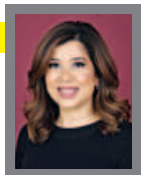


MIND THE GAP**NOSHIN NAWAL**

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LOVE BOMBING

Bursts of affection or just your new trauma trigger?

So, there I was, minding my own business, scrolling through TikTok in my sweatpants (obviously), when I came across yet another painfully attractive 22-year-old life coach. In a voice so calm that it might have been AI-generated, she spoke about “love bombing”. I paused mid-bite of my emotional-support chips, like, wait a minute—what in the name of generational trauma is *this*?

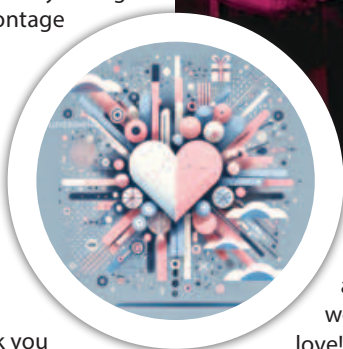
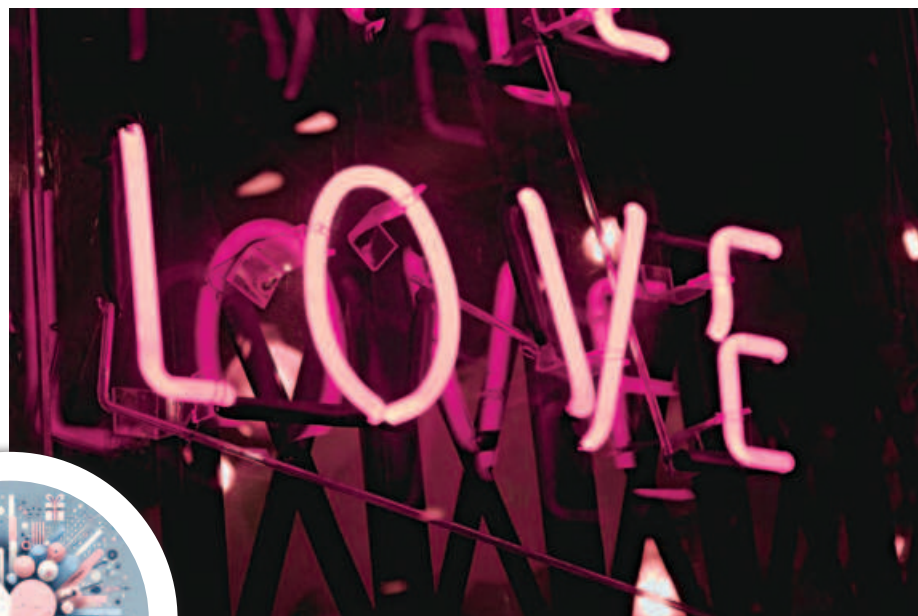
Apparently, it's not enough that we millennials are out here juggling student loans, existential dread, and the environmental apocalypse. Now, we also must deal with people aggressively loving us like they are a rom-com montage on steroids!

Love bombing, for the uninitiated, is when someone swoops into your life and makes you feel like you are the Beyoncé of their universe — texts 24/7, lavish gifts, Shakespearean sonnets about your eyes, and grand declarations of eternal love. And, just when you think you have landed the jackpot, they drop you like you are yesterday's Wordle.

As someone whose primary love language is “self-deprecating memes,” I was fascinated and mildly terrified. Was I love bombed? Was I the bomber? Was I simply raised to mistake chaos for connection because of my unresolved daddy issues? So many questions; and so little therapy budget.

Let's rewind a bit. You see, this generation has grown up with a cocktail of emotional unavailability and Instagram filters. Our parents told us, “We're proud of you!” exactly once, and even then, it was because we fixed their Wi-Fi.

We don't know what stability looks



like, so when someone comes along with an avalanche of affection, we're like, “This must be love!”

Spoiler alert: It's not. This is the emotional equivalent of being handed free samples at a grocery store — too good to be true, and, you can't survive on it.

The love bomber has a game plan. They worm their way into your life with over-the-top gestures that make your heart sing but your self-esteem wheeze. Then, once they are sure you are hooked, they pull a Houdini. Or worse, they stay, but now you are constantly begging for the breadcrumbs of affection that used to rain down like confetti. And why do we allow it? Because, dear readers, we are desperate. Oh yes! Our self-esteem is so low it is practically digging a hole in the Earth's core.

Case in point: Remember how in the early 2000s it was super romantic to have someone chase you through an airport to declare their love? That was love bombing in its cinematic form but let's be honest: If someone chases me anywhere now, it better be because I dropped my phone. Otherwise, call the police!

Low self-esteem makes us vulnerable to love bombing because we do not believe we deserve healthy, steady love. We think we need grandiose gestures to feel worthy. So, when someone offers us fireworks, we ignore the fact that they are also holding the matchbox. “This is fine,” we tell ourselves, as the red flags flap aggressively in the wind.

However, here is the twist: Love bombing is not about you. It's about them; their need to control, to feel validated, and to play hero. Meanwhile, you are left replaying their Instagram-worthy

declarations and wondering why you were not enough to sustain that level of affection.

Newsflash: Nobody is enough for that level of affection—it's not sustainable. Love bombers are emotional sprinters. Healthy relationships, my friend, are marathons.

So, what's the solution? Build your self-esteem. Easier said than done, of course, because self-esteem is not available on Amazon Prime. It's a DIY project that involves therapy, boundary-setting, and learning to love yourself. Yes, I know, that last one sounds like a quote from an overpriced planner, but it's true. If you do not love yourself, you will keep handing your power to people who only love the idea of you.

If you are reading this and thinking, “Oh no, I've been love bombed” don't panic! You are not alone. In fact, you are in great company — almost everyone who's dated in this era has been at least mildly exploded by affection.

The key is to spot the signs early. Is this person too good to be true? Do they respect your boundaries? Are they emotionally consistent? If the answers are no, no, and HAAAAHA, Run!

In conclusion, love bombing is like that free trial subscription for a streaming service — it seems amazing at first, but if you're not careful, it will drain you completely.

So, stay vigilant, raise that self-esteem, and remember: Real love does not need to bomb its way into your life — it just quietly shows up and stays.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some more TikTok therapy videos to watch.

By Noshin Nawal

Illustration: Noshin Nawal/Collected