

Love, Lust & Other Stuff

EPIC EXTRAS...

Tune in to *Cocktails With Patrick* on Cosmo Radio SiriusXM Channel 109 at 4 p.m. ET on January 9 to hear even more tips about how to make your love hotter than ever.

“Without exception, all epic loves start with a massive dose of lust....”



Take Your Love to an EPIC LEVEL

WHO DOESN'T WANT TO BE ONE OF THOSE COUPLES WHO HAVE SUCH UNREAL AMOUNTS OF CHEMISTRY, THE AIR PRACTICALLY SHIMMERS AROUND THEM? EXPERTS SAY THAT WITH ENOUGH LUST AND TRUST, WE CAN ALL HAVE IT—OR AT LEAST COME CLOSE.

By Annie Daly

Maybe you've already experienced a gripping, all-consuming, complete-each-other relationship at some point in your life. Wherever you went—to a bar, to the movies, to the grocery store—it felt as if you and your guy were the only people there. Like the world was so as-it-should-be when you were together that it practically stopped turning when you parted ways. Experts refer to that supercharged, almost electric phenomenon as consummate—i.e., epic—love: “It’s like the holy grail of love: a perfect blend of passion, intimacy, and

commitment,” explains Justin Lehmiller, PhD, a social psychologist at Harvard University, whose research focuses on relationships and sexuality. “Not only are the partners best friends who connect with each other on a very deep emotional level, but they also can’t keep their hands off each other—so the sex is mind-blowing.” Not surprisingly, this love of all loves is hard to find and hard to maintain. But it is possible. More good news: It’s also possible to transform a comfortable relationship into the crazy-connected kind, if you’re willing to take a few risks.

What It Feels Like...

“It’s when the world shifts from color to black-and-white when he’s not there. Your favorite cake won’t taste as sweet if he’s not there to share it. Everything is illuminated when he’s by your side.” —Meg V., 27

“It’s dating your best friend and your greatest lover at the same time....You will never, ever be bored.” —Ulysses J., 21

“You act based on emotion and will go out of your way to get your paws all over him. Whatever you have to do to get there is, thus, entirely reasonable. Basically, epic love makes you crazy.” —Sara N., 27

“He fills in your gaps. If you’re scatterbrained, he’ll help you get organized. If you’re shy, he’ll help pull you out of your shell. You bring out the best in each other, and it’s always a better day when you get to be together as much as you possibly can.” —Kelly T., 24

“Epic love begins and ends with the feeling that, no matter what, the love between you two is unbreakable and growing.” —Etan M., 29

“You lose sight of yourself as an individual and see yourself as half of something bigger and more important, which changes your whole outlook on life.” —Tom D., 30

“You feel like a kid again. It’s like building a blanket fort in the bedroom and hiding out with your partner....You feel like you’re protecting each other from the craziness of adulthood.” —Adam L., 29

“It’s when thinking about life without him is unimaginable and unbearable.” —Clara T., 22

“Epic love makes you want to try new things with your partner, and go further and faster than you’ve ever gone before. It’s so intense, it almost constantly hurts.” —Malia G., 23

“It eats you alive inside.” —Jenna Z., 19

Love, Lust & Other Stuff

IT STARTS WITH LUST

Without exception, all epic loves start with a massive dose of lust—i.e., when you meet someone and, the second you lock eyes, your thighs go up in flames. According to experts, that amped-up sexual pull isn't a product of your imagination—it's rooted in biology. "When you're instantly attracted to someone, your body actually produces a surge of the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone, meaning you're physiologically more turned on," explains sex and relationship expert Kristen Mark, PhD. But that's just the beginning. "Truly epic love takes longer than that to develop," explains Whitney Casey, a relationship expert in New York City. Experts agree that you need at least three months to move beyond infatuation to true love. Casey breaks down the timeline: The first month is filled with lust. During the second month, you discover your partner's deeper qualities and interests. If you have some shared ones, you could be on your way to epic. But the more significant qualifier goes beyond physical lust and common interests: it's when your values mirror each other's. "Epic love can't ever come from a genuine, authentic place faster than three months," Casey stresses. "To connect fully with someone on the most intimate level, you have to trust their values—and you just can't do that until you've known them for a long enough period of time. If someone is laying out their core values to you right at the beginning of a relationship, it's likely not coming from a genuine place, and that's a big red flag." But if each passing month and each new revelation about how you both think and feel brings you closer together, you're well into epic territory.

