



Relationships: Expressing Appreciation

When caring for a new baby, you probably have days where it seems like you give and give and give, and get very little back. As wondrous as a baby's smiles and contented snuggles are, sometimes we need more tangible appreciation for our efforts. Otherwise, it can be easy to start feeling down and feeling undervalued.

Making a conscious effort to actively express appreciation to each other can be invaluable for giving each of you the energy to continue nurturing and loving your baby. Also, as our relationships with our partners change, and our lives as a couple change, it's easy to start feeling disconnected and invisible to each other. A focus on expressing appreciation to our partners can be a valuable tool for rebuilding connections in the couple relationship.

This worksheet includes several ideas for appreciation. Many came from Jennifer Louden's *The Couple's Comfort Book* or from a workshop led by Kathlyn and Gay Hendricks, authors of *Conscious Loving*.

Techniques for Sharing Appreciations:

Five Minute Writing: What I appreciate about my partner. Each of you take a piece of paper and a pen. Set a timer for five minutes, and spend that whole five minutes listing everything you love about your partner. Pour out all the appreciation you haven't had time to share. Give your list to your partner to have and to hold.

Exchanging appreciations: Sit facing each other. Take a couple deep breaths. One partner (the Giver) goes first, completing the sentence "Something I appreciate about you today is..." The other partner (the Receiver) should just take a few deep breaths to let that appreciation sink in, and then say "thank you."

The Receiver should not interrupt, laugh, dismiss, snort sarcastically, respond with 'proof' that the Giver is wrong about what s/he's just said, immediately jump in to compliment the other person in return, or do anything else that pushes away the gift of appreciation. Just take it in and receive it as an expression of their love.

Then switch roles, and repeat.

Appreciation post-its. Have post-it notes and pens scattered around your house. Every time you think of something you appreciate about your partner or about life in general, write it on a note, and stick it somewhere that you'll both see it and be reminded by it.

Appreciation interview. Interview your partner to find out how s/he most likes to be appreciated: Physical touch? Written notes? Verbal praise? Quiet time together? Hearing them praise you to others? Gifts? Then, sometime that day, give your partner an appreciation using that "language" to communicate in.

Weekly letter. Once a week, set aside time to snuggle up over a cup of tea and a bowl of ice cream. During the week, make a list of everything you have to celebrate from your week – accomplishments, happy moments you’ve shared, health of family members, clean kitchen counters, anything that gave you satisfaction or joy! During the weekly snuggle time, read your lists to each other.

Keep these lists to reread when you feel down or defeated.

Please & Thank You. As parents, you share a big to-do list of tasks. It’s easy to get in the habit of “telling” the other person what to do: “I’ll get his bottle ready while you pack the diaper bag.” Remember, even if it’s work that has to be done, it’s nice to be *asked* not told, and it’s nice to be *thanked* for it. This also models polite behavior for your child.

Some Sentence Starters

If you’re having a hard time thinking of what to say, here’s some ideas to get you started.

- One unique quality you have that I appreciate is...
- I appreciate the way you’ve helped me grow by...
- One positive thing I am aware of through my senses right now is...
- One positive aspect of my life today is...
- Something you did today to make my life easier was...
- I appreciate your body and especially your...
- One thing you do that I appreciate, but often take for granted is...
- I really appreciate this about how you see the world...
- I appreciate the way you create beauty in our lives by...
- I appreciate that your creativity has generated...
- One thing I appreciate about our sexual relationship is...
- One thing I’m noticing about you and appreciate is...
- In your interactions with others, I appreciate...
- Something I am grateful for is...
- I am so glad that we do _____ every day (every week)...
- I feel loved when you....

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