

Welcome to your Date Night Experience!

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

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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.

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♥ Use good communication skills.

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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.

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Dessert

It is a Priority

The Perfect Ending

Relationships are strengthened when we make it a priority to express care and Affection. A couple's closeness deepens when they make a special effort to know one another's preferences for affection and then take initiative to give.

Intimacy is intentional! So be intentional about:

♥ Dating Your Partner.

Take turns describing your perfect date. Listen carefully for how you might give to each other and make the perfect date come true.

My perfect date would include . . .

♥ Prioritizing the Sexual Needs of Your Partner.

Take turns expressing your desires for physical intimacy with one another. Relationships are strengthened when couples are vulnerable with their sexual preferences.

I would love to keep the heat in our relationship by. . .

♥ Verbalizing Love

Now that I know a little bit more about your preferences and your need for Affection, I'm looking forward to planning a date for us that includes _____, because I love you and want to show you my love in ways that are meaningful to you.

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

*Love Gives
Affection*





Appetizers

Remembering Good Times

Early Romance

Remember some of the most romantic moments that you've shared with your partner. Take turns choosing one of those memories and describe it in detail to your partner. Use the questions below to help communicate the whole story:

- ♥ Where did this memory take place?
- ♥ What words were said?
- ♥ What sparked the romance?
- ♥ What made it special?
- ♥ Celebrate your experiences of genuine love and romance.

Looking Deeper

Now that you've spent more time (maybe even years) together, it's still important to be intentional about knowing your partner deeply. So think again about the romantic moments you mentioned above.

Share those memories with your partner using these sentence starters:

- ♥ *I felt loved in those moments with you because...*
- ♥ *That time was so perfect for me because...*
- ♥ *I knew that I loved you because...*



Main Course

A Well Balanced Dish

Expressing Affection

Giving the gift of Affection means: Expressing your care through physical touch and verbalized love.

Couples often think Affection only means sex. While sex is certainly one fantastic expression of physical touch, couples can often benefit from more expressions of non-sexual touching!

Try this. Do a little brainstorming. Think of six ways you might express your love for your partner ... that don't involve sex.

Are you up for the challenge?!

Just to make sure that you know we haven't forgotten the importance of physical intimacy, each of your responses could begin with the letters:

HOTSEX

We've listed a few ideas to get you started:

- H** – Hold hands and go for a walk
- O** – _____
- T** – Take initiative to give a back massage
- S** – Sit closely together on the sofa
- E** – _____
- X** – Relax together before your morning routine

Come up with 6 of your own non-sexual ways of expressing love to each other and note them below:

- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____

After you've brainstormed your own ideas for non-sexual touching and have a list to choose from, talk about your top 3 preferences with your partner.

Take turns sharing some of these sentences with each other:

I would love it if we spent time...

It would mean a lot to me if we could...

I would enjoy if we could...

Entrée 2: Affection Connection

Affection also means putting your feelings into words.

Talk with your partner about the words that have made an Affection connection in your relationship. Maybe it was the first time that your partner said the words, "I love you."

You might remember a special card or tender expression of emotion. Take turns sharing these responses with each other:

- ♥ *I really sensed your genuine love for me when you said...*
- ♥ *I feel certain of your love for me when you say things like...*

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Dessert

Appreciation in Action

Let's make it real

End your Great Date Experience with a written expression of your appreciation. Take out a small piece of paper, even a napkin will do. Now take a few minutes to privately write out how grateful you feel about your partner, or how you plan to be more Appreciative.

These thoughts may get you started:

- ♥ *Recently, I have been very impressed when you . . .*
- ♥ *I don't ever want to take for granted the way you . . .*
- ♥ *I want to be more Appreciative to you because . . .*

After writing out your response, hold hands with one another and read the responses aloud to your partner. Be sure to say, "Thank you" for your partner's gift of Appreciation!

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DATE NIGHT MENU

Love Gives Appreciation





Appetizers

Remembering the Little Things

First Memories

Think back to your dating years or the early stages of your relationship. Remember the “little things” that your partner did for you. What were some of those small gestures that made you feel special? Did he drive out of the way just so he could see you, or bring you flowers for no reason at all? Did she fix your favorite snack, or call just to hear your voice? Reminisce about those small gestures of early romance. Try to think of all the sweet, “sappy” things you did for one another as you began your relationship.

