

THE WOODWORM

by Abidin Sönmez

To couples who ask, “*What happened to us?*”

May they find a new perspective.

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THE WOODWORM

TAKING FOR GRANTED

The Relationship Rasp

Consequences of TfG

Everything Starts with Feeling Offended

Home becomes a tense space

RECONNECTING

HOW TO OVERCOME TfG?

A Healthier Lifestyle

Creating New Habits

SHARING

What Is Sharing?

Sharing and Harmony, Secrecy, Sharing Multiplies the Good and Reduces the Bad

How to Share?

How Much Should You Talk, The Right Timing, When the Topic Is Sensitive, Quality Sharing

Barriers to Sharing

Different Communication Styles, Talkative vs. Non-talkative, The Detail Issue

How to Clear the Hurdles?

Practicing, Why Practice Matters, Knowing vs. Doing

Exercise 1: Engaging a Quiet Spouse

Exercise 1: From Whole to Detail, From Detail to Whole

Practicing Out Loud Matters, Bidirectional Exercise

Practice Increases Sharing

THE WORLD OF FEELINGS

Imprecision, Hard to Pin Down, Clear Boundaries vs. Emotional Blurriness, Hard to Prove Feelings, Hard to Compare Feelings, Intertwinement, Individuality. Reciprocity, Selfishness

RECOGNITION

Being Noticed

Being Ignored

RESPECT

Easy to Display

Respect is Essential

CARING & VALUING

The Power of Greetings

Ignored Presence, Noticed Absence

Why Greeting Matters

Life Doesn't Help Us

When Opinions Overlap

MAGIC WORDS: THANK YOU

Barriers to Saying Thank You

How to Respond to "Thank You"

Exercise: Saying "Thank You"

PRAISE

Purposeful Behavior

Praise Barriers

TfG, Not Being Used to It, Not Noticing, Postponing Praise, Pampering and Praise The Fear of Sounding Fake

How to Receive Praise

Breaking Down Barriers

Weak Forms of Praise

Covert Praise, Indirect Praise, Diluted Praise

Praise Isn't Easy

Exercise: Find the Praiseworthy

Care vs Praise

The Mighty Nutrient, Praise Takes Effort, "Feeling Cared For" Is Easy, Showing Care Is Easy Too

FEED YOUR INNER SELF

How to Get Support

SUSTAINABLE LOVE

Words Are Not Enough

Love

No Reason, No Love

A Continuous Supply of Love

Say it. Show it. Act it out. Prove it.

The Love–Praise Cycle

Compassion and Love

CRITICISM

What is Criticism?, Criticism in a Relationship, Common Excuses for Avoiding Criticism

“Correct” Criticism?

Privacy, Timing Is Everything, “I” Statements, Be Solution-oriented, Speak Calm, Explain Consequences,

Avoid generalizing, Don't bring up past mistakes, Verbal or Written?, Be a Witness, In Short

Criticism and TfG

The “Purification Day”

How to Respond to Criticism

QUALITY COMMUNICATION

Quality Praise, Quality Criticism

The Right Way to Praise

The Right Way to Criticize

EPILOGUE

BIOGRAPHY

BACK COVER

TAKING FOR GRANTED

The Mobile Couch

At first, I thought I was imagining things. But after a few days, I realized I wasn't. The couch in the living room was moving—twice a day. Every morning, it was in one spot, and by evening, it had shifted to another. Strange, but true.

I didn't make a big deal out of it in the beginning. I tried not to think about it too much. But my curiosity kept growing—because it wasn't moving randomly. The couch only ever switched between two specific places: in the morning, it sat in the corner of the living room; by evening, it was parked right next to the kitchen door.

Now, some context: our neighbor Michael's father was unwell. He had a large diabetic wound on his ankle, and I was helping treat it twice a day. Every time I came over, the old man would be lying on that couch, waiting for me to tend to his foot.

They were a decent family. Michael was a quiet guy in his mid-thirties—tall, broad-shouldered, and physically imposing. His wife, Jennifer, was the opposite: bubbly, chatty, endlessly talkative. She could carry on a conversation all by herself and keep going even after you'd stopped listening.

Every visit, I hoped Jennifer wouldn't be home. If she was, I knew I was in for a marathon. First, she'd insist I have some coffee. Then came the cake she had "just baked"—there was always a "just baked" cake. And just when I'd be trying to leave, she'd shove a fruit plate into my hands and cry, "No way! You can't say no! Absolutely not!" Eyes wide, hand firmly pressing down on my shoulder so I couldn't stand up, all while talking a mile a minute.

Meanwhile, the mystery of the moving couch kept bothering me. I really wanted to know what was going on, but I didn't want to ask. It felt... intrusive.

I didn't want to bring it up with Michael—he might've thought it was none of my business, and he would've been right. Asking Jennifer was out of the question—I might still be listening to her answer to this day. Michael's father? No chance. He barely spoke, barely acknowledged my greetings.

A few more days passed, and the couch kept up its odd routine—corner in the morning, kitchen in the evening. Finally, one morning as I arrived, I ran into Michael at the door. He was just heading out for work. We greeted each other, and before I could chicken out, I blurted:

"Can I ask you something about the couch in your living room? It's always in a different place whenever I visit. What's going on?"

Michael gave me a long, slightly amused smile. He sighed and said:

"Jennifer and I can't agree on where it should go. I prefer it in the corner—like you see in the mornings. She likes it near the kitchen. We argued about it. Actually, we had a few serious fights. We haven't spoken to each other since the last one.

"So now, when I get home, I move the couch where I want it. Then in the morning, after I leave for work, she moves it back to where she wants it. It's been like this for weeks."

He didn't look at me as he said this. Maybe it was a good thing—he would've seen how stunned I was.

I couldn't understand how something as simple as a couch could cause that much tension. I stopped visiting after his father recovered. I don't know how they're doing now. Maybe they made up eventually.

In relationships, long-lasting grudges usually don't show up in the early years of living together. At first, you get small fights—maybe a few hours of cold shoulders, a day or two of sulking. Nothing more. It usually takes a few years—three or so—before couples really master the art of resentment.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some couples just don't let little things bother them. They get along so well they barely know what resentment feels like. Others, though, can get upset over the tiniest things, even early on—and not speak to each other for weeks, even months. It really depends on the people. But generally, the longer the relationship, the more likely it is for longer periods of silence to creep in.

Living under one roof isn't easy. The more “comforts” we add to life, the more little things we have to disagree about. The details pile up, and with them, the chances for friction.

Michael and Jennifer got married for love. Everyone knew their story. Their love was something people talked about, even beyond our neighborhood. They were the couple everyone envied.

So it came as a shock to realize they weren't getting along. They *looked* like they were still in love. They *seemed* happy. But clearly, something had changed.

