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Getting it together

What is love? It's more than a warm-feeling ache

"Do you love me?" she asks. "I don't know. What is love, anyway?" he replies. It's a question that doesn't expect an answer. Not because there isn't one. On the contrary, there are too many answers. There are so many different definitions of love, in fact, that looking for the truth must seem like trying to navigate with a spinning compass.

I recognize that I may be simply adding one more direction to the confusion. But I'd still like to share my own definition in hopes that it might be useful.

More than anything else, love is an attitude, an emotional posture. To say I love you means I choose to invest my hopes in you. It means I am taking the gamble that together we will be able to take care of our emotional needs.

I love you means I believe in our potential. The more strongly I believe, the stronger is my feeling of love. And it is this feeling which we usually are referring to when we speak of love.

feeling of love distracts us from love's essence. Like most emotions, love feelings are fugitive. They ebb and flow with the mood of the moment.

But love doesn't have to be so ephemeral. It is based on an agreement between two human beings. It is a partnership derived from mutual promises to provide for each other's emotional needs.

In contrast to the romantic notion that love relationships endure through adversity because they are held together by the glue of love feelings, the reverse is actually true. If such partnerships last it is because the partners have succeeded at building and maintaining a relationship that continues to meet their needs. When the love partnership stops working, the love feelings quickly vanish—not the other way around.

Why does this happen? By far the greatest causal failure at love is a lack of un-

derstanding of the real, need meeting purpose of love relationships. Believing that staying in love just means keeping that warm ache feeling going, love partners devote their energies to "love dovey" activities and avoid disharmony at all costs. And so they miss the part, producing

temporary bliss and ultimate boredom and disappointment.

LIKE ALL HUMAN institutions, love relationships can last only as long as they serve a real need meeting function. Human beings need nourishment and so they eat. They need emotional nurturance and so they enter into love partnerships. We choose to love because we hope to satisfy certain needs. Among these are a need for being known intimately by another human, a need for comfort and security, and a need for adventure and stimulation. A love relationship is successful and strong to the extent that it takes care of these personal needs.

Next week I'll discuss how love relationships can be built on these needs to last past the honeymoon.

Bob Trent is a Rochester psychologist and marriage counselor. Questions for Dr. Trent may be addressed to the Rochester Eccentric, 410 S. Main, Rochester, 45903.

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Ann W. Birmingham

for one hour before serving. Throw them into your soup at the last minute to preserve the nutrients.

Saute many bean sprouts in mince. I often chop up meat and green pepper and stir fry with a dash of soy sauce. For a quick stir fry, pop up a small fry pan and cook in it. It's a good idea to have a small fry pan in your kitchen.

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