

An illustration of two women in conversation. The woman on the left has dark hair, a yellow beanie, and red apple-shaped earrings. The woman on the right has brown hair and is resting her chin on her hand. A speech bubble with a heart inside is positioned between them. The background is white with scattered hearts in shades of pink, orange, and purple.

**IS IT
LOVE**

**OR
LOVE BOMBING?**

what to know + what to ask

what is love bombing?

2

Love bombing is a pattern of behavior involving targeted demonstrations of affection and excessive attention toward someone, often a romantic partner or love interest.

Love bombing is used to manipulate another person by:

- making them feel idolized
- creating the appearance of love and commitment

The intention is to acquire something (like a sense of security in a relationship, money, popularity, or a friend group) by coercing and controlling another person. Love bombing often starts at the beginning of a relationship, but people can experience it at any time.



Sometimes, a person who feels genuine interest towards someone may use love bombing to gain control. Other times, love bombing involves feigning interest to achieve something else.

All love bombing involves coercion & control, and anyone is capable of love bombing in a relationship (including friendships).



so, is it love bombing?



It depends on the context of your relationship and your experience of agency. It's not your fault if you're unsure. By design, love bombing can be hard to recognize. Remember: people can experience love and love bombing at the same time.

To assess whether someone is acting out of care or trying to control or manipulate you, try reflecting on the following questions. Also, consider talking through things with someone you trust.

you might start with:

5

Does this feel repetitive and unnecessary?

Do I feel pressure to do something in return?

Does this person repeatedly cross boundaries?

Are their intentions clear?

Does this make me feel genuinely cared for?



ask:

Do they say “I love you” a lot even though I haven’t said I love them back? Do they express commitment to me without concern for how I experience our relationship?

because:

If someone expresses love and commitment when you’re just getting to know each other, it can feel like “too much, too fast.” The intention might be to make a relationship with them feel impossible to resist. It might also feel like their passion is a sign of a strong relationship. Remember that strong relationships are built on authenticity and connection. Your experience matters, and you deserve for your relationships to move at a mutually determined pace.



ask:

How would a friend describe my partner/crush's gifts?
Are they usually "over the top?" Does each gift feel meaningful, or does the gifting feel overwhelming?

because:

Gifts can be used to express affection, but if someone is sending a lot of gifts your way, it could be a sign that they are trying to pull you deeper into the relationship without building authentic connection. "Over the top" demonstrations of affection – gifts or otherwise – are a hallmark of love bombing.



ask:

8

What are we bonding over? What is creating an immediate sense of closeness? Do they make it seem like they're the only person who can love me or understand my experience?

because:

Sometimes, love bombing can be an intentional strategy to isolate someone from their friends or communities. While bonding over shared backgrounds, values, or interests can create closeness, love bombing can look like someone leveraging what you have in common or claiming expertise in those areas to convince you that they know what's best for you. They may try to gain your trust quickly by making you feel understood or accepted. Remember, having a shared experience with someone doesn't mean they are the only one who can care for or truly understand you.



ask:

Do they “make a show” of affection after we’ve had a disagreement? How do they respond to my needs and concerns?

because:

The timing relative to arguments or an avoidance of even minor disagreements could be intentional parts of love bombing behavior. For example, regularly giving gifts after arguments rather than talking through things may indicate that the intention is to silence the issue and maintain a facade of a conflict-free relationship.



ask:

Do we agree on everything? Do they avoid sharing their own perspectives or change their opinions retroactively to agree with what I say?

because:

Excessive agreement with your opinions, especially without truly understanding your perspective, can be a red flag for love bombing. If someone constantly agrees with you or shifts their views to match yours, they may be trying to create a false sense of compatibility to gain your trust. No relationship is “perfect.” Positive relationships involve disagreements and open discussions to genuinely understand one another.

ask:

Do their texts feel nonstop? Am I able to respond to them without feeling rushed? What would they do if I couldn't answer my phone?

because:

Constant attention and affection are hallmarks of love bombing behavior and can come in the form of incessant communication. If you notice that someone is contacting you more frequently than what feels comfortable or you often feel pressured to respond, it could mean that they are trying to maximize their presence in your life without your consent and/or chip away at your autonomy.



how is real love different?

As opposed to love bombing, love is built and demonstrated through authenticity and connection. This might look like:

- Honoring and celebrating each other's autonomy and individuality.
- Learning about what types of affection feel most meaningful to each of you.
- Respecting boundaries and discussing them openly.



Remember!

Each of us is unique, and love bombing can look different for everyone. What promotes healing or is helpful for one person may not have the same effect for someone else – it may even be harmful.

It is crucial to recognize and respect our individual backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives when engaging in conversations about love bombing. Every person and relationship is different, and embracing and respecting our individual needs can foster understanding, growth, and safety.

what now?



Your story and experiences matter. Have open conversations with the people you trust, whether that be your best friend, a family member, a teacher, or a coach. Talking with someone you trust can help you find the care, validation, connection, and resources you need to be safe, heal, and prevent further harm. Share what you need from your support network to receive the care that is most meaningful and helpful to you.

For resources, please email childrensteam@futureswithoutviolence.org



Promising Futures



The development of this document was supported by Grant Number 90EV0532 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.