

# What We Can Learn from David Cassidy's Dying Words

Recently, pop idol David Cassidy of Partridge Family fame passed away at the age of 67. According to his estranged daughter Katie, [his dying words](#) were “so much wasted time.”

Months before he passed, Cassidy foreshadowed the meaning behind his dying words. Early in 2017, he [announced his decision](#) to stop touring saying, “I want to focus on what I am, who I am, and how I’ve been without any distractions. I want to love. I want to enjoy life.”

“I want to love.” What stopped him from loving during all those “wasted” decades? What stops us? Could it be that a misunderstanding of the nature of love is getting in our way?

After 20 years as a surgeon, physician Greg Baer devoted his career to teaching and writing about the principles of what he calls *Real Love*. In one of his many books, [Real Love and Freedom for the Soul](#), Baer writes, “Real Love is caring about the happiness of another person without any thought for what we might get for ourselves...Real Love is unconditional. It’s not Real Love when I do what you want and you like me—frankly, that’s worthless.”

Real Love often requires that we put the needs of our partner above our own. *I love you if you meet my needs* is a deal; not love. Baer calls that type of relationship *Imitation Love*. No wonder so many relationships end in bitterness and acrimony when one partner breaks the “deal.” Baer observes:

*“We tend to establish relationships with people—and fall in love with them—based on their ability to give us Imitation Love. When a man falls in love with a woman because she is beautiful, for example, he is actually declaring that he loves how she makes him feel with her beauty, not how he*

*unconditionally cares about her happiness.”*

Imitation Love feels great, initially; but it doesn't last. When relationships based on Imitation Love begin, expectations are “the other person will continue to make them happy for the rest of their lives.”

When those expectations are not realized, Baer writes, “the satisfying effects of Imitation Love always wear off, and the subsequent disappointment is overwhelming. Each partner naturally concludes that the other partner is the cause of his or her unhappiness.”

If we don't catch onto the dynamics of Imitation Love, we are likely to rinse, repeat, and continue the misery.

Baer believes we can find true happiness even when events do not go our way. We find true happiness when we share Real Love with others. If you want Real Love to grow, don't expect others to fill your void.

Before he realized he wanted to love more, Cassidy had other goals. Sadly, chasing those goals didn't serve him well. He earned millions and [went bankrupt](#); he couldn't spend his way to happiness. His [admitted alcoholism](#) contributed to his failed relationships.

Baer observes, “When we don't have enough Real Love, the emptiness is intolerably painful, and in order to fill our emptiness, we use money, anger, control, sex, alcohol, food, drugs, violence, and the conditional ‘love’ of others.”

In Cassidy's case, alcohol was an escape from the present-moment pain of not loving. Escaping from the present moment, he missed the love that was all around him.

Try this experiment. Pick up a favorite photo of family or friends. Look deeply into those faces. What do you remember about that moment in time? Do your life's struggles come to

mind? Do feelings of love arise? At the time the photo was taken, you may have been caught up in life's struggles; love may not have been fully in your awareness. Looking deep into the photo today, only love remains.

What takes us out of the present and away from love today? Listen to the voice in your head. Do you hear the incessant narrator, your ego, offering color commentary about your experiences? Our ego's color commentary is rarely helpful; it is full of opinions about what is happening and who is to blame for what is happening.

A few months ago, watching a baseball game on television, the audio feed for the announcers went out, while the crowd noise remained. My first reaction was to reach for the remote, to recover the feed; then, I paused. Without the incessant commentary, watching the game was more enjoyable. Without announcers interpreting, I sunk fully into experiencing the game.

We don't have to wait until the end of our life to question what isn't working. To question what isn't working, we need to take responsibility and stop blaming other people and circumstances. Polly Berends, in her book [\*Coming to Life\*](#), puts it this way:

*"Whatever our false surface goal may be, before it can be relinquished, it has to be questioned. Before it can be questioned, it has to become questionable... For anything cherished to become questionable it has to not work out...The false proving itself false is just the dark side of the truth proving itself true."*

Cassidy found himself in a plight as old as time. At the end of his life, he realized that his beliefs about happiness hadn't serve him well. About two thousand years ago, the Stoic philosopher Seneca wrote in [\*On the Shortness of Life\*](#):

*“When time is squandered in the pursuit of pleasure or in vain idleness, when it is spent with no real purpose, the finality of death fast approaches and it is only then, when we are forced to, that we at last take a good hard look at how we have spent our life – just as we become aware that it is ending.”*

As far as things of the world go, every one of us will die incomplete. There will always be a song we didn't write, a vacation we didn't take, a sunset we didn't see. The world can never fill the void we feel, but Real Love can.

We have all the time we need when, in this moment, we choose Real Love.