

Andrew N. Williams
Author of *HOW DO YOU COMPARE?*
Perigee March 2004

How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways . . .

The subject of love used to be confined to poets, scented missives, movies and songs. Then, of course, psychology got into and made it all clinical. It turns out that there are actually five types of love. Or, at least, healthy loving relationships can pass through five stages.

Because love and relationships are complex, we sometimes jump from one type of love to another, then back again. Sometimes we even enjoy multiple types of love simultaneously from the same partner. For arguments sake, let us move through these stages in a linear fashion so we can see clearly how their progression can lead to a wonderful and long-lasting loving relationship.

The first stage is **puppy love**. Remember this one? Sure you do. Puppy love is what made high school so nerve-wracking. Puppy love is all about the delightful anticipation of, “Will he call? Does he *like* me?” In the presence of your new friend your palms sweat, your mouth goes dry, knees grow weak, and your heart goes all aflutter. No wonder they call it being “love sick.”

Those who progress from puppy love to the second stage, **intuitive love**, enter that all-consuming, electric love that goes beyond anxious anticipation to realization –

from wistful looks to deep, soulful gazes into your lover's eyes. Partners make odd cooing sounds and roll their foreheads against each other. Intuitive love involves a lot of physical contact, from hand-holding and hugging to incessant kissing and caressing. This is a gooey love that will drive all friends away – except the one you are stuck on.

Cynics might dismiss these first two stages as being hormonal or simply the joys of youth. In any case, feelings definitely mature with the advance to **companionate love**. In companionate love, the pair becomes . . . well, *companions*. “You and me” becomes “we.” Lovers connect on a deeper level. A true lovers friendship emerges, as the pair grow more committed to one another. Which leads us to stage four on our love ladder – **committed love**.

Now we are far beyond child's play. This is the kind of love that prompts serious plans for the future. Marriage. Children. Shared decisions about life. Committed lovers are not merely smitten, they are pledging themselves to their “other half.”

Finally, as we mature we move onto **secure love** – the love we can bank on to protect us when times get tough, the bond we rely on when we are no longer young and beautiful, the love that keeps us safe and complete. Secure love is total and complete acceptance of who we are.

© Andrew N. Williams 2004

Author of *HOW DO YOU COMPARE?*
Perigee March 2004