Love needs care. Emotional connection needs maintenance. It's possible to keep love alive—but only if you work at it. Somewhere along the way, Michael and Jennifer had let that connection fade. Maybe they still loved each other, but not as deeply. Not as visibly.

Because when love is strong, couples can't stay mad at each other for long. Even if they argue, they find a way to patch things up. When the emotional bond is still there, resentment never lasts.

The Relationship Rasp

It's hard not to wonder how Jennifer and Michael spent their time at home like that. Maybe after dinner, Michael sat silently in a corner, zoning out in front of the TV—or maybe he brought work home with him. Jennifer might have been busy with housework. And maybe, in the middle of it all, they just stopped talking. Ignoring each other like the other didn't even exist.

You can almost feel how tense and uncomfortable the atmosphere must have been for the others in the house—the elderly father, the children.

When two people under the same roof start ignoring each other, life becomes hard for both of them. It doesn't happen overnight. You don't suddenly wake up one day and start tuning each other out. It's something that builds slowly, gradually, and quietly over time.

Couples who've lived together for years often begin to lose sight of one another.

What once felt like a miracle—sharing life with someone—starts to feel routine. That sense of wonder fades. Your partner no longer feels special, unique, or extraordinary.

After years of breathing the same air, life together becomes familiar. Maybe too familiar. You know your spouse inside out, and you get used to them. Your behavior starts to reflect an unspoken thought: *“My spouse is here with me. I can talk to them whenever I want. I can reach out whenever I need. They’re not going anywhere.”*

These thoughts are often a subconscious way to soothe our fear of losing them. We convince ourselves that loss is a distant risk—something that will only happen if things get *really* bad.

At the heart of it all lies one of the biggest challenges in long-term relationships: taking each other for granted—let’s call it **TfG**.

It’s a sneaky problem. TfG doesn’t show up overnight, and you usually don’t notice it at first. It creeps in slowly over time—three years, five years, maybe even more. Little by little, it erodes the connection between two people. Too many couples in a long-term relationship deal with it at some point.

So, what does it mean to take someone for granted?

It means becoming numb through repetition. Getting so used to someone’s presence, voice, or habits that they stop feeling special. We stop seeing the value in their efforts, their kindness, their unique traits. We get used to it all—and because we’re used to it, we stop appreciating it.

Eventually, everything about our partner feels ordinary. Their presence blends into the background. In a strange way, it’s like their being there or not makes no real difference. They become emotionally invisible.

This is the “relationship rasp”—like a woodworm eating away at the core of a relationship. It’s silent, slow, and hard to notice. But over time, it erodes the emotional bond between partners. Most couples don’t even realize it’s happening. And just like a woodworm hollowing out wooden furniture from the inside, it quietly undermines the foundation of a relationship.

The excitement from the early days fades. The qualities we once adored in our partner stop standing out. We don’t admire them like we used to. We start thinking, “These aren’t special qualities—I could find them in anyone.” And so, we stop noticing. We stop appreciating. We take them for granted.

TfG usually goes both ways—both people in a relationship start taking each other for granted. Over time, just being around each other starts to feel as normal and unremarkable as seeing a chair, a computer, or a favorite old t-shirt.

You can think of TfG couples as if they have this mindset:

My partner is always here, always available. Nothing special, nothing unique... Just a constant in my life. Like a fixed number in a math equation. Always there, always the same. Someone who’ll definitely be home in the evening, or someone I’ll surely see when I get home. No questions, no doubts. That’s just how it is.

What people usually take for granted are things like their partner’s temperament,

character, personality, behavior, habits, talents, and skills. Physical appearance can be taken for granted too, but it happens less often.

Still, TfG can affect physical attraction as well. Over time, we might start to overlook the beauty of our partner or the charisma we once admired. Their physical qualities may no longer seem so impressive—not because they've changed, but because we've stopped noticing.

But here's the thing: physical attraction isn't only about how the other person looks. It's also shaped by *us*—our hormones, our preferences, and how we feel inside. That's why physical traits are harder to take for granted. TfG shows up more often in everyday contributions: the things our partner *does*—their actions, efforts, and support in daily life. That's where it becomes easy to stop noticing.

For example, maybe your partner makes amazing coffee every morning. But after a while, you stop saying anything about delicious coffee. You just expect it.

The coffee's always good. It's just coffee. Of course, it should taste this way. That's normal. Nothing to talk about. This is just what being a partner means, right?

Or maybe your spouse is the one who always steps up when there's a problem at your kid's school.

Of course they take care of it. That's what moms or dads do. It's expected. Not a big deal.

We don't usually think these exact thoughts. Most of the time, they don't even consciously cross our minds. But in practice, we start to overlook the effort behind these things. Whether it's preparing great coffee or handling school issues, we stop acknowledging them. We get used to them, and they become background noise—like the sound of rain or the feel of sunlight, so ordinary, so simple.

We forget that someone *makes* the coffee. We treat it as if it magically appears, always the same. We act like it doesn't take effort, time, or care. We ignore the love and attention behind the small acts.

And when a problem at school gets fixed, we barely register how it happened. We just assume it has been taken care of by our spouse automatically. That's what parents do, right? No need to say anything.

But in doing this, we overlook real dedication. We fail to show gratitude. We stop seeing our partner's efforts. We act like these things just happen—when in fact, they only happen because someone cares enough to make them happen.

We often don't notice the effort, the care, or the quiet responsibility our spouse shows—whether it's the way they tune into our child's world or how they step up to solve problems. Over time, we stop paying attention. We begin to take these things—and the person behind them—for granted. Eventually, we don't even see them anymore.

There are so many small examples:

- A perfectly cooked bean dish

- Replacing the dishwasher detergent without being asked
- Zipping up a jacket when needed
- Always reminding us to grab the phone charger
- Reaching out a hand to help us avoid slipping
- Regularly changing the bed linens
- Staying on top of the grocery shopping
- Paying school fees on time

These might seem like simple, everyday things. And that's exactly the point. These little acts may not be headline events, but they form the foundation of daily life. We tend to dismiss them as minor, unimportant, not worth mentioning. But in reality, they matter—a lot.

They may not be dramatic or unique, but they are the glue that holds the relationship together. When we start taking these things for granted, it slowly chips away at our connection. We become less sensitive to each other. Less aware.

The focus here isn't on grand gestures. It's on the quiet, routine acts that barely register. The problem isn't that they're too small—it's that we stop noticing them altogether. We start seeing them as:

- Always there
- Always the same
- Too simple to deserve attention
- Too ordinary to appreciate
- So small, they seem to have no value

Little by little, we get used to them. We start thinking, "This is just how things are," or "It's always been this way." And the strange part is, we often don't even realize we're taking our spouse for granted. Most of the time, they don't realize it either. It's not intentional. It just... happens. Quietly. Silently. Without anyone noticing.

