

## The fire of love needs to be constantly stoked

**Mark Pavilons**

?The best thing to hold onto in life is each other. ?  
? Audrey Hepburn



Love is the predominant theme of the human condition. It's what makes us humans unique in the universe.

Love may be all we really need, but some sweets now and then are pretty good, too.

Most of us likely rushed around picking up cards, flowers, chocolates or making dinner reservations for St. Valentine's Day. It's the one day that really heats up a rather dull and dreary February.

Men and women have been confused and confuddled by one another since the beginning of time. While we still don't really know what happened in those primitive caves, I'll bet the man was the hunter-gatherer and the woman was in charge!

In some cases, the longer we men are married, the less we show how much we love our wives! I know, it doesn't make sense. One of the reasons we are saddled with this struggle between the sexes is our inherent differences and internal wiring.

I often tell my wife that our brains are wired differently, and men and women rely on different neural pathways to express feelings, make decisions and take action. There are times we look at each other, dumfounded at the other's lack of understanding of a situation.

In France, they follow the rule 'vive la difference,' but here in North America we go out of our way to get into each other's head and try to figure each other out. It's a life-long challenge that's why so much has been written about it.

In love, I think we have to toss out all the rules, regulations and 'thinking' too much. We simply need to revel in it and roll around in it like a dog twists and turns on the carpet.

I can rationalize all of the good qualities that attract me to my wife - she's strong, assertive, smart, compassionate and hard working. She knows where her priorities are.

To me, women (and moms) are the strongest creatures on the planet. Shakespeare said that a woman scorned is quite a handful. But beware the 'mama bear'; she is the most formidable force on earth.

Women also require demonstrations of our love, on a regular basis. When we date, men go above and beyond to win the heart of their love. This is a time when a man's nature reveals itself. In the beginning, I was quite giving, chivalrous and romantic.

I scribbled poems and messages of love on restaurant napkins. I was fixed on Kim's gaze and taken by her beauty. There were many times we were lost in each other's embrace.

We travelled, saw amazing sunsets and soaked up life like bread on a plate. We spent most of our time together, and when we were apart, could think of nothing else.

Love can't really be rationalized or 'figured out.' It can't be explained and the data can't be entered into some sort of computer program for analysis. It just is.

But men and women are different. And these differences should be celebrated. But as we grow, age and mature, these differences become more noticeable.

If you're familiar with John Gray's 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus,' you'll have some insights into why we behave the

way we do. Just like plants, we thrive in different conditions. We need different things to make us content.

In my case, I show my affection by taking care of things and being a type of 'Mr. Fix-It.' I try to make sure things run smoothly at home. I help with homework, but admit I get frustrated. I try to be the go-to person for advice, information and solutions. I am the chauffeur. And that's fine with me.

Growing up, I had a decent family life, but my parents seldom showed any affection for one another. Perhaps it was the generation. We all vow to be different, and better than our parents.

I will admit it, my romantic expressions leave a lot to be desired. If corporal punishment was still in vogue, I would need to spend some time in the stockade for my transgressions.

The other day, my wife called up several photos on her iPhone. We spent an hour taking a trip back in time, when our kids were young and acting silly. We were transported back in time, to family vacations, individual accomplishments and periods of fun and freedom.

It made us smile and laugh. The product of our love and commitment is evident in the hearts, minds and yes, attitudes of our children, who will one day change the world.

We did okay.

As parents, we're so busy running a household and so consumed by helping our kids, that we often forget ourselves. Our roles are increasingly demanding and we let things slip.

We know we love one another. We are comforted by the fact we are each other's rock, anchor and 'old reliable.'

The spark isn't gone; it never really leaves.

We need to make an effort to constantly remind ourselves about how our journey together began. Every summer, I work hard at making campfires and getting them blazing. I should approach my relationship the same way. Every day I need to build the foundation, light the spark and blow the heck out of the embers!

Maybe Valentine's Day is simply a reminder of what we need to be - loving people who care deeply.