

## Welcome to your Date Night Experience!

### Congratulations on prioritizing one another— After all, your relationship needs you!

To get the most out of each date may we make the following suggestions:

#### ♥ Stay positive!

This is not the time to tell the other what he or she has done wrong.

Be future focused. Focus on what you want your relationship to be like in the future. Don't concentrate on past failures. (It's okay to remember past successes).

Talk about your relationship. Do not talk about your job, children, in-laws, etc., unless it's part of the topic of the date.

#### ♥ Give a gift of love.

Some discussion items will excite you more than others. On the less exciting ones, give a gift of love.

Participate enthusiastically!

Don't force it. If you get on a negative track, stop that discussion. Move on to another topic that you both feel good about.

#### ♥ If you get stuck, ask for help.

If an issue comes up that you can't handle together, talk to a marriage coach at a local church or counseling center.

#### ♥ Use good communication skills.

Be prepared for some surprises and new insights about each other. They can open new opportunities for growth and intimacy in your relationship. The following are several specific tips for a great date experience:

1. Be honest, yet never unkind.
2. Remember to start your sentences with "I" and let them reflect back on you.
3. Resist attacking the other or defending yourself.
4. Be specific and positive.



## Dessert

Silently read the vow of Romantic Realism below.

When you both are ready, hold hands, and renew your vow to one another. Conclude your Date Night Experience with a special demonstration of how Love Gives Acceptance:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Say your partner's name)  
*I take you to be my spouse . . . with full knowledge that you will sometimes disappoint me and hurt me. In spite of your imperfections and differences, I commit myself to loving you. I Accept and receive you with gratefulness. I love you.*

Provided in partnership with:



## DATE NIGHT MENU

## Love Gives Acceptance





## Appetizers

Celebrate the Uniqueness of One Another

### First Memories

Think back to your dating years or the early stages of your relationship. What was one of the first differences that you noticed between you and your partner? Did you discover that one of you was more punctual, more concerned about keeping things neat and orderly, more talkative, or more introverted than the other person? Make this a fun conversation, where you celebrate the early discoveries of your relationship.

*Remember when we noticed that we were different in ...?*

### Love Wins Out

Talk on a little deeper level, but still with celebration as the goal. Discuss these thoughts with your partner: As you discovered all the differences between you and your partner, isn't it amazing that some of those differences become unimportant or insignificant? Did you think that your partner would change over time? Did you secretly hope/think that you could change them? *(Couples who have been together for several years often laugh about how unrealistic it was to think that they could change anyone!)*

Now celebrate how each of you have, in some way, been prompted to accept your partner and love them anyway! Celebrate about how amazing it can be when love gives Acceptance. Your celebrations might start out with words like these:

*We both know that I am different from you and yet you choose to love me. I am so grateful that you love me anyway because ...*



## Main Course

Get Real, Have Fun and Out-Give One Another

### Love Gives Acceptance

When Love Gives Acceptance, it means taking initiative to gladly and unconditionally keep caring for a person who is unique, imperfect, and different-from-me. It means being romantically, realistically in love!

Reflect on this progression of thoughts (*by yourself*) and then talk about them together.

Do you remember:

- ♥ Being a little blinded by your love? You might have thought your partner was perfect – everything you had always wanted.
- ♥ Doing a little relational bargaining? Since my partner isn't perfect, if he/she will change, then I will ...
- ♥ Trying a little coercion? Since my partner isn't perfect, I'll try to change him/her by ...
- ♥ Getting a little desperate? I get it now. My partner isn't perfect and he/she may never change.

Talk about how you may have passed through one or more of the four stages above. Where are you (*personally*) in the process? Are you romantically AND realistically loving your partner?

### Begin Your Discussion This Way:

*As I think back over our relationship, I know I have changed in how I see our differences. I am celebrating that we \_\_\_\_\_ because. . .*

*For Example:*

*I am celebrating that we have a more realistic love because that is a sign of our genuine, authentic relationship.*

### Celebrate Receiving Acceptance

Recall and share about a memory from your childhood. Think about a person who showed you Acceptance. Was there a teacher, coach, friend, or family members who knew your imperfections and yet cared about you anyway?

*I remember feeling very Accepted by \_\_\_\_\_ especially when . . .*

*(I remember feeling very Accepted by my grandfather, especially when he would take me fishing with him. These times were really special because he would even take me on these fishing trips during my rebellious teenage years, when my family and friends seemed to turn against me.)*

### Giving the Gift of Acceptance

- ♥ Don't waste another day trying to change another person!
- ♥ Focus instead, on how you can grow to love your partner well. Could you grow to become more patient, supportive, encouraging, understanding, affectionate etc.?
- ♥ Make this your goal: Try to **out-give** one another!

Take the next few moments and reflect on how you might finish the sentence below and then share it with your partner.

*I want to grow in my love for you. I especially want to become more . . .*

*For Example:*

*I want to grow in my love for you. I especially want to become more Appreciative of what you do and how you love me.*

After your partner has shared how they want to grow, be sure to say, "Thanks." Don't criticize or offer up any expectations, just express your gratitude for your partner's willingness to Accept you and learn to love you well. Your words could be something as simple as:

*Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_. It means a lot to hear you say that. I feel loved knowing that you want to grow and love me well.*