

Falling Out of Love – Should We Get A Divorce?

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

Often when a couple comes in for couple's counseling, one of the partner is stating that s/he has fallen out of love with the other partner. Sometimes they both feel that way, but usually it is just one spouse verbalizing this. The partner that feels as if s/he has fallen out of love, often questions whether they ever "really" loved their spouse in the first place. There are often other marital issues that the couple is either not acknowledging or have just given up on.

Other issues that are typically present are: feeling overwhelmed by "task overload", the sense of not having enough time, energy, or other resources to invest in their relationship, and a general apathy about investing those resources if they were available. The one who has fallen of love feels unloved and lonely, and may be daydreaming about the possibility of "falling in love" with someone new.

Typically, the spouse who wants a divorce, has stopped complaining to the other party about needing or wanting more attention (or other changes). The other spouse believes things are ok because of the lack of complaining. The couple has typically stopped consulting each other about problems and difficulties and tend to handle everything individually. They have stopped complaining about the other person's annoying habits, but feel resentment about them.

They may have even started to develop a life away from the other partner. When the marriage is in obvious danger of dissolution, they may resist any suggestion of actually working on the relationship. They carry unresolved hurt and resentment and use it as a shield to keep from taking risks again and being vulnerable. The withdrawing partner feels alienated from the other partner and the relationship and may believe that if you don't feel "in love" you might as well pack it in.

What this couple does not know is that you can regain your sense of "being in love" again. That hot romantic feeling may or may not return, but the sense of connection, satisfaction, and tenderness can return. One of the main contributing factors to "falling out of love" is neglect. Time and energy gets spent everywhere but on the relationship and each other. They have stopped thinking and acting like a team. They have developed a pattern of unilateral problem solving where they deal with some joint issue separately, then get back together to try to "sell" their solution to the other partner.

No one feels heard. Everyone may feel neglected. The solution is in the description of the problem. To return to love, start to re-invest in the relationship. People change over time. Its inevitable. Take the risks to share who are you with your spouse. Stay up all night talking like you used to do when you were first together. Go on dates. Buy thoughtful gifts for each other. Call, text, connect during the day. Try

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something new romantically. The love probably is not really gone. It's probably just lying beneath the hurt and neglect.

It is also important to know that marriages go through developmental stages, just like human beings. Couples that have been together over a lifetime often report that they have "fallen in and out of love" several times.

If, and when this falling out of love happens in your relationship, don't do anything rash. Get the help that you need to restore the love in your relationship.