That said, this doesn't happen in every relationship. There's no universal rule. Human relationships are complex, and not all couples experience this drift. Many partners continue to see each other as deeply important and valuable, just as they did in the early days.

Consequences of TfG

It would be great if we could talk about the consequences separately for each person. But usually, it's not just one-sided—it's something that happens on both sides. Both spouses get used to the other's qualities, habits, and actions. Over time, they start taking each other for granted—though it might look different for each one.

Trying to measure who does it more or less isn't easy. Feelings aren't simple to rank or quantify.

When we are taken for granted by our partner, it can feel like:

- We're not being treated as human
- We don't matter
- We're being ignored
- We're not appreciated
- We're not seen as a real partner
- We're treated as unworthy
- We're treated like strangers

At first, neither person wants to admit there's a problem. They might sense something's a bit off—maybe the atmosphere at home feels strange—but they don't call it a problem. "It's kind of weird," they might say. And in a way, they're right. At that point, it's not yet a *problem*.

But negative feelings slowly build up. After a while—and that "while" is different for everyone—the weirdness becomes too much. Then little things start to surface: boredom, restlessness, headaches, sleepless nights, random tears...

Sometimes there are arguments or little clashes, but they're not major—yet. The conversations might go something like this:

- "You don't pay attention to me anymore."
- "What makes you say that?"
- "I feel invisible. Like I don't matter."
- "I don't get what you mean."
- "Nothing I do seems to mean anything to you."
- "That's not true."
- "You've never really taken me seriously."
- "Wait—what are you talking about all of a sudden?"
- "I work hard day and night, and you don't even see it."
- "Please, don't start this now..."

In the busyness of daily life, we often don't stop to think about what our spouse is doing—for us, for the relationship, for the home. Or maybe we just *can't* think about

those little things when life is rushing by. And that's the real problem: we stop noticing, recognizing, appreciating.

There's no ill intent. No bad motives.

But the small things—the “little” subjects—are what actually hold a relationship together. When those things get ignored or taken for granted, the foundation starts to crack. And when the glue disappears, the relationship can't hold up. It falls apart at the weak spots.

As time goes on, both people talk less and less. The silences at home grow longer. No one brings up the “small” problems, but both can feel that something isn't right. Still, they don't really know what it is or how to talk about it.

If the TfG is one-sided, the person who feels ignored often tries to adapt. They ask themselves what they might have done wrong. They try to change, be more careful, do better—anything to avoid upsetting their partner.

They might notice annoying behavior from their spouse and try to explain it away. The most common explanation? “They're just working too hard these days.”

“There's nothing wrong with them—it's just the stress from work. That's all. Work is overwhelming right now...”

Sometimes they'll blame it on a recent event: a death in the family, waiting on important news, a bad experience with a friend. But often these explanations don't really fit. They're just attempts to justify the uncomfortable atmosphere at home.

How about the other party; the one who takes their spouse for granted? They usually don't even *know* it, they are not aware of it. They don't think, “*Oh, I've been neglecting my spouse lately.*” It doesn't even occur to them. But their actions change. They stop paying attention.

Even though we still believe our spouse is important, we stop showing it. We criticize more easily, lose patience faster, and snap at them over minor topics—as if it's our right.

And that's when the real damage starts.

The way we treat our spouse becomes cold and distant. We sulk, go quiet, and retreat into our own world. We don't necessarily act like they don't exist—but we behave like their presence doesn't really matter. We don't ignore them outright, but we also don't truly acknowledge them either.

The tricky part is, we don't even realize we're doing it. We don't stop to think that this kind of behavior is unfair or hurtful. We're simply unaware. That's what makes this so difficult. It's like we're wearing blinders—we just can't see what's happening.

Everything Starts with Feeling Offended

Problems usually begin with small, seemingly unimportant arguments. Often, it all starts with something simple: hurt feelings, a bit of resentment, or getting offended. Of course, this isn't always the case. Every couple is different, and it's hard to make generalizations when it comes to people.

Some couples go straight into big fights—sometimes even before they’ve taken off their coats at the door. Others, like Michael and Jennifer, might sulk for days or even weeks without saying a word. In most cases, the first signs of trouble are subtle—resentment, emotional distance, or easily hurt feelings.

As these feelings build, something changes. Suddenly, the tiniest joke or tease—which once would’ve made them laugh—becomes a source of offense. Both partners grow more fragile. They become more sensitive, more irritable, and less forgiving. Over time, they begin to drift apart.

When someone gets offended, they carry that hurt inside. A word, a look, a gesture—it hits them like an insult or a put-down. Some people speak up right away. Others stay silent, bottling it up for days or even longer. But the best thing to do is talk about it as soon as possible—before it festers and turns into something bigger. Otherwise, the problem just grows, making it harder and harder to fix.

Big or small, any issue needs to be talked through early on. That sounds simple, but for many of us, it’s not easy. Instead, we keep our hurt to ourselves. It’s almost like we want to stay in that feeling of being wronged, like it somehow gives us power. And we come up with all kinds of reasons not to bring it up:

- “It’s not worth making a fuss over something so small.”
- “I don’t want to ruin the evening.”
- “Eventually they’ll realize anyway—better if I just don’t say anything.”
- “What’s the point in talking? If they act like that, nothing I say will change it.”
- “After what happened, it’s too late to talk. The moment’s already passed.”
- ...

So we stay quiet. We hold it in. We tell ourselves it’s the right thing to do. And honestly, some of those reasons seem pretty convincing. Sometimes they’re even right. But being right doesn’t always bring happiness.

We try to carry on like everything’s normal. We smile, maybe even laugh—but it’s not real. It’s forced. And no matter how hard we try to hide it, our feelings still show. Our expressions, our tone, our body language—they give us away. We might not think we’re being obvious, but the people close to us can tell. Especially our spouse—the one who probably knows us better than anyone else.

They can sense something is off. So they ask, “What’s wrong?” And what do we say? “Nothing.” We pretend it’s all fine, that life is just going on as usual. We don’t want to bring it up. We think it would make things worse. So we keep pretending.

But deep down, the problem is still there.

Sometimes, staying silent feels like a way to protect the other person. “I’m already hurt, but at least I can keep my partner from feeling the same.” We don’t want to make them feel bad by pointing out their mistake—yes, it is their mistake—but we hope they’ll figure it out on their own.

Protecting, but at what cost?

Even when we don't say anything, our partners can sense something is off. They notice we're not okay, but they don't ask questions. They know there's tension, they feel the crisis, but they choose to ignore it. On purpose.

Why? Because they have their own inner justifications, just like we do:

- "If I act like nothing's wrong, we'll avoid an unnecessary fight."
- "Maybe it's something minor. Better to let it pass."
- "Let them bring it up if it's bothering them."
- "If they're oversensitive, that's not my problem."