When we were first dating, I remember when you . . .

I know it was a small thing, but I remember how you . . .

Looking Deeper

Talk on a little deeper level, but still with celebration as your goal. Think again about those early gestures of romance and how you expressed your love in such small, but meaningful ways. Take the next few moments to appreciate one another for those “small things.”

Let your partner know what those demonstrations of love meant to you. Try these sentence starters:

- ♥ *When you _____, I was especially thankful, because . . .*
- ♥ *I know it was a small thing, but I was so Appreciative, because . . .*
- ♥ *Thank you for the times that you . . .*



Main Course

Be vulnerable and grateful!

Great Date Experience: Love Gives Appreciation

Appreciation of your partner means giving acknowledgment to the things they do, recognition for what they have achieved and thanks for effort given. It means going out of your way to praise your partner for what they do that’s “right”, rather than what they do “wrong”.

When Love Gives Appreciation, it means verbally telling someone, “Thank you.” The most meaningful words of Appreciation are specific. Appreciative words that really hit the mark are detailed and precise.

Take the next few moments and consider some of the things that your partner has done for you in recent days. Notice the small things. Carefully think about the daily routine and the activities that you might take for granted. Consider the actions and efforts that are done “right” and are going well. Now tell your partner how those actions make a positive impact on you. Be specific. Give details.

For example: *“Thank you so much for fixing lunch for me the other morning. Your help meant a lot to me because it made all the difference in my morning. I felt really supported. Plus, the sandwich was delicious!”*

Now it’s your turn:

- ♥ *Thank you so much for . . .*
- ♥ *I felt . . .*
- ♥ *It meant a lot to me because . . .*

Celebrate Receiving Appreciation

After your partner tells their story, be sure to celebrate with them. Don’t minimize or dismiss any experience of Appreciation. It’s one of the ways that we all feel loved.

Your celebrations might sound like:

- ♥ *That’s terrific, Sweetheart! I’m glad you felt Appreciated that day.*
- ♥ *Wow! I know that was important for you. I’m happy for you.*

Giving the Gift of Appreciation

Round out your entrée with a celebration of your partner’s accomplishments. Privately consider these questions and then celebrate these Trophy Moments together.

- ♥ *What is the most important thing that you have DONE with your life this far?*
- ♥ *What personal achievement brings you the most pride?*
- ♥ *What is one goal that you’ve set and reached . . . and are now proud to say, “I did it!”*

Share one or more of your Trophy Moments with your partner

- ♥ *One of the most important accomplishments that I have done so far is . . .*
- ♥ *The personal achievement that brings me the most pride is . . .*
- ♥ *I am proud to say that I set and reached the goal of . . .*

Now take the time to celebrate with one another. Make sure this no dismissal of your partner’s accomplishments. Don’t minimize or trivialize your partner’s achievements. Celebrate their moments with genuine care. Your words of celebration might sound like:

- ♥ *Yeah! I know that was a big deal for you. I’m happy you can look back on that with pride.*
- ♥ *That’s terrific. I am thrilled that you were able to accomplish something that meant a lot to you.*
- ♥ *I Appreciate how much that means to you and I’m glad you reached your goal!*

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Bonus Date Ideas

Character Qualities:

diligence, understanding, dependability, generosity, compassion, supportiveness, thoughtfulness, helpfulness, caring heart, respectfulness, attentiveness, or encouraging spirit.

Continue this Love Experience:

Begin thinking about how you might share these same kind of words during the upcoming week. Take the list of character qualities listed above and begin thinking about other ways that your partner has displayed them. Look for new ways that he shows a particular character trait this week and verbalize your thanks. Look for additional ways that she demonstrates one of the character traits and share your gratitude in a personal way.

Continue this Love Experience:

Think of creative ways to let others know how proud you are that your partner is in your life. Post messages, publicly acknowledge your gratefulness about your relationship and boldly declare your love for your special someone! Your words of Approval might begin with:

- ♥ *I am so proud that _____ is in my life because . . .*
- ♥ *I am so grateful to be married to _____ because . . .*

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

Love Gives Approval





Appetizers

Celebrate and Have Fun!

