

## Is It Love?

Many people in life liked me. Few loved me. This experience led me to believe at some level that while I was likeable there was something fundamentally wrong with me. I feared I would always be unloveable.

This feeling was painful and destructive. It caused me to seek attention and approval in misguided ways. I needed to learn the difference between these levels of affection. The knowledge served me well. It freed me to seek healthier relationships. The ability to distinguish like from love helped me to form attachments that encouraged growth. It also diminished the abuse I encountered.

I believe my experience has value. I know others struggle with personal relationships too. I care enough to share my thoughts on the subject. I hope it will encourage someone else to examine their associations. The ability to distinguish between an acquaintance and a true friend serves to strengthen my walk in life. If you have ever wondered whether someone truly loved you, I hope to help. Are you ready to learn what I see as the difference between being liked and being loved?

People who like me enjoy my company. They give me positive feedback. I know how to be pleasant. I am aware that some people will not take to me. In general though, I see myself as a likeable guy.

People who know me often want my companionship. They have an appreciation for at least some of my better qualities. However, sometimes they like me for my worst behaviors. Regardless of the causes, I get along with them.

Most often people like me for one of several reasons. First they appreciate what I can do for them. Secondly, they enjoy the feelings they have while being around me. Thirdly, they relish how my presence makes them think and feel about themselves. Love goes beyond these considerations.

The few people who loved me had a real concern for me as an individual. They demonstrated it no matter what they felt when we were together. When separated by space, time or strong emotions they continued to care about me. This interest was disconnected from what I could do for them in the present or future. When we were at odds they made an effort to reconcile.

These loving people cared enough to risk unpleasant emotions, my anger and separation to tell me what I needed to know. In this way they fostered my growth. They were more concerned about my emotional, mental and physical health than they were with ease and comfort. (mine or theirs)

The people who loved me showed it in the way they treated me. They accepted me as a person even when my behavior disappointed or offended them. They nurtured, challenged, comforted or encouraged me according to my greatest need. They told me what I needed to hear rather than what I wanted to hear.

When others loved me they confronted me as I needed it. Sometimes they gave me a push when I hesitated to take necessary action. They took these steps even in difficult situations. My needs were so important that they made them a priority. But, they never did for me what I should do for myself. They also never bartered with their affections or tried to manipulate me with their approval or praise.

In closing I want to reiterate that there are differences between being liked and being loved. To be liked involves many pleasurable emotions. Usually they revolve around a common interest or a mutual desire shared between two people. To be loved goes beyond these conditions. It entails a true consideration of who I am as an individual. Those who had this level of concern for me placed my wellbeing ahead of other pursuits.

I want to encourage you to examine your relationships. Has each person demonstrated a deep concern for you or are they somewhat less involved? You may discover some are only acquaintances. In those cases enjoy their company. At the same time, limit the importance you place on them. They should never take priority over your true friends. If you find their influence to be destructive or hurtful cut them loose. This action will create more time to spend with those closer to you.

The true friends in your life are important. It is my hope you have a greater appreciation for those that love you after reading this article. Please take action on it. Tell your loved ones of the understanding and gratitude you have for the wonderful gift they give you each and every day.

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