And just like that, we both retreat into our shells. We pretend everything is fine. Neither of us wants to hurt the other, but we end up creating a quiet distance. We say nothing. We try to act like nothing's wrong. We leave it to time, hoping time will fix it. And yes, sometimes time helps. But often, it just covers up the wound instead of healing it.

That unspoken issue doesn't go away—it lingers. It leaves a mark, makes us more fragile the next time something similar happens. It becomes a sore spot. A small wound that never really heals. Time isn't always a cure

Sometimes, we grit our teeth and say, "Just be patient." But the problem doesn't fade. It grows. It takes on new shapes, spreads into other parts of our relationship. Slowly, it fills our whole emotional space.

We never talked about it. My spouse didn't do anything. I didn't either. Days passed. We spoke only when necessary—nothing more, nothing less. That same issue kept hurting me. Not in a loud, dramatic way, but quietly. It stayed in the back of my mind, eating away at me. It's not even a big deal—but it keeps coming back. Every day, it feels a little heavier, a little sharper.

And so, we stay quiet. But the quieter we get, the more the tension builds. And the more it builds, the quieter we become. A vicious cycle. Like falling into a bottomless pit. And then... boom.

It explodes—usually at the worst possible time, over something ridiculously small. Suddenly, we're shouting, blaming, complaining. Burning bridges over a forgotten sock or a dirty dish. Neither of us really understands what it's all about anymore. At the first chance—if you can even call it that—we let it all out. But it comes out wrong. We exaggerate. We pile everything together—making a mountain out of a molehill.

We lash out, louder and harsher than expected. Our partner is caught off guard, unsure how to respond. Their hesitation makes us feel more justified—"See? They don't care!" And we push even harder. They try to calm us down. They step back. But only for a moment. Then it's yelling on both sides. Accusations, judgments, raised voices. Until someone gives up or the anger burns out.

What if we had just talked early on?

Things could have been so different if we'd just addressed the issue right away. If we'd said, "Hey, this hurt me," instead of bottling it up.

Talking always makes a difference—and usually, it's a good one. When we don't let problems pile up, we're less likely to explode. Even if we don't solve the issue completely, talking helps reduce its weight.

When problems accumulate, they become harder to deal with. It's always easier to break one stick than a whole bundle. So, deal with issues as they come. Don't let them stack up.

Understanding starts with a conversation

To truly understand each other, we have to sit down and talk. Exchange thoughts. Get to the root of things. Sometimes, we might even realize we were wrong—or that there wasn't anything to be offended about in the first place. And that's okay. It's not about "winning" the argument. It's about reaching a shared understanding.

Once we do, there's less friction moving forward.

But if we don't talk, problems grow. Over time, we lose patience. We become less tolerant. We get easily irritated. Suddenly, every little thing feels like a big deal. And we become difficult people. Probably we all know the signs:

- Quick to anger
- Poor emotional control
- Blowing small issues out of proportion
- Constant inner frustration
- Avoiding eye contact
- Answering in short, cold sentences

Home becomes a tense space

There's less talking, less sharing. The tension builds. Even if it doesn't always erupt into fights, there are constant signs: sharp glances, long sighs, frowns, heavy silences.

And sometimes, it plays out like this:

Astrid is cleaning up after dinner. She's not in the mood. She moves stiffly between the kitchen and the living room, occasionally glaring at her husband, Richard. She's clearly angry. Richard can tell. She barely said a word during dinner—not even when the kids were arguing. He senses something is coming. And then, it begins:

- "Why don't you ever throw your socks in the hamper?"
- ...
- "I'm always picking them up."
- ...

- “I can’t keep up with everything.”
- ...
- “I have only two hands, you know.”
- ...
- “I can’t do it all.”

She goes on like that for a while. Eventually, she stops. She’s let it out. She feels a bit better. Venting gave her some relief.

Then Richard speaks, calmly but firmly. It’s his turn:

- “Is it really just about the socks?”
- ...
- “Is that all?”
- ...
- “You think things are easy for me?”
- ...

And often, that’s where it ends. With silence. Maybe they both feel a little lighter. Maybe not. But if this keeps happening—if the resentment builds and builds—then silence isn’t relief. It’s the fog that covers everything.

Where does it lead? It starts with short bouts of resentment. Temporary truces. Then another argument. Then another. Each one a little longer. A little louder. Eventually, no one knows where it’s headed. But honestly, it doesn’t matter. Because the real loss isn’t the argument or even the outcome.

It’s the time we lose. The days, weeks, months—sometimes years—that we can never get back.

RECONNECTING

HOW TO OVERCOME TfG?

First things first—money isn't the answer. A couple's financial situation doesn't really affect whether or not they experience TfG. Both wealthy and struggling couples can face it. So it doesn't make sense to think the solution lies in money, property, or material things. Sure, financial issues can cause stress in a relationship, but TfG is a different story.

You might think the problem will go away if partners just do more for each other, like:

- Paying attention to each other's needs
- Helping out when needed
- Buying gifts
- Being supportive at the right time
- Making more money
- Pitching in with chores
- Attending school meetings
- Taking care of neighborhood stuff
- ...and so on.

Of course, all of these things matter when you live together. They're part of building a life with someone. But unfortunately, they don't solve the TfG issue. These kinds of actions—while important—don't really prevent TfG from showing up, or make much of a difference if it already has. They're necessary, yes, but not enough. They fall outside the scope of what really addresses TfG.

Why? Because when you live together, these things are just expected. You *should* be helping out, showing up, and doing your part. If you're not going to do the basics—like care about your spouse's needs, give the occasional gift, attend meetings or handle responsibilities—then what's the point of sharing a home?

The real issue with TfG starts one step further: it's not *what* you do, but *how* you respond to what's done. The problem is about attitude—being appreciative, recognizing effort, valuing each other, celebrating the small wins, and expressing care through words and gestures.

A Healthier Lifestyle

There's no quick fix for TfG. It's like a slow-growing issue that eats away at the connection between partners. But the good news? You *can* overcome it—or at least reduce its impact—by gradually adopting a different approach to daily life together. It

takes time, not days but months, and consistent effort.

- Talking more and sharing more with each other
- Showing appreciation and respect openly
- Not forgetting to say “hello” and “thank you”
- Praising each other when it’s deserved
- Criticizing in a kind and constructive way

Couples who manage to shift their habits in these ways tend to push TfG out of their lives. Why? Because when you truly see and value your partner, it’s much harder to take them for granted.

Ideally, couples should start this way from the beginning of the relationship. Thus, TfG doesn’t even get a chance to take root. A home built on mutual sharing, care, respect, and appreciation isn’t fertile ground for TfG. These couples not only face fewer problems, but when problems do come up, they’re better equipped to handle them.