First Impressions

Tell your partner about one thing that first attracted you to them. Celebrate your positive first impressions and talk about what piqued your interest in one another!

Looking Deeper

As you've come to know one another and are relationally closer, which of your partner's character strengths is attractive to you? Celebrate the great things you now more fully appreciate about the unique qualities of your partner. Tell them about that now.

The more that I've come to know you, I'm especially attracted to your ...



Main Course

Be Vulnerable and Grateful!

Love Gives Approval

Approval of your partner's character qualities affirms who they are —as an important person in your life. In order to give words of Approval, you might acknowledge and affirm your partner's: diligence, understanding, dependability, generosity, compassion, supportiveness, thoughtfulness, helpfulness, caring heart, respectfulness, attentiveness, or encouraging spirit.

Take turns sharing these sentences with each other:

When I see the person you are, I am really grateful for your unique character qualities. I am especially grateful for your

(name one of the qualities above or choose your own). I see that quality in you when ...

Continue this Love Experience

Now talk about a more recent time when you were grateful for a specific character trait that your partner displayed. Give words of Approval for one another as you take turns sharing your response to this sentence:

This past week, you were very _____ when you ...
(name one of the qualities above or choose your own)

I am really grateful for this part of you because ...



Dessert

Celebrate Imperfections and Express Thanks

Let's make it real

Relationships are strengthened when we can notice the imperfections in one another and yet not forget the positive character traits that are also true in our partner.

In strong relationships, couples are able to share this perspective:

♥ Even when I am imperfect in the things I do... please do not forget who I am!

Think for a moment about some of your own imperfections and choose one to talk about for yourself (This isn't the time to remind your partner of their imperfections).

I can sometimes be ... (impatient, irritable, insensitive, preoccupied, oblivious, sloppy, compulsive, forgetful etc.)

Now, take turns responding to one another with words of acknowledgement and expression of thanks.

I know that I can sometimes be _____, but thank you for remembering today, that deep down, I really am a _____ person. I love you.

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Dessert

The Perfect Ending

Let's make a plan

Now that you've explored your partner's "world" in more detail, make plans to join your spouse in doing something they like to do.

Consider what you've come to know about your partner and then take the initiative:

- ♥ I would like to plan a time when we _____
Calendar a date _____
- ♥ Let's set a date for when we _____
Calendar a date _____

Remember:

Your joy may not be found in the activity your partner identifies.
(Going for walks may not be your favorite past-time!)

Your blessing can come from the joy it brings your spouse!

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

Love Gives Attention





Appetizers

Which is More Like You?

Let's Play a Game

We'll never "know" everything there is to know about our partner—so the gift of Attention will always be needed.

Just for fun, try the following game. It's called, "Are You More Like?" Read each statement below and then decide which of the options you are "more like" and why. Take turns sharing your responses. See if you can guess how your partner might answer.

Are You More Like:

- ♥ A spicy jalpeno or a juicy orange
- ♥ A Volkswagen or a Ferrari
- ♥ A paint brush or a pencil
- ♥ Salt or pepper
- ♥ Batman or Superman

Keep the conversation playful. The goal is to more deeply know your partner in a fun, lighthearted way.

Take a second to celebrate this moment . . . maybe even take a selfie!



Main Course

Be vulnerable and keep having fun!

Giving the gift of Attention

This means: Entering into someone's world, taking thought of them, noticing them, doing things they like to do.

Couples often think that to need Attention means that a person wants to be the "center of Attention." This may be true, but isn't always the case.

Giving Attention *does* involve noticing your partner.

Share Surprises: Take turns finishing this sentence:
(And remember to keep it positive and fun)

I remember what a surprise to me it was that you _____.

For example: *I remember what a surprise to me it was that you don't wet your toothbrush before brushing your teeth!*

Let this be a time of playful celebration and how you've noticed the "little things" about one another.

Lets Practice Giving Attention

Remember, giving the gift of Attention involves initiative: Taking thought of your partner and then taking action.

Invite your partner to respond while you listen . . . Attentively.

