



9. I can't love someone I'm disappointed in

Possible root: Love and approval belong together. If I am disappointed in someone, showing care would seem to excuse what they did. If someone is disappointed in me, I assume their love has gone too.

When disappointment makes affection difficult

Notice one ordinary disappointment in a relationship you value. What happens to the affection you feel able to offer or receive? Are you needing time, setting a limit or feeling that love must wait until everything is put right?

Someone you care about makes a choice you dislike. A friend disagrees with you, a family member takes a different path or a partner lets you down. Alongside the disappointment, another question appears: can you still be loving while this remains unresolved?

Perhaps warmth feels like surrender. If you are kind now, they might think the problem no longer matters. If you enjoy their company, you might seem to be approving of their decision. You hold back affection until they understand, apologise or change, because allowing it sooner would seem to weaken what you need to say.

The same rule can work in the receiving direction. Someone is upset with you and you find it difficult to believe that their care remains. A disagreement feels like the withdrawal of love. Even a reasonable limit can seem to say something larger about whether you still matter to them.

This differs from "I'm unlovable", which questions whether you can be loved as a person. Here, you may know that love was present and believe disappointment must cancel it. It also differs from "I have to earn my place", where your contribution seems to secure belonging. The question here is whether love can remain when approval does not.

Perhaps affection once depended on being agreeable, successful or easy to manage. After a mistake, warmth may have disappeared until you had made things right. You may have learned to read approval as the evidence of love, or to withdraw affection as the clearest way to show that something mattered.

Unconditional love allows care for a person to extend beyond whether they are currently pleasing you. Their worth need not rise and fall with your approval, just as yours need not depend on theirs. You can care about someone and still disagree with a choice, ask for a repair or decide what you are willing to be part of.

Love, affection and closeness may not all feel available at the same moment. You may need time before warmth returns. You do not have to perform affection, accept touch or make yourself love someone. A



pause to settle, think or protect yourself is different from a rule that love can resume only when the other person has earned it back.

Unconditional love does not mean unconditional access. Repeated harm, coercion or disregard for your needs calls for attention to what is happening. You can care for someone while limiting contact or ending a relationship. Receiving love also leaves you free to say no; someone's claim to love you does not settle whether their behaviour is acceptable.

Begin with one manageable disagreement in a relationship where your choices are respected. You might say, "I care about you. I'm still upset about what happened, and I want us to talk about it." Notice whether both parts can be true. If the other person is disappointed in you, consider whether their actions still show care rather than deciding from their mood alone.



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Reflection prompts

Take the space you need. A few words or a fuller note are both enough.

1. What do I fear showing care would imply while I am disappointed in someone?

2. When someone is disappointed in me, what tells me about their care beyond that one feeling or disagreement?

3. What could love and a clear limit look like together in one relationship I want to keep?

Optional deeper thread: Do I treat love as something we must keep earning from each other, or can it leave room for being imperfect people?