

# Love in the Trenches

By Dr. Roxanne Dryden-Edwards

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*“...and they lived happily ever after.”*



**I**t seems like virtually every fairytale we read as children ends that way. The dragon is slain, the princess rescued and all is right with the world, right? WRONG! If that were true there would be no such thing as loneliness, broken hearts or divorce. We've been wrongfully taught to think the story is over once two people commit to each other but it is only the beginning. If not nurtured, cared for and attended to it can fall apart like a house of cards. We children of fairytales can take heart though. If treated with the appropriate time, care and respect, romantic love can last forever, even as people tend to live longer.

## No End Game

First and foremost, do away with the idea of resting on your laurels after you've gotten your heart's desire. Since love is not a game there is no end game. Taking your significant other for granted and thinking you no longer have to work for their love is a good way to lose them. Keep trying to look your best while reminding your lover how appealing they still look to you. Surprise the one you love with sexy text messages, hold doors open and give him or her your undivided attention every chance you get. Make spending time together an ongoing priority, even when work, family and community make demands on your time and energy.

Be creative. Just because love takes hard work doesn't mean it has to be ugly. Make the process of love as exciting as the seeking of love. Whether it is as small as trying a different restaurant or different kinds of wine together, work to make the usual unusual, the drab different.

## Manage Your Demons

Before skipping over this paragraph because you think this does not apply to you, know that everybody has demons. Demons are just personal challenges and make us all human. Whether your major demon is a fear of being left, consumed or controlled in a relationship, or any one of a nearly infinite number of hang ups, the first step in managing your relationship issues is to know that you have them and what they are. Even knowing just your major ones is a major step in the right direction. Viewing women as either saints or whores is something many people suffer from. However, it can be overcome by knowing it is your issue rather than anyone's reality. Realizing that you suffer from depression during winters should keep you from making major relationship decisions until you recover.

## **Be a Best Friend**

Last but perhaps most importantly, treat your spouse like your best friend. Hopefully, he or she is already your best friend forever, or used to be. Keeping that frame of mind can avoid a lot of fallout. When your loved one complains about their boss for the 40 thousandth time, treat her with the same patience, care and respect that you would your best childhood friend. Best friends don't neglect, abuse or betray each other. They pay them regular, undivided attention. They let them know they are special. They treat them with care and respect and share their honest feelings. No one wants to lose their best friend. Support your partner. Protect your partner. Love your partner.

## **Moving Ahead**

This article may have made romantic love sound like a lot of effort, marked by hard, sometimes dirty work. That's because it is. It involves two imperfect people in an imperfect world. Mistakes will be made and feelings will be hurt. At the same time, it's the mystery, the mistakes and the messiness of love that make it so exciting when it works and keeps people chasing it. So go ahead and jump in the mud and have fun making a mud pie. Love your partner today.