Girlfriend gets scared every time I say, "I love you" [1]

Dear Alice,

I have a girlfriend who I love dearly, but every time I say I love her, she tells me that someday I'll leave her for another girl just because it happened to her before she met me. How can I prove to her that I'll never leave her and make everything right again? Your answer may save our relationship. Please Alice, I need your help.

Answer
Dear Reader,

No one really knows what the future holds. And while you can't promise your girlfriend that you'll never leave her, there are some ways that you can try to reassure her for the time being. By confiding in you that you're going to leave every time you say, "I love you" to her, she's really expressing fear, anxiety, and/or insecurity. She might have had negative, and likely painful, experiences from a past relationship, apparently powerful enough to cause her to feel awkward or undeserving when you tell her you love her. Getting close to someone emotionally leaves you vulnerable, more prone to the possibility of getting hurt. Our past relationship experiences, positive and negative, can certainly influence our current and/or future ones, possibly long after those relationships have ended.

It may be useful for you and your partner to talk openly about her past relationship(s), as well as your feelings, to understand the source(s) of her concern(s). Expressing her feelings could give the two of you the chance to discover how your relationship is different. You are not the same person as her ex-love(s). Your girlfriend will also be able to see more clearly how much her comments have made you feel. You and/or she can consider talking with a counselor at school or elsewhere. It could be helpful for her to explore the roots of her insecurity and look at the ways in which this fear is keeping her from enjoying someone who is committed and loves her. You may also want to try going to counseling together to explore the ways in which her fears are affecting your relationship.

There is only so much you can do for your girlfriend. Ultimately, it's up to her to get the help she needs that will allow her to live in the present moment and enjoy her current relationship with you. No matter how sincerely and frequently you reassure her, she still will probably go on feeling insecure unless she deals with the origin of these feelings. It isn't your job to make everything right for her, and it may reach a point when you cannot be there for her anymore.

Alice!

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