WHY EPIC LOVE CAN BE SO EXPLOSIVE

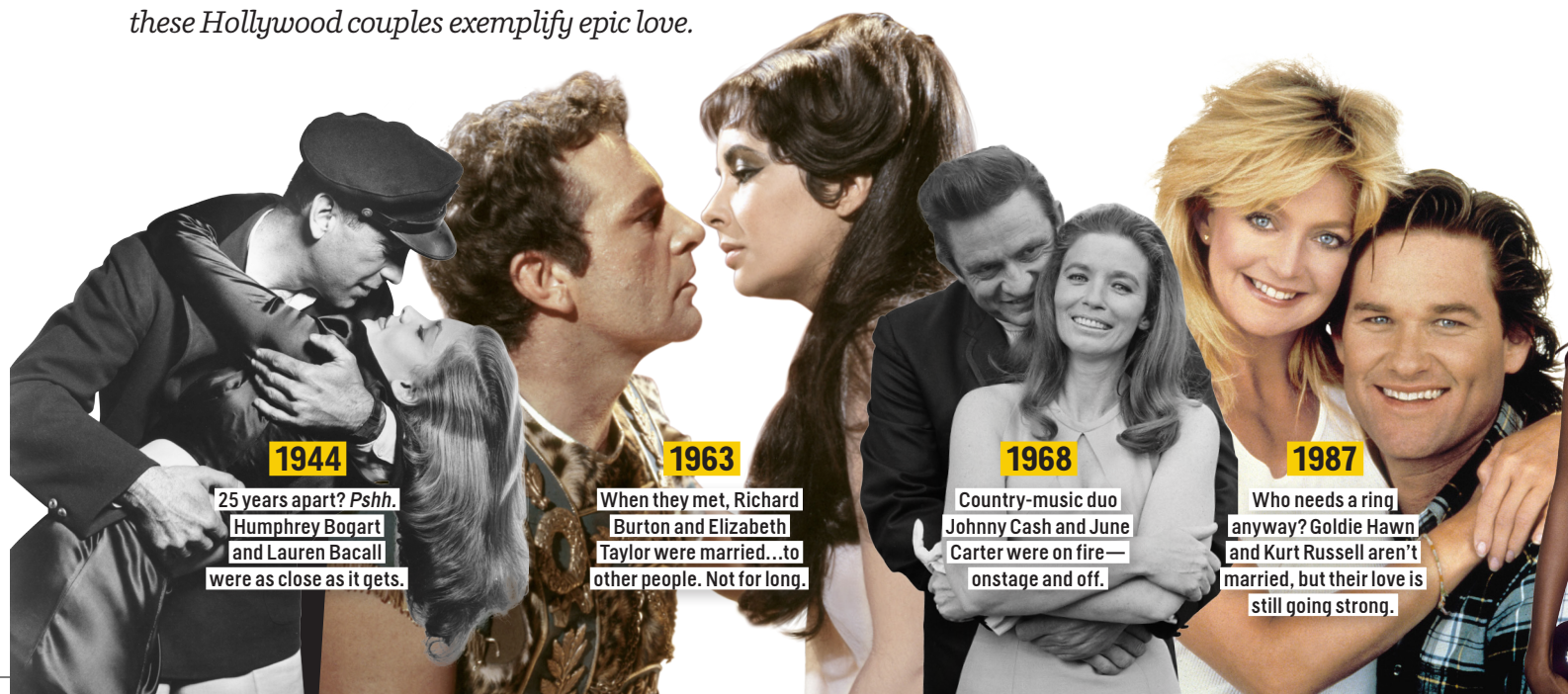
Johnny and Winona, J.Lo and Ben, Heidi Klum and Seal...there's an integral aspect of epic love that makes it especially apt to go up in flames: The power dynamic is completely equal—both parties know that they have found their match. "There is no sense that anyone has settled or that anyone could do any better," says Mark. But as a result of being so perfectly matched, neither partner gives in easily—so when epic lovers butt heads, it can lead to epic, destructive arguments. "Ironically, the passion that fuels their attraction is the same passion that fuels their fights," Mark continues. Some couples survive and even thrive on this intense push-pull because they're able to compromise (you get your way this time; I get my way next time), but others don't. For them, a never-ending tug-of-war over minor differences ends up tearing them apart. In order for an over-the-top love affair to last, both people have to be willing to curb their ego on a regular basis.