Creating New Habits

Building a habit takes time. Turning it into a lifestyle takes even more effort. At first, you might not enjoy it. It might feel weird, fake, or uncomfortable. But don’t give up. Keep going. Later chapters will offer exercises to help you practice. Stick with it—you can absolutely succeed.

Make time to talk more with your partner. And if possible, spend more time together in general. Use every opportunity to show that you care. Celebrate their wins—no matter how small. Compliment good behavior. Highlight great work. Make it a regular part of your life together.

You might be thinking, *“Why should I be the one to do all this? What about my partner?”*

Yes, it starts with you. At first, you may feel alone in the effort. But don’t panic. Once you start showing appreciation and care, your partner will likely respond in kind. That’s how we work—we tend to mirror the way we’re treated. So focus on your own actions, and let your partner handle theirs.

It may be tough at the beginning. You might struggle. It might feel forced or unnatural. That’s okay. Keep pushing. With time and practice, it’ll start to feel real and rewarding.

Giving praise or showing appreciation doesn’t always come naturally. Even when your partner deserves it, you might find it hard to express. Sometimes the words just don’t come. This usually means you’re simply not used to it—but that can change.

In short:

Taking your partner for granted doesn’t make a big scene—it slips in quietly, almost unnoticed. In the moment, it might seem harmless. It doesn’t break the relationship all at once. Instead, it creeps in slowly, like a woodworm, burrowing deep and

hollowing things out from the inside.

If you don't catch it early, it can quietly eat away at even the strongest connection—unseen, silent, and steady. You might not notice the damage right away. But over time, the bond weakens, and what once felt strong and solid starts to feel shaky and fragile.

That's why the little things matter—small acts of appreciation, sharing more with each other, being emotionally present. These aren't just nice habits; they're the everyday tools that keep the "woodworm" out. And if some damage has already been done, they're also part of the fix.

Bit by bit, day by day, you can rebuild the closeness you once had. These small efforts protect the relationship from wearing down further. All it takes is the choice to notice—and to do something about it.

SHARING

One of the best ways to develop a better lifestyle is to *talk more*. Share more. The more you talk with your partner, the easier it becomes to appreciate them, to express praise, and even to give thoughtful criticism.

By opening up and talking, you show that you value your spouse. And when you understand what they think or how they feel, you're better able to respond genuinely. You can't agree with someone's point of view if you don't know what it is—and the only way to know is through conversation.

When two people share openly, they become more comfortable with each other. Appreciation, respect, and empathy grow naturally from that connection.

Sharing is one of the most essential parts of a happy home life. Couples who can share—without hesitation or discomfort—can solve most of their problems. Sharing builds closeness. And closeness makes everything else easier.

What Is Sharing?

Sharing is necessary. Sharing makes a difference. Sharing is essential. But what exactly does it mean to share? What are we supposed to share? When, how, and how much?

The first thing that usually comes to mind is sharing **time**. Spending time with your partner—real, meaningful time—is one of the most important things you can do for your relationship. Try to increase the number of activities you do together. Both you and your spouse should actively create reasons to be together.

Over time, it's natural for both partners to develop different personal interests, which can lead to spending less time together. That's why it's so important to use every opportunity to be in the same space at the same time.

Sharing time doesn't just mean being physically present. It means doing things *together*, or at least *talking* to each other while you're together. Sitting silently in the same room, each person glued to their own phone, isn't really sharing time. In fact, if both of you are fully immersed in your phones—typing away with both thumbs—you might as well be spending that time with the person you're texting instead of your

partner.

Of course, when we think of sharing, we might also think of sharing responsibilities, like housework. Couples should divide household chores in a way that works for them—not with a calculator. It's not about keeping score: "If I do the dishes, you have to do the laundry." Ideally, the work is shared based on who prefers or is better at doing what.

In urban settings, couples often find a rhythm that works. In more traditional or rural areas, there may still be room for improvement in this area.

But the kind of sharing we're really talking about here goes beyond time or chores. The most meaningful kind of sharing in a relationship is *sharing your thoughts, your world, your day*. Talking with each other. Telling your partner what's going on in your life when you're apart. Letting them know your small updates, big news, or random thoughts.

Living under the same roof means more than just coexisting. It means opening up. It means *sharing*. And that starts with communication. Your partner should be someone you can talk to—about everything. And they should feel the same way about you.

You have a whole life to share, and so do they. That includes:

- New experiences or interesting things that happen to you
- Ordinary daily events (yes, even the boring ones!)
- Things you've learned from books, articles, videos, or conversations
- Work-related thoughts: your goals, ideas, frustrations, or worries
- News you've come across or opinions about current events
- Your fears, hopes, joys, and questions about life in general
- Events that make you happy, inspired, or at peace
- Things that upset or hurt you
- Your thoughts and opinions on any topic, big or small
- How you feel in certain situations

In short, share what's happening *in your life* and *in your mind*.

Sharing Is the Glue

Couples who share deeply and regularly tend to have happier, more peaceful relationships. Ideally, you'd share everything with your partner—but in reality, not everyone finds that easy. That's okay. Everyone has their own comfort level. But even so, it's worth making an effort.

Because here's the truth: **The more you share, the closer you become.** Sharing builds intimacy. It strengthens the bond. It's the glue that holds a relationship

together.

And if we flip that around: the less you share, the more distance grows. Emotional distance, not just physical. Good looks and attraction might hold things together for a while—but without sharing, the connection weakens over time.

So if you want your relationship to last and feel meaningful, make sharing a habit. Start small, but keep going. It's worth it.

There are so many things to talk about—like the weather, current events, hobbies, what's going on at home, how the kids are doing in school, what friends and family are up to, new developments in science, literature, art, politics, sports, or even just small talk and gossip. The list is endless.

Sharing and Harmony

Some couples seem to have had matching tastes, interests, and opinions from the moment they met—and they still do. When we see these couples, we might think, *Wow, they were made for each other.* It seems like they're perfectly compatible and must have a wonderfully happy relationship.

And some of them do. They really get along and live in harmony. But even these couples can run into problems, because compatibility isn't something that just stays perfect forever. Even with many similarities, maintaining harmony isn't always easy. Similar tastes don't automatically lead to harmony. Being similar is one thing—being compatible is another.

Compatibility means being able to come to an understanding. It's about finding common ground on how to handle life together, especially when things aren't smooth or predictable.

Some couples find that harmony early on. Others grow into it. They change, adapt, and find ways to understand each other. Their peaceful life together isn't just about having similar preferences—it's the result of effort. Whether they realize it or not, they've worked toward that harmony. They've talked things through, made compromises, and figured it out together.

