

THE MANY MEANINGS OF LOVE
By Alice Eby Hall
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“Honey,” I asked my husband on the eve of our twelfth wedding anniversary, “what do you mean when you tell me you love me?”

Roger looked at me with a puzzled expression and tried to put me off with, “I’d really rather not answer that question.”

“Oh, come on, Dear,” I said. “I’m trying to analyze what happily married people like us mean by love, and I need your help. I’ll start by reading what I’ve written, and you can add to it, okay?”

Roger grudgingly agreed.

“Sometimes,” I started, “when I say I love you, I mean that I trust you implicitly. Other times I mean that I have faith in you and that I want to support you whole-heartedly.”

Roger caught on. “Sometimes when I say I love you, I mean that I care a lot and that I want to share a lot.”

“Yes,” I agreed. “Sometimes it means that I have a lot of compassion for you, or that I enjoy the closeness I have with you and the understanding that is between us. And sometimes it means ‘thank you’ for something special you have said or done.”

“Sometimes,” continued Roger, “I love you means you bring me a lot of joy. Or it means that I’m able to put up with the moments of sorrow.”

“Or,” said I, “it means that I can stand the little aches because I appreciate you for what you are and accept you for what you are not. It means that I hope you will become what I dream for you, and I’m willing to work for that because I want our relationship to continue for a lot of tomorrows.”

“Sometimes,” he said tenderly, “I love you means that you thrill me, and that I desire you, or that I’m thankful you are here with me.”

“Oh, yes,” I agreed, “but sometimes doesn’t I love you mean that right this minute I don’t *feel* a lot of love for you, but with patience I know that those tender feelings will return?”

“Yes,” Roger grinned with a twinkle in his eye, “and sometimes I say I love you, maybe through gritted teeth, because I don’t dare say what is really on my mind.” And we both laughed.

“That’s the patience part, all right,” I agreed.

But I thought about what Roger said, and I am glad that I am married to a man who says, “I love you” instead of the hateful things that may be on his mind.

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Addendum in our 54th year: Through the years I’ve conversed with many women who lament the fact that their husbands never tell them that they are loved. That is so sad!

Sometimes I have heard those precious words through gritted teeth. Sometimes I have barely heard them through a choking whisper. Sometimes the voice that delivers the ‘I love you’ sounds harsh. Sometimes I even have to chuckle over the delivery or shake my head in dismay.

But the fact remains that because Roger speaks the words under all kinds of circumstances, I know I am loved in the long run.

Through almost 54 years, even in difficult times when we can’t stand or understand each other, we have always ended every day with the verbal affirmation that we love one another.

It needs to be said—I love you.