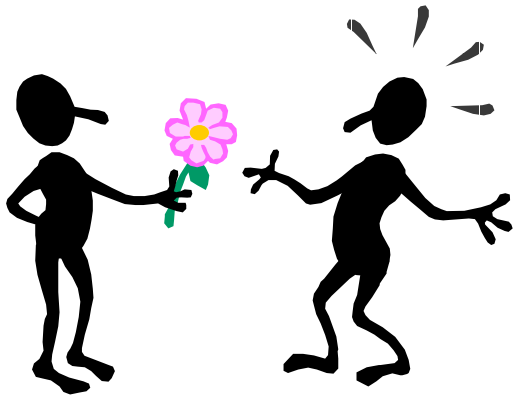


Great Dates!



Daily Temperature Reading

Here is a practical, usable skill to develop depth in your relationship. Set aside anywhere from 15 minutes to a half-hour daily to take a temperature reading.

You'll evolve your own style as you cover the five key areas which will keep you and your loved one up-to-date. Strive to do the Daily Temperature Reading (DTR) when you can focus your full attention on each other. Ideally, sit face to face, knee to knee, making eye and hand contact. If you can't do the DTR in person, do it by phone, e-mail or even fax, but do it!

The five simple steps in each and every DTR are as follows:

- Appreciation
- New Information
- Puzzles
- Complaint with Request for Change
- Wishes, Hopes, and Dreams

DTR is a nourishing way of keeping each other informed. Low self-esteem may at times cause you to feel less eager to do it, less likely to take the risk of being honest with your partner. Sometimes we fear being rejected, or we feel so upset that we don't want to share our thoughts with our partner. Try it anyway.

In relationships that go well, people make time to be alone together, and to talk about what is on their minds. If you aren't used to doing that, the Temperature Reading may seem artificial or clumsy at first. Be aware of its importance and make a decision to do it -- like keeping a savings account! Take the time off the top and learn to do it regularly. This is an insurance policy on your relationship for keeping it current and pleasurable.

1. APPRECIATIONS.

We all need to be recognized and to know what's good about us. Nobody is better equipped to tell us this than the person who is closest to us. Whatever you feel good about, let your partner know. We hear so much about what's wrong with us -- the world tells us, and we tell ourselves all the time; we're usually our own worst critics. When you see something you appreciate in your partner, express it -- with words, or with a gesture, but express it.

Hearing appreciation regularly is an important element in our self-esteem. Self esteem shouldn't come only from outside ourselves, but we do need to feel appreciated, loved and accepted by our partners. We have to learn to listen to our partner's appreciation, accept it and internalize it. Too many people have a conditioned response of pooh-poohing compliments away ("Ah! Anyone could do this!" or "It was nothing.").



2. NEW INFORMATION.

We tumble over our assumptions when we are not given the information we need to understand what's going on. Intimacy thrives best when both partners know the ins and outs of each other's lives. Here are some sample statements of new information:

- Work: *"I finally got that new contract",*
- Family: *"The dentist says Mandy's teeth are perfect",*
- Gossip: *"Helen's divorce was finalized yesterday",*
- Fears: *"I'm worried about the mole on your neck",*
- Interest: *"There's a great article in the Parade section that I think you'd enjoy"*

Remember, these statements can include anything and everything, either trivial or important, that helps keep your partner up on your state, mood and, generally, what's going on in your life.



3. PUZZLES.

If there are things you don't understand that your partner could clarify, ask for clarification.

"Are you saying that the dentist visit is your regular check-up?"

"Or is this going to lead to some kind of treatment that we should budget for?"

"Why did you seem so edgy this morning?"

Puzzles are also those questions currently occupying brain space that do not necessarily have specific or simple answers. Because they have a hold on you, they affect the relationship and need to be shared.

