

LOVE IS...

Whether it's the person who holds your hand when you're scared or holds back your hair when you're ill, love comes in many forms. Join us in celebrating the different types out there... *Words by Yi-Hwa Hanna*

"... a friendship that will last forever"

**Sharon Alvares, 29,
and Krita Coelho, 33**

The friendship between two women is an undeniably special bond, and for best friends Sharon and Krita, it's a life-long sisterhood. After meeting at a club through a mutual friend six years ago, Sharon, a mum and an PR director, and Krita, a journalist, were quick to bond over their home state Goa, dancing and having a good laugh. "I was thrilled to meet someone who was as crazy and fun-loving as me," says Krita, adding, "We've been inseparable ever since."

Although the girls didn't know each other when they moved to Dubai, now they can't imagine life without each other. "I dread to think what our phone bills would come to if we lived in different countries—she's my confidante, my gossip-buddy, and my BFF. So call me selfish, but I'm not letting her leave the UAE as long as I'm here. Besides, she's never going to find another me elsewhere!" Sharon laughs.

Married life hasn't affected their

friendship in the slightest (except to celebrate each others' happiness), and whether they're going to concerts, going to costume parties or experimenting with makeup, Sharon and Krita know they'll be friends until they're old and grey. "What I love most about Krita is her attitude to life: She's been through some challenging times, but never once did she lose hope. To say that her approach to life has altered [mine] wouldn't be overstating the fact at all," says Sharon.

"There are very few people in the world that love you just the way you are and Sharon [is one of them for me]," Krita continues, adding: "We've [even] got matching BFF tattoos!"



“...raising my daughter and ensuring her health and happiness”

Ikumi, 31, and Mylia Merola, 11 months

“I fell in love with Mylia the first time I felt her kicking inside my belly—though nothing compares to the moment I first saw her face and when I held her for the first time! To feel her skin against mine and hear her cry for the first time was an indescribable and life-defining moment,” says Ikumi, a stay-at-home mum. Mylia is now a constant source of love and joy in Ikumi and her husband’s life.

“Mylia is always goofing around and

laughing at herself, not to mention using her expert crawling and climbing skills— she has so much character already! It makes me so happy to watch her discover things on her own and develop her own personality,” Ikumi says, explaining that the highlight of their day is when Mylia wakes up. “She whispers ‘Dada’ over and over again, and wakes my husband up so he can rescue her from the crib. She loves to climb all over us and we smother her with our kisses and cuddles.”

While having someone completely dependent on her does scare Ikumi at times, the personal reward is priceless and being with Mylia makes her feel whole. “I want nothing more than for her to be happy, safe and healthy. No matter how she chooses her path in life, I will [always] support her to the fullest. I want

her to always know that I will be her number one fan and believer, and she will always have a place to call home no matter what bumps she encounters along the way.” →



“...having sisters who are there for you”

Bekky Britton, 32, Sian, 32, and Teagan Rowlands, 28

Going into business with your sisters isn't an easy road, but for Bekky, Sian and Teagan, it was a natural development. As the trio behind clothing resale company My Ex Wardrobe, the sisters spend a lot of time together both inside and outside the office. “When we came up with the concept, for me it was partly an excuse to hang out with my sisters more!” Sian says. Teagan agrees: “Sian’s shopping problem brought us all together,” she jokes, adding, “There are definitely ups and downs to working together—we’re all quite strong willed so we can still have our moments—but [without them] we wouldn’t be where we are today.”

After their family moved here from the UK in 1990, the girls now consider the

UAE home. “We used to have great fun trying to row, swim and sail dinghies at Dubai Offshore Sailing Club,” says Bekky, continuing: “Our relationship became a lot stronger when we all ended up based in Dubai. We found ourselves socialising in the same groups.” Since they all share a similar sense of humour, family dinners usually end up in tears of laughter. “I love getting the giggles with them,” Teagan says. Bekky agrees, “Though I do have to remind both Sian and Tiggs that my two children are sponges and teaching them silly sayings or songs is not always the best even if it does create a lot of laughs!”

Bekky, Sian and Teagan can't imagine life without each other. “My family is such a huge part of my life—in fact, they really are my best friends!” Sian says. “I think we’ll always be quite close. It’s how our family works,” Teagan adds. “These are the people I can be the most honest with, who keep me grounded, encourage me and make me better.” →





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“...marrying your favourite person in the world”

Paula, 38, and Adam Gibson, 37

It was a January night in Kuwait at a fancy-dress themed party at the school they both worked at when Paula—an Irish primary school teacher dressed as an air hostess—and Adam—a British PE teacher masquerading as James Bond—first met. “We spent the evening dancing and talking, went out for lunch the next day—and the rest is history!” Paula says. Ten months later, they headed to Goa for a holiday and there, on a beautiful deserted beach, Adam asked Paula to be his wife.

The happy couple’s journey has been a fairytale romance—they even had a white horse-drawn carriage at their wedding—and it’s a feeling they like to keep alive by celebrating their anniversary wherever they are in the world at that time each year. “So far, we’ve [celebrated in] Turkey, Australia and England, and this summer [it’ll be in] Arkansas in America,” Paula says. So what’s the key to their happiness? Support, shared

interests—and separate bathrooms.

“Someone once said [that was] the secret to a happy marriage and I tend to agree!” Paula laughs.

“Adam is always the person I want to be with in every situation, good or bad,” Paula says, adding, “He makes me feel loved, cherished and secure and he is the most thoughtful, wonderful husband. I think it was fate we met that evening and not a day goes by when I’m not thankful he’s in my life.”



“...the joy a pet brings”

Laura Põldma, 27, with Mate the dog and Yalla the cat

“**[Having a pet]** is the easiest way of being selfless: You do all these things for them, but it comes so easily and they give back so much. It just makes your life so much fun!” says Laura, a Project Manager for events company Contemporary Connoisseurs. The proud owner of Mate, a Chinese Border Collie, and Yalla, an Arabian Mau, Laura has a natural way with animals—and it only makes sense that she’s taken care of many cats and dogs throughout her lifetime: “[One of my cats] is now 20 years old and still living with my mother in Estonia!”

Yalla was rescued from the streets of

Dubai, and Mate was almost abandoned by his previous owner when Laura and her husband lived in China. Bringing Mate with them upon their move to the UAE wasn’t an easy feat, but to Laura, it was worth it; he’s travelled with them on holidays and everywhere they’ve lived since. “My husband and I...would never move to a country where we couldn’t take Mate with us—he’s part of the family. Luckily, my husband also loves animals—it’s a good thing otherwise I don’t think it would work!” Laura laughs.

“It’s a lot of work and sacrifice [caring for and training pets], but I would never give it up and as long as it’s still up to me, I would never be without one. To me, a home’s not a home without them—they complete our family.” ■

