

## Is It Love?

Everyone desires to be loved, but when you're young it's hard to really know if it's love or not. Unfortunately too often love is promoted as a reason to make decisions that will be harmful to your well being. **Having Sex and Being in Love is Not the Same Thing.**



According to most TV shows and movies, love and sex go hand in hand. But in the real world, it's not always true: **Sex doesn't equal love.** You may want to have sex to prove your emotional commitment, but your partner may be interested only in sex, not you. And if you have sex, you may end up feeling hurt and used. Sex can't "save" a relationship. Mature relationships are built on mutual trust and respect. Having sex won't make a relationship work. In fact, couples that have sex resulting in a pregnancy often break up because they can't withstand the demands of parenting. Even when there is no pregnancy, young couples lack the commitment to stay together when problems arise. Sex won't make you popular. Your friends should like and respect you for who you are, not because you're willing to have sex. True friends won't pressure you to have sex.

Love should never be used to pressure or manipulate someone into having sex. In fact, having sex to prove your love for someone is one of the worse mistakes anyone can make. When someone attempts to pressure you into having sex the typical line is, "If you loved me you would". One response could be, "If you loved me, you wouldn't". Sexual pressure is a sure sign that the motivation is lust rather than love because someone who loves you would never pressure you into doing anything against your will.



It's also helpful to have discussions about your goals and beliefs as your relationship develops rather than waiting until things get heated before mentioning your decision to delay sexual involvement. It is much easier to have a friendship that is based upon mutual respect when you have clearly expressed your desires to each other. Your personal decision to delay sexual involvement should be communicated in both words and deed. Body language is a powerful form of communication. It's possible to send one message in your conversation while sending conflicting message through nonverbal communication. Avoid the confusion by making sure that the way you carry yourself around others and your conversation are one in the same. Your decision to delay sexual activity does not have to limit your ability to show you care. There are four tips that will help you develop a strong relationship:

**Learn about each other:**

Conversations will help to uncover both the obvious and the not so obvious details about each other's likes and dislikes, as well as individual goals and priorities.



**Take the time to show you care:**

Expressing your concern for a friend does not have to be a physical experience. Remembering birthdays and other special dates along with sharing a favorite meal are creative ways to show you care.

**Encourage and support each other:** Everyone needs encouragement, especially during difficult times. Take the time to share an inspirational card or leave an upbeat message on their answering machine just to let them know that you believe in their ability to come through this difficult time.

**Maintain existing relationships:** Getting to know a new friend can become so exciting that the existing friendships are put on the back shelf. A true sign of a healthy relationship is your ability to maintain the strength of existing relationships. Give each other space to spend time with other people, including family and friends. Believe it or not, you also need time for yourself. When you spend quiet time alone, you have time to plan and assess your feelings.



**Send an e-card or text message:** Why not take advantage of technology and use the email system to stay in touch with close friends. A text message or e-card is a simple way to keep the lines of communication open. With busy schedules, after-school activities, and homework, sending an e-card or text message is a quick and easy way to show someone you care.