

# “I love you” & love

Tips from Dr. Darek Dawda of DAVDA Psychology\*

BY MATHILDA WATERS



*According to our expert on well-being, Dr. Darek Dawda of DAVDA Psychology, we say, “I love you” too often and show love too rarely.*

MW: I once dated a man who frequently told me he loved me, yet I didn't feel loved by him.

Dr. DD: Saying “I love you” and showing love are two different things. Love, of course, has much more to do with actions than words. In an ideal world, “I love you” would come together with loving acts. Unfortunately, we sometimes use “I love you” as a substitute for love, perhaps because it takes less effort.

MW: How do you show love?

Dr. DD: One element of love (this applies to parental love, romantic love, or love between friends) is curiosity about the other. When you are curious you can appreciate others' uniqueness. Understanding their desires and fears will help you love them better. It will also prevent you from confusing your own desires and fears with theirs, and from making poor choices in the name of love.

MW: Like when people claim to be in love, yet hurt each other over and over?

Dr. DD: That's right. Deep bonds are formed between people in abusive relationships, but this intimacy should not be confused with love.

MW: So we should give each other more attention?

Dr. DD: Absolutely. When you understand the other, you are in a better position to give affection and care that will contribute to their well-being. You are then on your way to building trust and commitment that will sustain your loving relationship.

MW: So love is all about giving?

Dr. DD: Yes. Love is about giving of yourself. But this doesn't mean self-sacrifice. Love can require sacrifice at times, but it should not compromise your own well-being. You love best when you're true to yourself and take care of yourself.

MW: So one should love oneself?

Dr. DD: It would be best to practice self-love at the same time you practice loving others.

MW: And we all benefit?

Dr. DD: Yes. But it is important not to treat love as another commodity to be exchanged between individuals. We all have different gifts to offer, and those gifts can't be quantified. There are also different roles love can assume. Parental love, for example, is very different from children's love towards parents. It doesn't all have to be equal and reciprocal. It just has to work. And each loving relationship will differ in details. Love, in the end is not about you or me but about us. Love creates a third space that transcends individuality, and moves us to a better place.

MW: If it's not working for people, can they make it work?

Dr. DD: Yes. People often can make it work if they are both willing. Love isn't a mysterious force we have no understanding of. We know what elements create good conditions for love to flourish.

MW: Speaking about the “mysterious force,” what about romantic love?

Dr. DD: “Falling in love” is a great feeling that often marks the most emotionally intense and pleasurable times in our lives. But the truth is falling in love is more like getting drunk than loving. Love can sometimes come out of the initial intoxication of infatuation, but I would not use the word ‘love’ to talk about infatuation.

MW: Last word?

Dr. DD: Many people are starved for love, because love is not valued and practiced enough in our busy individualistic culture. If I had a magic wand, I'd conjure up a world in which we would have the wisdom and time to love each other more.

\* DAVDA Psychology is a psychotherapy and personal coaching clinic. For inquiries call 253-2832. Visit [www.davda.ca](http://www.davda.ca) for free SLEEP QUIZ with SLEEP TIPS or for more information. To find other Manitoba psychologists, visit [www.mps.ca](http://www.mps.ca)