

Love MAKES THE WORLD GO AROUND

On the eve of Valentine's ay, *OK!* Middle East talk to Sree Sreedharan, an acclaimed teacher of Vedanta, an ancient Indian philosophy that ultimately leads to spiritual enlightenment. Here Sree unravels the concept of True love...

What is the true definition of love?

Love is the feeling of harmony and identification with another. Love creates an attitude of sharing, caring and giving. It isn't about taking, grabbing and manipulation. Love transforms the thought of 'me' and 'you' and replaces it with 'us'. The fundamental requirement for true love

is unselfishness. Only then can love grow and mature. Love is inclusive and has many faces – caring, listening, sharing from the heart and just accepting someone for what they are right now. Real love seeks nothing in return.

Do you have to love yourself first to love someone else?

Yes. It all starts with acceptance of yourself. Those with high self-esteem have a greater capacity to love. So you should ideally love yourself first yourself, then others (especially the ones you currently resist) and eventually you can have the capacity to love everyone including your enemies Love can never be exclusive. The sun does not choose to shine on some flowers in the garden and not others.

It seems the concept of true love has been distorted...

The concept of love has been totally misunderstood. The love many people claim to feel these days is merely a physical attraction, an emotional manipulation or an intellectual stimulation. And it does not grow beyond that. Although attraction plays a part in the early stages, the realisation that you are in love with your ideal, and not your partner eventually shatters the illusion. Reality awakens from the romantic dream. Those partners either continue in the benign relationship where they feel disappointed or they part company. Now, here's the truth. The person you're in a relationship with is a reflection of your own self-esteem. What you feel you deserve is equal to what you think you're worth.

What is possessive love?

When thoughts rush towards an object or a person indiscriminately, it's called preferential attachment. When the attachment sustains it becomes possessive love, which is tainted by selfishness. In this case the husband expects the wife to behave in a way he thinks is right. And the wife expects the husband to behave in

'The person you're in a relationship with is the reflection of your own self-esteem'

the way she thinks is right. There is no understanding that each person functions according to their nature. Expectations become unreasonable and this then leads to huge disappointment. As a result there is friction and repulsion, which usually leads to separation.

What are the key ingredients in a healthy relationship?

- 1. Unselfishness:** This is incredibly important. If both partners are self-centred, there will always be agitations and disappointments. Both partners need to develop a sense of unselfishness. It could be difficult in the beginning but it will yield peace and happiness in the end.
- 2. Listening:** These days partners do not seem to listen to each other. One partner could be speaking but whether the other is really listening is another question. If you don't absorb what your partner is saying, there will be a lack of understanding, and you won't be able to bond properly. So develop the art of real listening.
- 3. Value your roles:** You have different roles in life. At work, perhaps you are a manager whereas at home you're a spouse to your partner or a parent to your child. You are also a child to your parents and brother to your sister and so on. If you play each role well you will experience joy in life. You shouldn't bring the stresses of your workplace home. Certainly your spouse should lend you a sympathetic ear when you really need to let out your frustrations, but consistently complaining about work-related issues is negative and suggests you don't respect the relationship enough to give it the tenderness it deserves. So leave your work at the office. When you're with your partner you should enjoy quality time together. OK!

INTERVIEW BY SARAH BLADEN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES/GALLO IMAGES



TREAT OF THE WEEK

VALENTINE'S DAY RETREAT

What is it?

A complete package for couples which includes a Real Aromatherapy Experience Massage, followed by a de-stressing body treatment. After a quick shower, your therapist then begins a cleansing facial to complete the experience.

What are the highlights?

The spa has a very modern, urban feel to it and you will be waited on with the utmost courtesy. The couples treatment is performed by both a male and female therapist while you both enjoy the treatments in a special couple's room. However, they are careful to ensure you are never feel exposed and the facial leaves you glowing and fresh-faced. Plus, you are also able to take advantage of the fitness centre, sauna and outdoor pool, before enjoying chocolate covered strawberries and a glass of bubbly at their gorgeous Amatista lounge.

Are there any downsides?

When the therapist manipulates your pressure points, it can be a little painful. If it becomes too much to bear, be sure to tell them to ease up!

How much is it?

Dhs 950 per person.

Where can I try it?

The Address, Dubai Mall. Call 04 438 8888.

★★★★☆

Review by Jasmine Bandali