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Another Valentine's Day is upon us and with so much talk about love in the air, why is it so hard for men to recurrently say the words "I love you"? Women use the "L" word with such ease in the vein of, "don't you just love these flowers", or "I love this dress!" Over and over and without fail, women use the word love to reflect how they feel about people, places, things, and experiences. Men, on the other hand, use it limitedly if at all. This phenomenon is why I thought it is important to give my insight on the reasons I believe men don't routinely use the "L" word.

First, men have difficulty distinguishing the grey area between "like" and "love." If there is ever doubt on which to choose, men will cautiously lean toward the word "like." If pressed to express more emotions, a man may then add adjectives to the word "like" to give it more power such as "I like you a lot" or "I really like you." When it comes to expressing emotions about places, things, and experiences, for a man, the use of the word "like" is usually sufficient.

Secondly, some men are uncomfortable saying it. These men have a limited amount of emotional experience connected to the word love. They know what it is to love their family, but they seldom have to say it for them to know it. For a man to put his emotions into words requires him to have had past emotional experiences that connect him to the feelings that coincides with the current use of the word. This lack of familiarity leaves the man uncomfortably in the grey area again.

Thirdly, some men have negative experiences from using the "L" word in the past. These men may have previously dated someone who took the use of the word love to mean marriage. By using the "L" word, this man opened himself up to the expectation that the relationship must move to the next level. This new expectation resulted into pressure that the man now connects to a negative experience associated with the use of the word.

Next, a man may not use the "L" word because his previous actions may not line up the present use of the word. His recent bad behavior may hinder him. How can he say that he loves you after the things he has done. As much, as he would like to use it, he does not feel worthy. Because he now knows the word carries responsibility and consequences, he will most likely wait until his current actions line up with the future use of the word.

Finally, men do not use the "L" word for fear of over use. For a man, to associate the word love with every day usage makes it common and love is not common. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13: 4-8).

A man's use of the word love should be reserved for the special occasions that both deserve and demand its use. So when the woman hears it, she knows that the man in her life has thoughtfully considered its use, and has reserved it especially for her. This gives truth and sincerity to its use, and is the reason why real men do use, or should I say overuse the "L" word.

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