

Is it REAL Love?

Only time will tell

By Vesta Copestakes

It's Valentine time, so we look for trinkets that become little reminders of our love, take our sweeties out to dinner, etc. Why? Because it feels good and that's what love is all about. As a friend once said to me – you like to be in love because of the way it takes you feel. Yeah – well – me and Paul McCartney. As my guy Alan says, "Vesta – you're in love with love!" Too true!

So what is love anyway? Well, I've certainly had my roller coaster rides and formed opinions through the years. A bunch of years ago I came up with what I call ...

"The Rule of Two and 1/2 years."

Early love is all illusions and it's a wonderful time to just immerse yourself in the thrill of it all. As we age and experience broken hearts, over and over, we tend to get skittish about this phase. We're reluctant to surrender to it – distrustful, etc. We have reasons! BUT, if we hold back, we're missing out on an opportunity that happens ONLY when love is fresh and new. How about just surrender to it. Hold off on sex as long as you can stand it and feel the intense electricity of desire that lasts only until you indulge! Once over that line – it all changes rapidly.

The first stage lasts about six months and everyone is on good behavior. They feel so good you can't blame anyone for acting nice, nice all the time. Lovers are happy and behave well. Basically, at this stage, you don't have a clue who you are falling in love with – and vice versus.

By the time a year has passed you learned a lot. Not the whole story, but enough to decide if you want to keep walking down this path hand-in-hand. If the answer is yes, then carry on, but know that you still don't have the whole story. This is NOT the time to get married! You might want to test-drive the deal by living together, but it will put guaranteed pressure on the situation, so hold off if you can. Living together is mighty different from spending the night at each other's homes. Shared responsibilities can take their toll on love.

Over the next year or so you will have conflicts. How you resolve those conflicts will tell you everything you need to know about the strength of your love, your compatibility and your mutual respect. People who yell nasty things in the heat of anger don't have

what it takes. Those nasty remarks leave scars on hearts. The words rattle around in a lover's head and ring true enough that they will form self-doubt and all kinds of emotions that don't blend well with love. They are confidence killers as well as relationship killers. Good love is all about respect.

By the time 2 years rolls around people are very real. You just can't maintain illusions beyond this. The next year makes or breaks the tie that binds. I've certainly had the inklings that I should leave at 2 years, but I'm persistent and dragged it on another year only to come to the same conclusion – this doesn't work. Another year didn't make it better, it only diminished the love until that love was gone. Once the love is lost, there's nothing holding strings to your heart. It's time to leave and let each partner seek someone more compatible. The important thing to do at this point is to part with respect. Fights and insults, cheating, all that nasty stuff is not necessary to say goodbye. Just agree to disagree and move on.

But – if the love is growing, the compatibility increasing, the mutual respect feeding each other, then this is where what I call "Deep Heat" takes over. If you thought new love was exciting, wait until you experience real love. I know some couples who have been together decades and they talk about the thrill of seeing their lover walk through the door. That tingle in your heart? It runs clear through your body. The love literally settles into a physically deeper space in your heart.

Sexual desire is a full body experience that is even satisfied by cuddling around each other and falling asleep. It's intimacy in a safe environment and there is nothing more thrilling than feeling emotionally, mentally and physically safe with someone you love, and most important, loves you in return. "Safe Haven" is what Alan and I call it. Wow! THIS is worth waiting for, striving for and seeking. Ask any couple who has fared well over time will tell you there's nothing like long-term, enduring love.

I wish every lover a wonderful month of love, and if you can pull it off, decades until death do you part. And quite honestly, it never leaves your heart. Ask anyone who lost a lover to death. It doesn't end there!

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Reclaiming Our Power

The **GoLocal** campaign is co-hosting, with its allied group members, a series of spring events on the theme "Reclaiming our Local Economic Power"

The first event is 3 to 6pm on **March 1st** at the Glazer Center in Santa Rosa and will include:

1. Introducing the Sonoma County GoLocal Cooperative, its mission and loyalty rewards program.
2. A panel discussion with local cooperative enterprises and the California Center for Cooperative Development in Davis.
3. Insights from Mondragon, the world's most successful cooperative community.
4. Local Producer Showcase - highlighting GoLocal member businesses.

The second event is 7 to 9 pm on **March 19th** at the Santa Rosa City Hall and will look at successful examples of "Localization" from Willits and communities across the county.



On Friday April 17, 2 to 8pm and **Saturday April 18, 9am to 7pm** at the Petaluma Community Center there will be a workshop with keynote speaker Michael Shuman. This interactive program will explore ideas, partnerships and opportunities for building a more resilient economy and creating local jobs.

For more information on participation in these events go to www.GoLocal.coop or call Jay Beckwith at 824-9349.