4. COMPLAINT WITH REQUEST FOR CHANGE.

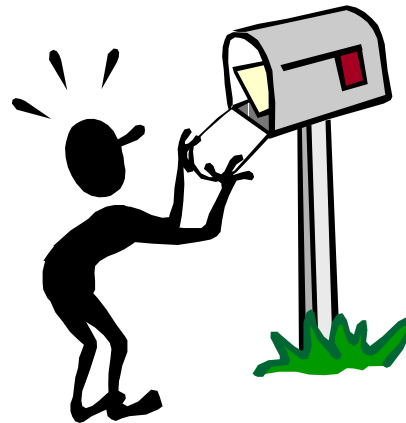
This shouldn't be blaming or judgmental. You can set aside time for a problem solving session if you really think you need the structure, or you can simply say,

"This thing happened that bothered me, and I would feel better if you would do this other thing instead."

When you state your complaint, be specific about which behavior displeases you, and state which behavior you are asking for instead: e.g., *"I don't like finding hair in the bathroom sink when I come to get ready. Please wipe out the hair before you leave the bathroom."*

5. WISHES, HOPES AND DREAMS.

If your expectations are different from mine, it doesn't make one of us noble and the other ignoble. It just means that we are all different and in being different we have different expectations. The more we can bring these expectations into our awareness and talk about them, the more possibility there is that we will reach some accord. If we have rules that say we shouldn't let ourselves know what we're thinking or feeling or wanting, much less let you know, then it's almost impossible to work out a comfortable, close relationship. Our hopes and dreams are integral, vital parts of who and what we are. If we don't share them with our partner (as information, not demands or complaints), we are depriving them of an important part of ourselves.



Resources where you'll find additional relationship tools...

Fighting for Your Marriage: Positive Steps for Preventing Divorce & Preserving a Lasting Love

Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, Susan L. Blumberg, Josey-Bass Inc (350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104), 1994, 331 pages, softcover - \$14.00.
Indexed. Down-to-earth. User friendly. Can help you to master basic relational skills on discussing difficult issues, establishing ground rules for conflict, and tips on enhancing fun, friendship, commitment and intimacy.

The Good Marriage. How and Why Love Lasts.

Judith S. Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee. Houghton Mifflin Company (NY, NY), 1995, 352 pages, hardcover - \$24.95
A readable study on why good marriages are successful. Based on a study of 50 couples, the authors describe four basic types of marriage and identify nine tasks of growth and development for a healthy marriage.

Marriage and The Spirituality of Intimacy

Leif Kerwald, St. Anthony Messenger Press, (1615 Republic Street, Cincinnati, OH 45210-1298; Voice: 513.241.5615, Website: www.americancatholic.org), \$7.95 softcover, 1996; 100 pages.
Explores mutuality, self-acceptance, openness to growth, intimacy, partnership, conflict and work and their roles in marital spirituality.

Marriage Magazine

International Marriage Encounter, Inc., (955 Lake Drive, St. Paul, MN 55120; Voice: 800.509.8765), \$22.50/year.
A wonderful easy-to-read magazine full of humor, commentary, letters and reflections on how to improve the quality of your married relationship. Full of practical easy-to-use ideas and strategies.

ME - Marriage Encounter

Marriage Encounter is a weekend experience for husbands and wives to help them deepen their communication and provide an opportunity for further growth as a couple. It is not therapy. M.E. Weekends are scheduled throughout the Diocese in a variety of locations. For more detailed information contact either the Family Life Department (920.437.7531, ext 8304) or the following toll free number 1-866.411.0048

Marriage Tools

www.marriagetools.com

A site dedicated to marriage. Provides tools and resources on a variety of subjects: Creating Marriage, Maintaining Marriage, Repairing Marriage, and a Marriage Mall. Site is currently building a chat room. Features "Passion Plays."

Couples Place

www.couples-place.com

Features: Quiz Corner, Relationship Building a.k.a. Building Bridges, "Stories" about committed relationships, On-Line Newsletter. If you choose to subscribe to the "Adventure Program" (\$29 for four months), you get access to a relationship skills building program.