- ♥ Tell me about some of the important events of your day/week.
- ♥ I'd like to hear about some of your most recent concerns.
- ♥ Let's talk about what's been going on with friends, family, or kids, and how that's impacting you.

Celebrate Initiative

Take turns finishing this sentence:

I really enjoy it when you take initiative to _____.
I sense you're taking notice of me and my world.

For example: *I really enjoy it when you take initiative to hold hands, plan a date, surprise me with flowers, cook, etc.*

What Does it Look Like to Enter Your Partner's World?

Giving the gift of Attention involves being with your partner and joining them in what they enjoy doing.

Reflecting Your World: Take turns finishing this sentence:

I love it when you join me in _____ because . . .

For example: *I love it when you join me in going for walks, attending sporting events, gardening, etc. because it makes me feel special.*

As your spouse shares, be Attentive. Make sure to:

- ♥ Notice and get to know your partner even better
- ♥ Think about a time when you can do the activity they just shared with you
- ♥ Listen for why this activity means a lot to your partner

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Dessert

The Perfect Ending

Thinking Back

Reflect on your relationship and a time when you were in pain and your partner gave you Comfort.

Perhaps you were going through a time of loss or sadness and your partner came through with the Comfort of their presence—they listened and was "really there" for you. Maybe you were feeling disappointed, discouraged, or especially alone and they came through with words of compassion letting you know they cared.

Talk about these memories and celebrate the closeness that Comfort brings:

*I remember when _____
and you _____.*

Thank you for Comforting me then. I love you.

For example: *I remember when I didn't get the job and you held me.
Thank you for Comforting me then. I love you.*

Keep it up!

The next time that your partner experiences some kind of loss, sadness or difficulty—give Comfort. We can't keep the painful experiences of life from coming our way... but we can make sure that our partner doesn't go through these times alone!

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DATE NIGHT MENU

Love Gives Comfort





Appetizers

There is Good News

Care Changes Things

Life is filled with challenges and losses, but there is good news. The good news is, when we experience another person's care during difficult times, the challenges of life don't seem so challenging! That's the importance of giving Comfort.

Let's Talk About it

Sometimes we may feel uncomfortable receiving Comfort, even though we really need it. If that is true for you, talk together about what makes it feel uncomfortable.

How would becoming good at both *giving* and *receiving* Comfort benefit your relationship?



Main Course

Being Vulnerable

What Comfort ISN'T

Giving Comfort in consistent doses helps deepen the closeness and trust in your relationship. Giving something other than Comfort when your partner is hurting brings distance and even hurt to your relationship.

Responses that are **NOT** helpful include:

- ♥ **Giving advice:** Next time that happens, you might want to . . .
- ♥ **Trying to fix the situation:** Things would be better if you . . .
- ♥ **Facts and logic:** That's just the way that . . .
- ♥ **Criticism:** You're just being too sensitive. You don't need to overreact.
- ♥ **Pep talks:** Things will get better. Everything happens for a reason.

Talk with your partner about which of these responses you typically do. We all do these at times so don't be embarrassed. Try using these sentences to help share about where you may have not Comforted well:

- ♥ *The unhelpful responses I turn to the most might be _____.*
- ♥ *I remember I did this response when _____ needed my comfort.*

What Comfort IS

In contrast, compassionate, Comforting responses will include:

- ♥ Listening to your partner's story and communicating concern
- ♥ Telling another person that you are hurting for them and are sad they are going through a difficult time
- ♥ Reassuring a person with your words and maybe even giving a gentle touch to show that you care

Let's Talk About it

Tell your partner about a time when you were hurting and someone gave you a **Comforting** response. (You can tell about a time of receiving comfort from your partner or someone else.)

- ♥ Make this a time of discovery.
- ♥ Listen for what's meaningful to your spouse.

I remember a time of pain or disappointment when _____ and I received a very Comforting response from _____ It made me feel. . .

Let's Practice it

Who are the people in your lives (friend, family member, co-worker or neighbor) that are going through a loss, struggle, or time of sadness? Perhaps someone you know has experienced a job loss, financial pressures, relationship challenges, health issues or the death of a loved one.

