

FALLING BACK INTO LOVE!

Building Hope and What To Do With Your Doubts

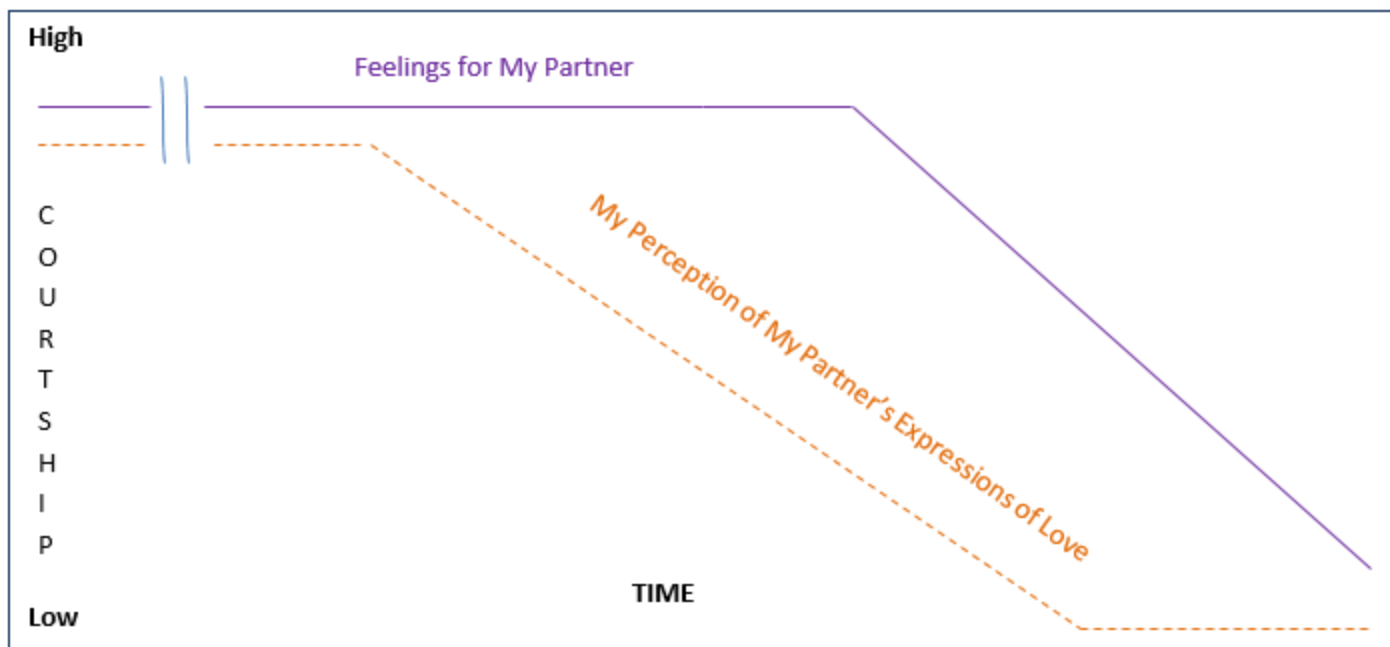
How often have you heard someone say, “I love him/her, but I’m not *IN love* anymore”? Or, maybe you’ve said this, and have gone through these thoughts and feelings yourself. Did you know that this is a common experience that many couples have in their marriage? Seasons like this can feel hopeless. And while we are in this state, because our feelings seem so strong, our emotions seem like the only truth; we can’t grasp that our feelings might and in fact can change. We cannot even picture being in love with this person again. It feels like and seems like our *love is lost and it cannot be regained*.

But that is NOT the truth. Love can be rebuilt, doubts of love and caring can be overcome, and we can fall back in love all over again. It is a researched FACT! Friesen & Friesen (Counseling and Marriage Vol 19, 1989) cite information given by Reuben Hill regarding the *motivation to work* on the marriage relationship. Their “Falling Out of Love – Falling Back In Love” models graphically show how couples who are willing to put effort and intentionality into the relationship can regain that lost “lovin’ feeling!”

But how?

Check out the chart below. When we first get together with our partner, the stage known as courtship, we have high “**Feelings for My Partner.**” We think of them in a romantic sense, there is a good friendship, and solid commitment. We do a lot of fun things together, spend a lot of time talking, and create shared meaning. We **feel good** about our partner. And of course, “**My Perception of My Partner’s Expressions of Love**” toward me is also high.

What my partner says and what my partner does meets my needs. We perceive each other as caring and loving, we generally please each other, and we also give each other the benefit of the doubt. There is understanding, patience, and kindness in the relationship. These actions or expressions of love **feel good**; not just to our emotions, but at a deeper level they also meet our need for love, acceptance, and understanding.