Here's an example of how that kind of understanding might sound in everyday life:

- I get nervous watching action movies with all that shooting. I don't know how you can enjoy them.
- I love them! They don't make me nervous at all—they just get my adrenaline going, and I like that feeling.
- I feel really uncomfortable.
- I don't want you to feel that way. Let's turn it off.
- No, wait. Maybe we can find a solution.
- Okay, how about we only watch movies we both enjoy?
- That works. Or hey—why don't you watch action movies when I'm out at my ceramics class on Saturdays? Would that be okay?
- Perfect! I'll do that.
- You're the best!

Couples who live in harmony feel at ease with each other. They speak freely and act naturally. They don't second-guess themselves or worry too much about how they'll be received. But when there's no harmony, conversations can dry up, problems may

build up, and conflicts often aren't far behind.

Harmony brings people closer. And the secret ingredient? Sharing. The more you share with each other, the easier it becomes to build and maintain harmony.

Being Close

In any relationship, couples are constantly moving—either growing closer or drifting apart. Every new experience or situation can bring them together a bit more or create some distance. It all depends on what happens and how they handle it.

This cycle repeats with each new stage in life. Every time, there's a chance to discover something new about your partner—something you hadn't seen before, or that only emerged over time. Life just works that way.

The goal is to increase those moments of closeness. And that doesn't happen by accident. Talking, sharing, being open with one another—these things matter. Because sharing brings people closer.

If you tell your spouse what you're thinking and feeling—if you simply share more—you'll notice a change. First, it's your behavior that changes, not your spouse's. You'll start acting in a way that feels more connected and intimate. Over time, your partner will begin to feel closer to you too, because you're no longer a mystery. They'll understand you better, and that understanding builds closeness.

We naturally feel closer to people we truly know. And it goes without saying: being close to your partner is key to being happy together. The closer you feel, the more likely you are to enjoy your life together. That's why it's so important to share openly and often. Without sharing, it's hard to build closeness—and without closeness, happiness is harder to come by.

But sharing doesn't just mean living in the same house or eating meals at the same table. Real sharing, especially in a relationship, starts with talking. It means opening up and telling your partner what's going on inside you. And this goes both ways—they need to share with you too.

There shouldn't be secrets between partners. Being open is the simplest and most powerful way to grow closer. In fact, openness and closeness feed into each other: the more open you are, the closer you become; and the closer you are, the more comfortable it is to open up. It's a loop that builds connection.

So how far should you go in sharing? And for how long? The truth is, there's no limit. Emotional closeness isn't something you can measure like distance or weight. The world of feelings doesn't work that way. You can't really say, "We're close enough" or "We've reached our limit." There's always more room to grow together. Feelings are vast and complex—something we'll talk more about later.

Secrecy

When you stop sharing, you start drifting apart. And even if you don't mean to show it, it comes through—in how you act, how you respond, and how you carry yourself. Your partner will notice. Over time, if the distance keeps growing, they might start to pull back too. If you don't make an effort to reconnect, small problems will start to appear, and they'll eventually grow into bigger ones.

Can you keep *anything* to yourself? Sure—when it comes to other people. But with

your spouse, it's usually better not to keep secrets. Still, this is a personal choice. You just have to be aware of the consequences: the more you share, the closer you'll feel; the less you share, the more distant you'll become.

Secrecy doesn't only refer to big things like money or property. Yes, those matter too—but often, it's the little everyday things that make the biggest difference. Hiding financial issues or emotional struggles can seriously damage a relationship. But even tiny problems, if left unspoken, can build walls between you. Over time, silence about minor topics becomes a major issue.

When you don't share, you reinforce TfG. And once you fall into that trap, you're even less likely to open up. It becomes a cycle: you don't share because you've started taking them for granted, and you take them for granted because you're not sharing anymore. Unless you break that cycle, the gap between you will keep growing. Eventually, problems will show up—maybe not with a bang, but quietly, like a slow fade.

"We used to talk for hours. We'd share so much we'd forget to breathe just to keep the words flowing. Now, neither of us says a word."

I don't know what happened to us. It's like we each carry a pair of pliers, trying to pull words out of the other. Hours pass in silence. After dinner, we go our separate ways—not because we fought, but as if we're silently sulking. We do our chores. We play our roles. But it feels like we're just trying to avoid showing any weakness.

"I'll do everything perfectly so my spouse won't complain. That way, I won't need to defend myself."

It's like we're always calculating, walking on eggshells to avoid conversation. Not even fighting—just quietly avoiding each other.

Everyone in the household should share. Parents with each other, parents with their kids, siblings with one another. But most of all, spouses. That's where it starts. Ideally, there should be no secrets between a husband and wife. Or rather—it's better if there aren't.

Of course, not everything is meant to be shared with *everyone* in the house. Some things are private, and that's perfectly normal. Parents, for example, should be thoughtful about what they share with their children. But between spouses, openness should be the default.

Parents shouldn't treat their children like friends. Kids can make plenty of friends in life, but they only get one set of parents. Being a parent comes with serious responsibilities—more than what friendship requires. Sure, it's okay to act like a friend from time to time, but what children need most is for their parents to *be* parents.

Spouses on the other hand, should treat each other as special. They need to be open with one another, to share honestly and fully. That kind of connection builds a strong relationship.

Sharing Multiplies the Good and Reduces the Bad

We all want a home filled with love, respect, understanding, warmth, and kindness. Sharing creates the foundation for these good feelings and helps keep them alive.

No one wants a home filled with coldness, tension, arguments, or fights. These things don't belong in everyday life. And the more we share, the easier it is to keep that negativity out of our homes.

You don't have to start talking non-stop the minute you walk through the door. Just speak when you feel like it, when it feels right. Talk as much or as little as you want.

But it *is* important to have the intention to talk—and to understand that we *need* to. Sometimes, even a little bit of effort can make a big difference. A small push in the right direction can lead to meaningful, positive change.

How to Share?

When it comes to living together, there's real value in sharing through conversation—especially when both partners are home. But if that's not always possible, there are other ways to stay connected. Every now and then, you can go out and spend time together—go for a walk, have a picnic, visit a park, garden, forest, or beach. Even a big social gathering can be a good opportunity to check in and share with your partner.

The kind of sharing we're talking about in this book is face-to-face conversation with your spouse—not over social media. Of course, there are many ways to share, and if chatting online or texting helps you feel better, that's okay too. Any kind of sharing is better than none. Talking online, through messages or posts, still counts. Sharing is sharing.

But when it comes to your home, your family, or your shared life, there's nothing like sitting down and actually talking face-to-face. That's by far the best. You can't really live together through letters, phone calls, emojis, likes, or comments. Real connection happens in person.

When you talk at home, it's best to feel relaxed and at ease—spontaneous and natural. You shouldn't feel fear, anxiety, worry, shyness, or stress when you're opening up. You shouldn't have to prepare what you're going to say, choose your words carefully, or feel like you're walking on eggshells. Home should be the place where you're most comfortable—more than anywhere else.

How Much Should You Talk?

