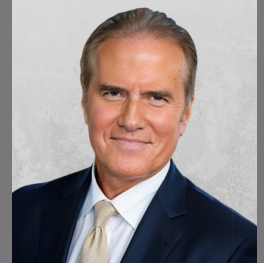


True Love

By Henry S. Givray



I know how rare true love is, and how elusive it can be. Life can be so short and unpredictable. But nothing in life is more sublime, more extraordinarily meaningful, more profoundly joyous, more treasured, and more peaceful than true love.

Finding and preserving true love is not easy (what an understatement). It requires an enormous amount of work, effort, openness, vulnerability, and trust – from both parties. One thing I know for sure. The most consequential factor is open, effective communication.

Specifically, we are both willing and committed to share two revealing aspects about ourselves. The first is our life story. We must answer the fundamental question: How did I get to be me? That can include our memories, dreams, challenges, experiences, lessons learned, people who influenced us, events that shaped us, our decisions and consequences, our triumphs and setbacks, and even our traumas.

The second is equally important. What are our innermost thoughts and feelings, such as what makes us happy, what scares us, what makes us feel loved, what causes us pain, what brings us joy, what fulfills us, what gives us meaning, our core values, our life goals and aspirations, our dreams, our relationship must-haves and our deal-breakers, and so much more.

And throughout the true love journey, we listen to each other with an empathetic ear and loving heart, ask questions to genuinely understand, and never assume intent. We do this continuously and without compromise. We are always learning, about each other and ourselves.

True love does not mean the relationship is perfect. Far from it. And none of us are anywhere near perfect when it comes to communication (again, what an understatement). But actively practicing the imperative

of open, effective communication – consciously and intentionally – will greatly enhance the odds to finding and keeping that most cherished human connection, true love. I guarantee it.

Countless definitions of true love exist, from poets, philosophers, great thinkers, and from those of us who have had the great fortune to experience it. I lost my wife to cancer in 2016. I can write pages about Jannine and what she meant to me. The pain of losing my life partner, my best friend, my true love who also happened to be an extraordinary human being will always be with me. I embrace the pain and am not bitter or despondent; I bear what I cannot change.

Though preciously rare, true love can be sought and discovered more than once.

Can I be so lucky to find true love again? I honestly don't know. But it is my highest priority. And so many people in my life are rooting for me.

If I could be any part of you, I'd be your tears. To be conceived in your heart, born in your eyes, live on your cheeks, and die on your lips.

-UNKNOWN

Henry S. Givray is former Chairman, President & CEO of Smithbucklin Corporation, the world's largest association management and services company. He served as President & CEO from 2002 to 2015 and Chairman of the Board (non-executive) from 2016 to 2020. Henry is a dedicated, ongoing student of leadership, committed to speaking and writing as a way to teach and give back. His insights and ideas on leadership have been prominently featured in business books and national news media, and he has been invited to speak at numerous association conferences, corporate meetings, and educational forums. One of Henry's most enduring achievements has been his creation of comprehensive, high-impact leadership learning programs. The programming has evolved to include two offerings under the brand Leadership's Calling®. The Diverse Cohort Program is for CEOs and other C-suite executives, vice presidents, directors and managers at all levels, business owners, entrepreneurs, individual practitioners, and high-potentials from all types and sizes of organizations representing varied industries and professions. The second offering is an exclusive program for a CEO (or head of an organization) and members of his or her senior management team, participating together.