UPGRADE YOUR LOVE

Any elevated emotion is hard to maintain over long periods of time, and epic love is no exception. If your relationship started out hot, hot, hot, and you have that nothing-compares-to-you connection but you're currently spending more time chilling in your sweatpants than lighting each other on fire, you can still raise the bar. There are two key strategies. First, show your partner you're still absolutely crazy about

Passionate Pairs

Sexy as hell and completely obsessed with each other, these Hollywood couples exemplify epic love.



him. Every. Single. Day. "It sounds obvious, but if you both go out of your way to demonstrate your love as often as possible, it really helps keep your connection charged up," explains Lehmiller. Your romantic gestures don't have to be big, elaborate productions, but they do have to have a certain intensity. Roll over in bed in the morning, look him straight in the eye for a drawn-out moment, and tell him you love him, send him a text in the middle of the day letting him know that you are hands down the luckiest woman in the world, or describe exactly how you felt the first time you met him—how you loved his eyes, the smell of his cologne—over a normal weekday dinner. "The goal is to keep your love declarations frequent, surprising, and emphatic. It is challenging, but with determination and creativity, it can definitely happen," Lehmiller continues.

Second, you have to continually up your sexual game. That means grabbing him as he walks by you and giving him a hard kiss, whispering things that make the hairs on his treasure trail stand on end, and bringing an endless stream of new moves to bed with you. Novelty releases the feel-good hormone dopamine, which in turn cranks up arousal, says Lehmiller. Open conversation about what you both like in bed and want to try next is a must. And if there's something he's craving, always consider it, says Lehmiller. Even if you're not willing to grant his every wish, you can find a way to satisfy some aspect of the urge. (Threesome? Uh, no. Getting naked while watching a threesome scene on *True Blood*? Why, yes!) In turn, it's crucial for you to initiate conversations about your own fantasies and discuss how you'd love to see them play out in real life. Yes, that kind of openness takes guts and balls-to-the-wall honesty, but that's part of what makes epic love so, well, epic. ■

10 Epic Sex Moves

Since novelty is the key to upgrading sex from good to whoa, you're going to need fresh ideas. These should last you for, oh, at least a week.

1 STRIP HIM SLOWLY. Start to unbutton his pants. If he moves to help you, grab his arms and hold them at his sides to signal that you want him to be still. Slowly proceed to take off the rest of his clothes, kissing his bare skin as it becomes exposed.

2 MELT HIM WITH YOUR MOUTH. For an entire sex session from start to finish (although this isn't likely to go on long before he loses it), regularly interrupt the action to give him a few seconds of oral.

3 AMBUSH HIS A.M. SHOWER. Join him as he's getting ready for work, stand behind him, soap up your hands, and reach around to treat him to a slippery hand job.

4 LEAD HIM ON. Take him to a random spot in your home where you've never done it before...and initiate a deep kiss and a butt grab that lets him know you want him. Right here. Right now.

5 GET SILLY. Instigate playful sex with a tickle session that starts on the sides of his torso and makes its way south. As things heat up, spank him as if you're kidding—but you're kind of not.

6 LET HIM DIRECT. Tell him to sit down across the room from you, then start touching yourself for several minutes as he watches. For phase two, invite him to tell you what to do next.

7 ROLE-PLAY A LITTLE. Announce that you're a nurse and that you need to test his arousal levels. Then touch him all over while speaking serious-sounding observations about how he is responding.

8 TEASE WITH A VENGEANCE. Wear BDSM-inspired lingerie under a normal date-night outfit, and let him spy leather when your top slips off your shoulder or a garter when your skirt inches up.

9 HOOK UP LIKE HIGH SCHOOLERS. Keep your undies and bra on the whole time, forcing him to touch you through the fabric, then finally move it aside once things get urgent.

10 LOCK EYES. As you're on the brink, make eye contact with him and hold it until your O forces your lids closed.

SOURCES: SEX AND RELATIONSHIP EXPERT EMILY MORSE, COAUTHOR OF *HOT SEX*; SEX EXPERT DAVID SHADE, AUTHOR OF *THE SECRETS OF FEMALE SEXUALITY*



1993

Blind-date success! Iman and David Bowie's hairdresser set them up. They've been married for 20 years.

1997

Just the two of them... or not. Jada Pinkett and Will Smith's passion proves that open marriages can work.

2005

Jennifer Aniston may have had Brad Pitt first, but he and Angelina Jolie are the ultimate alpha couple.

2012

Emma Stone and Andrew Garfield's *Spider-Man* director says their instant spark was undeniable.