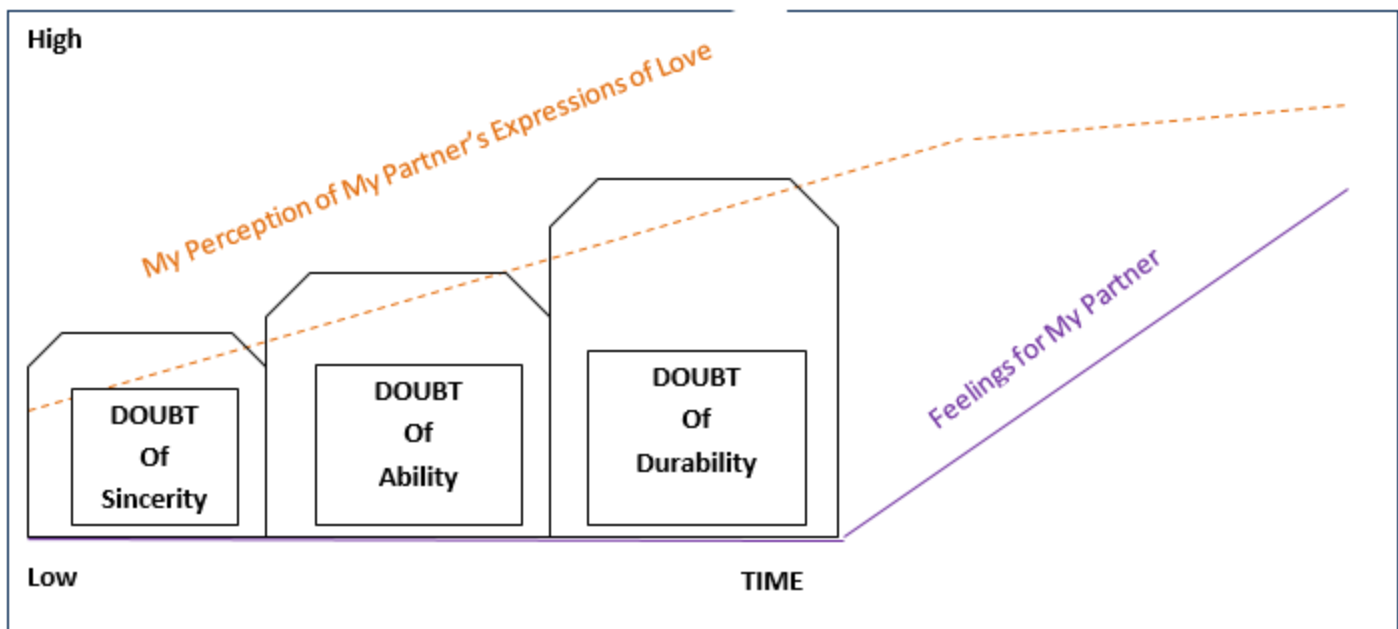
But somewhere along the timeline of life – marriage, honeymoon, the birth of children – we settle into routines, we spend less time together, we are less intentional with one another, and things get in the way of the **expressions of love** that made us feel so good about each other.

But as you can see above, for a time period, even though the **expressions of love** fall off, our **feelings for our partner** remain high. Why? Because we do give them the benefit of the doubt. We understand that their career is important and they are busy, working hard, and trying to take care of the kids all at the same time.

However, if needs are not met, eventually **feelings for the partner** *begin to follow the course of your partner's behavior (lack of the expressions of love)*. Remember, these feelings are *perceptions and interpretations* of behaviors which may not be completely accurate. But, **feelings are tied to behavior!** “I see and think about your behavior and those thoughts produce my feelings.” And the **changes in our feelings lag behind** changes in behavior.

So now, our feelings for our partner and our perception of their willingness to meet needs, the expressions of love, are all low. Something must change. Maybe it is time to get some help...call a friend, make an appointment with a pastor or marriage counselor, something. Because there is a way out, and that way is with effort, willingness, and intentionality.

Here's what it looks like:



As the words and actions of love begin to be more intentional and more deliberate, there also is more awareness on both partners part to see these. But remember, our feelings are tied to behaviors, but they lag! We go through periods of doubt.

- **Doubt of Sincerity:** You see changes in behaviors, but you are not sure the person really wants to change.
- **Doubt of Ability:** Ok, so you believe your partner wants to change, but CAN they? You are skeptical that change is actually possible.
- **Doubt of Durability:** Your partner has consistently worked on making changes. But can it really last? There are fears of opening your heart up again; you don't want to be hurt.

Resistance to change is natural. But you get through the doubts. Sometimes this may take effort on the part of both partners. But you **can fall in love** again. Many couples have proved the research true, and so can you!

What words and behaviors of love can you share with your spouse to make them feel more loved?

What expressions of love do you need from your spouse? Try having the conversation!!

Friesen & Friesen, *Counseling and Marriage Vol 19, 1989*