So, how much should we talk at home? The answer is simple: *enough*. And who gets to decide what “enough” is? The person who wants to speak. Not the listener.

Everyone in the household should be able to talk until they feel fully heard—until they feel they've truly expressed themselves. That's part of what makes a house a home. A home is a place where people can meet their most essential needs—and expressing ourselves is one of those needs. Maybe it's not *the* most basic (we still need air, water, food, and safety), but it's right up there.

The one who needs to talk, talks as much as they need. But that brings up a fair question: what if the other person doesn't feel like listening? What if “enough” for one feels like *too much* for the other?

Don't worry—we're not stuck. These kinds of issues can be worked through. You'll find some helpful exercises in the following sections. It's also possible to agree together on how long conversations should go and what topics you'll cover.

Does one party have to listen to the end just because the other partner wants to talk?

Ideally, yes—it's great when one partner can listen all the way through. But in reality, that's not always possible. The listener might be busy, distracted, or dealing with other priorities. When that happens, the couple needs to make a decision together. If they agree to pause and continue the conversation later, that's totally fine—but it needs to be a mutual decision, and they should follow through on it.

The Right Timing

Finding time to talk shouldn't be a problem. If it doesn't naturally exist, it can be created. Harmonious couples often do this without even trying. They seem to know what to talk about, when to talk, and for how long. But really, it's not about "knowing"—it's the result of their connection. Because of their harmony, things just flow. They handle communication effortlessly. That's the power of a strong emotional bond.

Still, real life gets in the way—work, kids, errands, fatigue. Even the most compatible couples may struggle to find the right moment to talk. That's when planning comes in handy. You can agree in advance on a specific time to have a meaningful conversation.

For example, you might go out together for a couple of hours once a week or every other week just to talk and unwind. Or, you can make use of modern tools—emails, texts, or video calls. The key is to remember: sharing is essential.

Think about it this way: if there's no food in the house, or if the water or electricity is out, we drop everything and take action. We don't ignore it, we fix it—because it's urgent and important.

Talking—sharing—is just as vital as electricity, water, or food. It deserves to be a top priority. Whether immediately or at the first opportunity, this need must be met. If it goes unaddressed for too long, both partners might tolerate it for a while—but the relationship won't. Living together can't thrive without consistent emotional sharing. Problems will eventually show up. That's why it's so important to make time for meaningful conversations—no matter what.

Once couples build the habit of talking regularly, sharing becomes second nature. They feel close. They don't stress about saying the wrong thing. They aren't focused on the clock. They just talk—because it feels natural and necessary.

When the Topic Is Sensitive...

If you're planning to discuss something delicate or important, timing matters even more. It helps to consider a few things beforehand:

- When is the best time for me to have this conversation?
- How am I feeling right now? Am I calm, rested, and in a good mood? Or am I tired, stressed, or irritable?
- Do I understand the topic I want to bring up clearly?

And what about your partner?

- Are they in a good mood to talk? Are they well-rested and not overwhelmed?
- Have they had a tough week or dealt with recent stress?

If you're planning to talk during a relaxed time, like a weekend or vacation, it's often best to do it at the beginning. Otherwise, other things can come up and interfere. Plus, if you start early, you'll have the rest of the time to reflect on the conversation and revisit any points that need more attention.

Ideally, you should leave the whole day open—no appointments, no errands. Your mind needs to be clear and free of distractions. Don't schedule anything else for that afternoon or evening.

For example, saying, "We're going to visit friends at 8 p.m., so we've got five hours—we can talk before that" might seem fine. But it's risky. You may not be fully relaxed, knowing there's something else coming up. That lingering thought—the evening commitment—can clutter both your minds. Even with five hours, that little mental "blur" can get in the way of a truly open, meaningful conversation.

Quality Sharing

Talking needs to be *enough*—but "enough" doesn't just mean how long the conversation lasts. It also means the *quality* of the conversation. And quality has a lot to do with how engaged both people are. In other words, are you really talking, or just going through the motions?

Talking "with the tip of your tongue" doesn't count—just like working "with the tip of your hand" doesn't get the job done. Multitasking, going off-topic, constantly looking around, giving one-word answers, or making irrelevant or inappropriate jokes—these things lower the quality of your interaction. Try to avoid them.

For more on what makes a conversation meaningful, check out the section called "Quality of Communication."

Barriers to Sharing

Spouses should never feel afraid or hesitant to talk to each other. They should feel free to speak their minds and start a conversation whenever they want to. The idea of "freedom" in communication between spouses should be wide open—nothing should feel off-limits.

You shouldn't have to overthink every word, or pretend to talk while hiding what you really feel. You shouldn't avoid speaking out just to keep your partner from getting upset.

If you find yourself hesitating because you're worried about questions like:

- Will my spouse ask a hundred questions?
- Will they argue with me?
- Will they criticize or get mad?
- Will they listen without making a scene?

- Will they misunderstand me?

...then something's off. A healthy environment for sharing doesn't include fear or doubt.

If these worries continue, the amount of sharing will slowly decrease. Over time, you and your spouse may grow distant. You may begin to feel like strangers. The love and warmth you once had will wear away—and that's when deeper problems start to grow.

Different Communication Styles

One major barrier to sharing is when spouses have different communication styles. Maybe one is quiet, calm, and rarely speaks, while the other is talkative and expressive. That difference can cause tension—but it doesn't have to.

Even in these cases, couples can grow closer by practicing how to share better. With time, patience, and small steps, progress is absolutely possible.

You'll find some simple exercises in the next sections that can help you improve communication and develop the habit of sharing more effectively.

Talkative vs. Non-talkative

- *"You can't just go through life without saying anything! How can two people live together without talking, joking, or laughing? How am I supposed to know if you hear me, or understand me, if you never respond? Just say something—anything—so I know you're really here!"*
- *"Can you stop talking for one second so I can breathe? It's amazing how much one person can talk!"*

Both of these complaints are valid. And both are understandable, each in their own way. But sometimes being right isn't enough to make a relationship work. Happiness often requires compromise. If something needs to change, *both* partners need to make an effort. Both need to step a little out of their comfort zone. Both need to take a step toward each other.

Being talkative isn't a flaw. Neither is being quiet. Some couples naturally match each other in this area. They talk about the same amount, enjoy similar styles of conversation, and don't have issues here—they have other things to focus on.

Some people are outgoing and energetic. Talking comes as naturally to them as breathing or drinking water. They're quick to start a conversation—and sometimes they don't know when to stop. Others are more reserved. They enjoy quiet and calm, and can feel overwhelmed in noisy or talk-heavy environments. Long conversations can be tiring or even stressful for them.

For a talkative person, living with someone quiet and reserved can be frustrating. And for the quieter partner, constant talking can feel draining. It's a challenge for both sides. And the key isn't to "fix" one another—it's to understand, adjust, and meet somewhere in the middle.

