

Immediate Love

by Alyce Duckworth, LCSW

Supervisor, Prince St. Academy, Arapahoe/Douglas Mental Health Network

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As I write this column, I am sitting on a plane to California. I can't believe it, but I have just finished flipping through one of those magazines with all the up-to-the-minute celebrity gossip anyone could ever need. I've always found it a bit confusing why the information found in publications such as these is of any use to people like me, a regular non-celebrity type, and yet I have just allowed myself to be a consumer of that very thing. There's something seductive, even gratifying, in these pages. Maybe it's the realization that celebrity types are, in fact, very similar to us regular folks. But, I think it's the immediate gratification tabloids offer. We have become a culture that is addicted to getting what we want immediately, without having to wait.

This fact was confirmed to me an hour earlier when the grumbling started because our take-off would be delayed by 10 minutes. Here we are, my fellow passengers and I, on the fastest and most direct form of transportation there is – next to Star Wars teleportation. And 10 minutes is enough to bring on complaints. I purchased this ticket after receiving an automatic alert via email that the price had dropped below \$200. The transaction was completed within five minutes because my computer had all my information saved, and my Internet service is high speed. I checked-in online and printed out my boarding pass, which I simply scanned on a bar-code scanner “thingy” once I got to the airport. I passed people who needed to wait an extra few minutes or so because the bar-code scanner thingy wouldn't work for them. An airline official needed to enter a special code. Others were upset because their bag had to be checked due to size, and they wanted their luggage immediately accessible on the other end of their high-speed trip. Yep, we are a culture that wants it all as quickly as we can get it, no waiting involved. We are spoiled.

As I glance through the magazine that I grabbed in the three minutes before my plane was due to board, one of the saddest symptoms of the immediate gratification culture strikes me. It has to do with what's become of love and the romantic relationship today. I have just read a short story about a couple from an extremely popular reality show, in which many young single people are supposed to compete for the love of one eligible and desirable individual. A true love connection is supposed to happen over the course of a few

dates, most of which are broadcast on national television. In the final, completely gratifying finale, it is anticipated that the couple become engaged on television. The couple is then subjected to months of public scrutiny and criticism, especially, as was the case with the particular couple about whom I have just read, when someone changes their mind and decides that maybe they weren't in love after those three or four televised dates.

Our gimme-what-I-want-NOW society even wants true love to be on demand, in the moment, quick and real. And we've deceived ourselves into believing this is a possibility. Now, I'm not saying that the Beaver Cleaver families of the past, who were short on real problems and big on hilarity, are preferable to the "reality" show romances of today, but I am making a plea here. As a person who was once seduced by the concept of fairy-tale love-at-first-sight romance, and who has subsequently sustained a few injuries from the seemingly trustworthy cartoon bluebirds of romance, I still believe in true honest-to-goodness love. But, I have to remind myself on a continual basis that the reality of "reality" shows stops at the title. We have done ourselves a disservice in this immediate gratification culture, in believing that anything worth having can be obtained quickly and perfectly.

But love, true love, is a phenomenon that develops and grows over time. It is a relationship with ups and downs that, when worked through together, can strengthen itself. Love is not always a fairytale, but it always enriches the lives that it touches. Don't give up on the power of love, but don't be deceived by the made-for-television immediately gratifying versions we are deluged with on a daily basis.

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