

The Research of Lost Loves Reunited: A Special Valentine
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Dr. Kalish's 14 years of research with thousands of people worldwide who tried reunions with their lost loves shows that the most successful rekindled romances were between lost loves who had been 17 or younger at the time of their initial romances -- particularly first loves -- and had separated for situational reasons, such as "parents disapproved," "moved away," "went off to college," and just "too young".

Age of the couples when they reunited didn't matter for success of the reunion. Dr Kalish's participants ranged in age from 18 or 95. In fact, the older they were at the time of the reunion, the better their chances of success.

The rekindled romances were surprisingly successful the second time around (*provided that the lost loves are single, divorced or widowed, and not already married!*). In her 1996 sample of 1000 people worldwide, ages 18 to 95, 72% of them reported that they are "still together" with their lost and found love. Absence really does make the heart grow fonder!

First loves had the highest "stay together" rate --78% of her original sample had happily reunited and remained blissfully in love over their many years of marriage. 71% of them said that this was their most intense romance of all.

Rekindled love endures because the couples grew up together, they spent their formative years together, and many of the first loves reported that their high school sweethearts became "the standard" for all their other romances. They knew each other well; they attended classes together, knew each other's families and friends, shared

roots and values. It is these similarities that form the strength of the bond. These romances are, at their heart, strong friendships as well as romances.

Remember that expression used for teenagers, "ranging hormones?" There is speculation that these chemicals form emotional memories in the brain. When the lost loves meet again, those memories are released by the familiar sight, smell, touch, sound of the long lost love. The feelings are comforting and familiar and also very sexually arousing.

Parents of teenagers, take note: the most common reason why these romances broke up the first time was "parents disapproved." Many of these couples were forcefully torn apart by their parents, with threats or manipulations, such as hiding letters from the sweethearts. When these couples reunited, they were very bitter and angry at their parents (dead or alive) for costing them many years when they could have been happily together. Many missed their childbearing years because of this breakup. And why did the parents react that way? They just "didn't like the person" their teen was dating. There is no way to predict, no way for parents to know what's right for their children. It should make parents think twice before they break up first loves.

If the lost loves are already married, don't go there! Don't even look up the person to say hello. Even good marriages were put in jeopardy by lost loves, according to Kalish's research findings. The people just didn't realize that the feelings come back, often VERY strongly.

And if the person was abusive in any way the first time, forget a reunion. Personalities don't change very much. The participants in Kalish's sample who succeeded with happy reunions had been pulled apart the first time; they did NOT check the box "we weren't getting along well."

In her latest, unpublished research, Kalish recently recruited a control group of adults who had never tried reunions, and asked them to answer the same questions about their first loves as her reunited participants; she found that most of these men and

women do NOT want to go back to their lost loves and, in fact, they cannot understand why anyone would want to!

These are very intense romances. Before you begin any dialogue with a lost love, ask yourself if you could handle whatever occurred -- a rejection, a romance, another breakup with that person. If the answer to any of these is "no," it's best not to try.

Even when a rekindled romance ends, there may be no closure. Someone might be able to accept that the lost love romance will never work for them, but that will not close all the old adolescent feelings.

And the recent increase in extramarital affairs among Kalish's lost love participants indicates that these affair reunions are rarely successful -- most do not want to leave their marriages -- and these reconnections are typically damaging to the lost loves and to their families. Many married people who contact lost loves say they just "want closure."

Kalish has found that often there is no closure. The old feelings come back. Married people who want to keep their marriages should understand this before they contact a lost love. Sometimes people have to learn to live with these feelings, accept them as part of oneself, and dismiss them each time they come up. Understand that the feelings are normal, they won't go away, but that doesn't mean they have to be acted upon, or that it would help to act upon them.

But if you are single, divorced, or widowed, a reunion might be the best thing that ever happened to you. These romances are not fantasies. They are not nostalgia. They are not midlife crises. They are loves that were interrupted, loves that can last the second time around.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Nancy Kalish, Ph.D. (pronounced Kay« lish) is a developmental psychology professor at California State University, Sacramento. She received her B.A. from Douglass College

(Rutgers University) and her doctorate from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. In addition to her popular book, *Lost & Found Lovers* (William Morrow, Inc. hardcover; Authors Guild paperback), Dr. Kalish has had numerous articles published in professional journals and presented at national psychology conferences.

Dr. Kalish is the international expert on rekindled romances, lost loves, and first love, and has been in great demand as a speaker on this upbeat topic. She discussed her early findings on lost love on shows including Oprah, 20/20, NPR, and CNN. Since the publication of *Lost & Found Lovers*, she has appeared on Canadian and Australian TV and radio, NPR, and many others. Dear Abby has cited Dr. Kalish's research in two of her columns. AARP, Self, The Chicago Tribune, The Boston Globe, Parade, Men's Health, USA Today, and The New York Times are among her many diverse media appearances worldwide.

Her web site, Lostlovers.com, is very popular and includes the latest lost love information and a message board for lost lovers to post their experiences.