

Romance and relationships

Romance is an important part of life for a lot of people. When we talk about romance or romantic love, we mean feelings of strong or intense attraction to a person. Those feelings of attraction are often experienced physically - you may have heard people talk about feeling light-headed, dizzy, or having a faster heartbeat when they are feeling a romantic connection to somebody.

What is the difference between wanting to be friends with someone and wanting something more romantic?

Wanting something more romantic with somebody is different to wanting to be their friend, but there are lots of things that friendships and romantic relationships have in common. For example, in friendships as well as romantic relationships, you may want to spend a lot of time with the person, and like them very much. You may want to talk to them about lots of different things, including your opinions, feelings and perhaps even secrets. Romantic feelings towards a person might be based on a physical attraction - in other words, you like the way they look and you find yourself attracted to them physically. It isn't just about looks, though - for lots of people, it's the personality which makes them attracted to somebody. The main thing that makes romantic feelings different from friendships is that you might think about the person all the time obsessively and want to kiss them. This is known as an infatuation.

What might a healthy or unhealthy relationship look like?

Healthy relationships are important in all areas of life, and romance is no exception. If you have romantic feelings for someone, you should decide whether or not to tell them. There are some times when it would not be a good idea to tell that person, for example if you are a pupil who has feelings for a teacher. This isn't a good idea because the relationship you have with a teacher is professional. They will not be able to return your feelings in the way you would like them to.

If you do choose to tell a person that you have romantic feelings for them, you have to respect their answer. If the person is interested, they will let you know that they have romantic feelings for you too. However, they may tell you that they are not interested, or they may never reply. In these cases, you have to accept their feelings and wait until you can meet someone else who does have romantic feelings for you.

Romance can feel scary or exciting, because it involves lots of strong feelings. Some people compare it to the feeling of being on a rollercoaster or walking on air. You should

not be afraid of these feelings, but you should always behave responsibly. For example, if you are under 16 and in a romantic relationship with somebody, it is against the law to have sex with them, even if you are in a long-term relationship with them. You should also respect the person you are in a romantic relationship with. This means showing them the level of affection and physical intimacy that they are comfortable with and not forcing them to do anything they don't want to do.

How can a person show someone they care about or love them?

There are lots of ways to show someone that you care about them romantically. It depends on the person's individual tastes. Some people like to show their love by sending gifts, like chocolates or flowers. Some people like to make things for their beloved, like a piece of jewelery, a cake, or a special collection of songs. Some people write poems or letters. You should think about the person you care for and think about what *they* like.

Unwanted contact

Another way to show a loved one that you care about them is to be affectionate towards them, for example holding their hand or kissing them. Again, you need to be sure that the person you care for is comfortable with this, otherwise this is unwanted contact. Continued unwanted contact is harassment and this is illegal. If it is unwanted sexual contact then it is sexual assault. This is why you need to be 100% sure that you have the other person's consent before you touch them.

How long does romance last?

Romances vary in their length. Some infatuations are very short. The chemical which rises in the brain when you feel these 'loved up' feelings is dopamine. This can rise and fall very quickly, greatly affecting the way you feel. This is not to say you will want to be without your partner when your dopamine levels return to normal, for you may develop a relationship by then which you both wish to continue.

A few romances therefore, last forever as they turn into settled relationships. Most feelings of intense attraction fade after a while, and are sometimes replaced by deep affection. Sometimes, romances just aren't meant to be. Romances can be wonderful, but romances can also be painful, especially if you are dumped. It is normal to take weeks to get over this. It is all part of the experience of being alive and growing up.