally?

Is their partner, who loves them unconditionally, supposed to sit there passively to the detriment of their health and wellbeing?

Disregarding reality is dangerous, especially in the face of serious relationship problems such as emotional, physical or financial abusiveness.

So how do we demonstrate unconditional love in these situations?

Perhaps the kind of love couples share in marriage is best described as "boundless" love rather than unconditional, which these days seems to have a passive connotation.

Boundless love doesn't depend on external circumstances; it endures even when external circumstances are working against you and your marriage. It's a wise kind of love that endures even when you're facing a potentially harmful situation emotionally, physically or financially. It's a kind of love that does not disregard external circumstances or threats to your health and wellbeing.

Perhaps these are traits of unconditional love, too. But I wonder if the true meaning of unconditional love has become so blurred and cliched through misuse or overuse that it has lost its meaning.

The main distinction between these two kinds of love is that boundless love acknowledges obstacles and strives to overcome them; it's active - and never plays the victim.

Boundless love is based on the knowledge that your emotions towards your spouse may change depending on external/internal faults, pressures and circumstances that are weighing on your marriage - but it doesn't mean you don't love your spouse anymore.

You shouldn't feel bad for having negative emotions such as anger towards your spouse; it's not an indication that you've fallen out of love. It's a sign that there are some obstacles you need to overcome, and that you're taking 100% responsibility for creating the kind of happy and healthy marriage that you want and deserve.

Unconditional love doesn't need to be blind or naive in a way that leads you to become a helpless, hopeless punching bag. You have the ability and responsibility to make rational decisions in the face of danger and adversity, such as abuse. Furthermore, you don't deny, ignore or suppress negative feelings.

Genuine love is rich and multifaceted, and it takes 100% responsibility for making the relationship as healthy as possible, diligently working through any obstacles or challenges your relationships faces along the way towards lifelong happiness.

Until next time, this is Mike Tucker and I want YOU to be mad about marriage!