Next, work together to construct an email, or text that communicates care. Let this person know:

- ♥ You are thinking of them
- ♥ You are sorry they are experiencing this difficult time
- ♥ You care about what they are going through

If possible, send that text or email now.

You did it! You just GAVE COMFORT to another person.

Let's Try it in Person

Take the next few moments and think about a time from your childhood that was painful. Perhaps you felt disappointed, rejected, unaccepted, left out, or hurt in some way. You might start your memory this way:

I remember feeling _____ as a child, when. . .

Take turns sharing your stories and giving Comfort to one another. Your words of Comfort might sound like:

- ♥ I'm so sorry that happened
- ♥ It makes me sad to know that. . .
- ♥ I feel a lot of compassion for you because. . .
- ♥ My heart hurt when I heard you say. . .

Take turns giving Comfort and then receiving the gift of a closer relationship.

Welcome to your Date Night Experience!

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To get the most out of each date we have made the following suggestions:

♥ Stay positive!

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

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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.
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3. Resist attacking the other or defending yourself.
4. Be specific and positive.



Dessert

The Perfect Ending

Goals, Dreams, and Challenges

Keep in mind your partner's goals, dreams and challenges that were shared during this experience.

Reflect on your partner's insights about what Encouragement "sounds like" and "looks like" to them.

Now, take turns being your partner's cheerleader!

- ♥ *Thinking about your goal of... I want to share with you...*
- ♥ *Reflecting on your dream of... be assured that I...*
- ♥ *Considering your challenge of... I want you to know that...*

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

Love Gives Encouragement





Appetizers

Time to Celebrate

Childhood Victories

Take turns sharing childhood memories about a time when a goal was accomplished, a project was completed, or a victory was achieved.

I remember being excited that...

As your partner shares, be sure to rejoice together!

I'm excited that happened. I'm proud of you!

Taking it a Little Deeper

Giving Encouragement in things that are both big and small, is one way that we uplift our partner toward new goals, projects and achievements. When we rejoice together in past victories, it Encourages us toward new ones.

Take turns completing the sentence below:

I recently felt Encouraged by you when...

For example: *I recently felt Encouraged by you when listened to my dream to learn how to sing and then helped me figure out how to accomplish it!*



Main Course

Being a Cheerleader

Expressing Encouragement

A commitment to Encouraging one another in goals, dreams, and life challenges means we always have someone in our corner... we're a resident cheerleader for our spouse!

First, take turns sharing:

- ♥ A goal I have for this month (or this year) is...
- ♥ A dream I have for the future is...
- ♥ A challenge I seem to be facing is...

Let's Talk About it

Discuss what Encouragement "sounds like" and "looks like" to each of you—realizing you may have very different responses.

You might start with words like: *"I want to be your best cheerleader, so tell me how!"*

- ♥ Encouragement "sounds like" _____ to me.

For example: *I am with you in this. In fact, I'm all in!*

- ♥ Encouragement "looks like" _____ to me.

For example: *Giving me a medal or trophy, just to make me smile.*

Let's Practice it

Practice giving the Encouragement that best fits you, your partner, and the situation. Choose one or more of the statements below (or a different response that your partner has shared with you) and give a personal word of Encouragement to your spouse.

- ♥ *Count on me to support you.*
- ♥ *I'm sure you can do it.*
- ♥ *I'll be praying with you about that.*
- ♥ *I'm committed to help out in any way I can.*
- ♥ *I believe in you.*
- ♥ *I'll join you in that.*

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Dessert

The Perfect Ending

Respect as a Lifestyle

Giving Respect is powerfully communicated when we value our partner's input, involvement, counsel and wisdom in decision making!

Even the decisions we think "only affect ourselves" tend to affect our partner as well. Interdependence, rather than independence, is a sign of a great relationship.

Here's an important guide for interdependent, Respectful decision-making: Before I make a commitment or decision that impacts you, your life and our life together—we'll talk about it first!

Let's Talk About it a Bit More

Celebrating reassurance: Think for a moment about an area where you've made more "independent" decisions, rather than include your partner. Take this moment to give your partner Respectful and loving reassurance:

I'm committed to doing a better job of involving you in decisions about...

(For example: weekend projects, my days off, plans with friends, expenditures, finances, hobbies, sports outings, etc.)

Be sure to thank your partner for this reassurance and gift of Respect!

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

*Love Gives
Respect*





Appetizers

Starting Right

Their Strengths

Start this experience by affirming your partner's strengths. When you consistently notice and value your partner's strengths, you're not only showing respect, you're strengthening the bond between you.

Share with each other:

♥ *I've noticed that you're great at . . .*

(For example: being a mom, finances, fixing things, cooking, gardening, math, small talk, hospitality, having fun, etc.)

♥ *When I think about your strengths, I am amazed that you . . .*

(For example: are so comfortable speaking in front of groups, have no trouble negotiating deals, etc.)



Main Course

Its About Value

Expressing Respect

Giving Respect means to value your partner in countless ways. You've just affirmed one another's strengths, but it's also important to value ideas, opinions, decisions, time, insights, gifts, talents, wisdom, and experience.

Let's Talk About it

Think back to your earliest days as a couple and then finish this sentence about your partner:

From our earliest days together, I have valued/respected you for . . .

For example: *From our earliest days together, I have valued/respected you for how you handle our finances and make wise decisions.*

Let's Practice it

Take turns meeting one another's need for Respect!

Consider the additional dimensions of Respect that are listed below. Choose at least two different aspects of valuing your partner and verbalize your thoughts:

- ♥ *I value/Respect your ideas and opinions about . . .*
- ♥ *I value/Respect your insights and wisdom about . . .*
- ♥ *I value/Respect your strength and experience in . . .*
- ♥ *I value/Respect your gifts and talents in . . .*

Celebrating Their Great Decisions

Reflect on your partner's great decisions—**beginning with choosing you!** This can strengthen your trust, deepen your love and empower continuing Respect.

Other than choosing you—reflect on some of the great decisions your partner has made over the course of their life, then verbalize your Respect and admiration.

You made a great decision when you . . .

Examples:

- ♥ Handled your dad's health challenges
- ♥ Decided to change jobs
- ♥ Encouraged us to consider relocation
- ♥ Worked on our retirement plans
- ♥ Responded to unwarranted criticism
- ♥ Dealt with our son's challenges at school
- ♥ Encouraged us to socialize more

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Dessert

The Perfect Ending

Creating A Safe Place

Security is experienced more deeply in a relationship when your partner finds that it is a safe place to be REAL—to be vulnerable, without fear of defensiveness, criticism or retaliation.

Mission Possible: When you're ready, take turns asking this question: *As you reviewed the ten growth areas, is there one more area that you would love to see changed in my life?*

Brace yourself! No defensiveness or justification. You can respond with words like: *"Thanks for sharing that with me. I'll look forward to doing a better job in that area."*

When it's your turn to give your partner feedback about an additional area of needed growth, here's a great way to gently convey your hopes:

It would mean a lot to me if you would think about giving more attention to. . .

Celebrate: You've Just Been Loved!

You've just heard your partner's acknowledgement of their needed growth and then you were given the opportunity to give gentle feedback. That's a gift of love!

When we have the certainty that our partner has an openness to change, we feel more Secure!

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

*Love Gives
Security*





Appetizers

Starting Right

Celebrating

Love deepens when it rests securely. To be Secure is to be at peace in your relationship, experience harmony, confidence and trust, to be free from fear and harm.

Let's begin by celebrating the dimensions of Security you're already experiencing in your relationship.

Take turns celebrating completing two or three of these sentences:

- ♥ *In our marriage, I'm Secure that...*
- ♥ *I don't worry about you...*
- ♥ *I am not anxious about...*
- ♥ *I am at peace concerning...*
- ♥ *I'm so glad that we are generally in agreement and/or in harmony about...*

As your partner celebrates—celebrate with them:

- ♥ *I'm excited to hear that...*
- ♥ *I'm glad that's true because...*
- ♥ *Thanks for sharing that...*



Main Course

Being Vulnerable

Improving Security

An important ingredient in deepening the experience of Security in your relationship is to identify your own "growth areas" and vulnerably assume responsibility for improvement!

There are several common growth areas that help bring added Security. Review them privately and then vulnerably share at least one area that you want to improve.

A Deeper Understanding

Security in a relationship is improved when:

- ♥ I fulfill my daily responsibilities at home... without being reminded
- ♥ I work to "smooth out" my mood swings... being more predictable in my emotions
- ♥ I "remember more" and "forget less" of what is important to you
- ♥ I improve my part in our financial journey together
- ♥ I offer more apologies when I know I've wronged you in some way
- ♥ I better control my irritations, frustrations and anger
- ♥ I am more consistent in keeping commitments... not changing plans
- ♥ I engage (with you) in resolving conflicts... rather than avoiding them

Let's Talk About it

In reviewing the list of 8 possible growth areas that are listed in the **A Deeper Understanding** section, which area needs improvement for you? Share this with your partner:

Because I want you to experience more Security in our relationship, I know that I need to give more attention to _____.

(For example: *Because I want you to experience more Security in our relationship, I know that I need to give more attention to offer more apologies when I've wronged you in some way.*)

As your partner shares—avoid criticism. Instead, thank your partner for their desire to change.

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Dessert

The Perfect Ending

Support—Saving the Day

Giving Support is powerfully communicated when we come alongside our partner and share the load of life's struggles or practical things to do.

End this date night by affirming your partner's *"Super-hero-ness"*.

Share with your partner the following sentence:

"You're my amazing Super Hero when . . ."

(For example: "You're my amazing Super Hero when you help with the chores in the yard, change lightbulbs, get groceries, bathe the kids, pay the bills, cook dinner, help with laundry, etc.")

Celebrate: You've Just Been Loved!

Celebrate the unity of your relationship - that even the *challenges of life* can bring you two together!

Provided in partnership with:



DATE NIGHT MENU

*Love Gives
Support*





Appetizers

Starting Right

Celebrating Accomplishments

Celebrate the Things You Have Accomplished Together: Take turns talking about a favorite project, trip, or accomplishment that you have enjoyed doing together. Perhaps it was planting a garden, painting the house, learning a foreign language, organizing an anniversary trip, or building a playhouse for the kids.

Looking Deeper

Giving one another Support deepens closeness and helps brighten your future as you celebrate, "We did it!"

Time to Share

Just this week, I was remembering how grateful I was for your Support when...

(For example: *helped with dinner, picked up the clothes from the cleaners, entertained the kids etc.)*



Main Course

Taking an Honest Look

Expressing Support

Supporting your partner in the ways they need most, communicates a message of, "I'm here for you!"

Let's face it – sometimes we don't slow down long enough to reflect on the areas where we might need Support and then get irritated when we're doing things all alone.

Let's Talk About it

What does Support look and sound like for you? Take turns sharing with each other:

A time when I really felt supported by you was when...

Now, take the next few moments to reflect on one area of your life where you might need additional Support.

- ♥ First, prepare yourself for your partner's response. You are about to ask your partner where they need more of YOUR help. So drop any defensiveness or self-centeredness.
- ♥ Embrace this message: Because my partner can experience more of my love through additional Support, I want to hear and receive their response.
- ♥ Take turns asking: *I want to love you better, so what is one area where I could give you more Support?*
- ♥ Take turns sharing: *It would mean a lot if you could...*
- ♥ Finally, offer committed reassurance: *Thanks for letting me know how I can help. I'm looking forward to Supporting you in these ways.*

Removing Anxiety

Concern, and even anxiety about the future, can develop when we imagine facing the challenges of life without our partner's Support. If you talk NOW about your Support needs, this can reduce anxiety and increase unity as you encounter the challenges of the future.

Think about some of the life challenges you see in your future:

- ♥ A job change
- ♥ Child's education
- ♥ Car/transportation needs
- ♥ Pregnancy
- ♥ Child's schedule
- ♥ Housing needs and demands
- ♥ Aging parents
- ♥ Health issue
- ♥ Child's behavior
- ♥ Financial issues
- ♥ Conflicted relationship

Time to Share

Now, take turns sharing what your need for Support might "look like" when this challenge comes your way.

*When we deal with (name the challenge) _____,
I would feel like we're facing it together if you could...*

(For example: *When we deal with my mother's declining health, I would feel like we're facing it together if you could help me check out nursing home facilities for her).*