It probably won't surprise anyone to hear that it's usually women who say their husbands don't like to talk. Many women complain that they can't have a "nice conversation" with their partners. They say they can't discuss the things they'd like to resolve—simply because their husbands just don't enjoy talking.

To be fair, maybe it's more accurate to say that men don't like talking *as much* as women do. Of course, this is not a rule. Whenever we talk about people, there are always exceptions. Not all men dislike conversation. Some actually love chatting and are very expressive. But in general, it's safe to say that women tend to be more talkative than men. That's not a judgment—it's just how things usually are.

Example:

– *You looked a bit weak this morning when you left for work. I even called after you—I wanted to give you some hot water with cinnamon and ginger. It would've been good for you to drink it before heading out. But I guess you didn't hear me. How was your day? I hope you're not getting sick. Are you feeling okay?*

– *Uh-huh.*

– *You should be careful in the winter. I was thinking, maybe you could take a couple of days off and catch up on a few things around the house. The kids' books are still all over the floor, and remember, the shelf fell down the other day. What do you think?*

– ...

– *I took the kids to the park today. They had a great time. On the way back, we stopped by your cousin's place. Their little boy has grown up so fast—he's practically a young man now. They just got back from a camping trip. I had no idea they were even gone. Did you?*

– *No.*

– ...

In this short exchange, one person says only two words—actually, just two sounds: "uh-huh" and "no." This person clearly doesn't like talking. It's a typical scene: a husband coming home from work, and his wife trying to have a conversation. She's talkative, and he's quiet.

But being talkative is actually a good trait. People who enjoy talking are usually better at jumping into conversations with others. That means they're more likely to pick up new information and ideas than someone who keeps to themselves. Quiet people often miss out—and sometimes they don't even realize what they've missed.

Talkative people, whether men or women, also tend to give more details when they talk. That means they often think things through more carefully and consider different angles. In many situations, that's a real strength. Paying attention to details helps avoid problems, because you're more likely to notice relatively simple things and take precautions in advance.

The Detail Issue

It's not easy to convince a quiet person to talk more. Telling them how important communication is won't help—they already know that. The same goes for people who talk a lot; asking them to speak less isn't simple either. It's just how they are.

Still, there's hope. With practice, both talkative and quiet people can improve how they communicate.

Let's imagine two people with very different talking habits. One loves to talk—constantly and in detail. The other is more reserved, prefers silence, and is happy with short, to-the-point sentences.

When they try to have a conversation, it often doesn't go well. It fizzles out quickly, like a balloon losing air. Their attention drifts elsewhere. One reason for this disconnect is how differently they treat *details* in conversation.

Talkative people tend to give more details. They believe a good conversation should cover everything—down to the tiniest point. No matter the topic, they want to dig deep, mention every little thing, and expect others to do the same. Being brief just doesn't satisfy them. They ask lots of questions and often push the other person to say more—almost like they're trying to pull the words out.

On the other hand, quiet people prefer to keep things short. They're uncomfortable with long-winded speech and feel it's unnecessary to spend time on too many details. To them, it's more efficient to wrap things up in two or three sentences and move on.

For detail-oriented folks, though, it's impossible to just say something and be done with it. They want to discuss everything thoroughly. They believe this is the "right" way to talk. Their motto might be: "Why settle for a few words when you can say more? Are we running out of words or something?"

Imagine a couple having a conversation. The talkative partner is telling a story about running into a mutual friend at the bus stop:

"Just as the bus was arriving, I saw her in the distance, walking toward me. Well, at least I thought she was walking toward me, but her face was turned, so maybe she didn't see me. I'm still not sure. Oh, and then an ambulance drove by with its siren blaring—I don't know if she saw me at that moment or not. Anyway, the bus was about to leave, but I decided to wait for her and take the next one."

"She finally got there, and she looked so upset—like really miserable, like a wet weekend. I asked what was wrong. At first, she said 'nothing,' but after I insisted, she gave in and started talking. Turns out, she and her husband had a huge fight. He accused her of not taking proper care of the kids. Can you believe it? Said she was a bad mother! She said he comes home late all the time and basically ignores his family. Sounds like things are really bad between them."

"I tried to comfort her, told her that these things happen, but she wasn't really listening. She was looking at me, but her mind was somewhere else..."

Now, the quieter partner is sitting there, thinking:

"I'm trying to be patient, but most of these details are unnecessary. Why does it matter whether she saw my spouse or not? In the end, they met and talked. That's what matters. No need to waste time on all the little in-between stuff. Every extra word feels like a waste of time and energy."

If it were the quiet partner telling the same story, it might go like this:

"I ran into our friend today. We talked."

And that would be the end of it—unless someone asked for more. Because for them, "every unnecessary word is a waste of time and energy."

People who don't like to talk much often find it hard to keep up with long

conversations. Listening to someone speak at length isn't easy for them. While they may admit that sometimes it's necessary, that "sometimes" rarely seems to come around.

They want to hear the conclusion right away. They expect—and often demand—that their partner get straight to the point without dragging things out. Their expression seems to say: "Whatever you have to say, just say it quickly and spare me the effort."

Meanwhile, the person doing the talking feels uncomfortable, thinking:

- *My spouse looks at me in a way that makes me want to stop talking and go quiet. It's like everyone's staring at me, judging what I'm saying—as if I've made some big mistake. I feel like I've said something wrong, something irrelevant or inappropriate. I don't know what to say anymore... I feel like I should just be silent.*

You might assume that women like to talk more "nicely," and men don't have patience for wordiness. But it's not always that simple. Sure, you can generalize—but not all women are talkative, and not all men are quiet. Some men actually love details and enjoy talking more than many women. And some women are so reserved, they won't even give a one-word answer, let alone go into detail.

So how can two people—one who loves details and one who can't stand them—live together?

The answer is simple: *compromise*. Both partners need to make an effort. Both need to change a little. They have to meet somewhere in the middle. That's the key.

The detail-lover has to tone it down a bit. The one who dislikes details needs to make an effort to share a little more when they speak—even the small things they might usually ignore. In short, both sides need to adjust their attitudes about details. They'll eventually find a middle ground—by talking it through.

How do they do that? First, they have to really want it. That's the most important part. Then they need to practice. It takes time and energy, and you can't expect good results without putting in the work. If we want to have a happy life together, we need to try. We need to make an effort. Practice makes it possible—for both sides.

Living under the same roof doesn't usually come with one single "right" way of doing things. Most of the time, there are two "rights." It might be hard to navigate between them, but compromise doesn't have to be that hard.

And it's absolutely necessary. Without it, that delicate balance of living together falls apart. And when that balance is lost, life can become pretty miserable.

How to Clear the Hurdles?

It starts with attitude and approach. First of all, it's important to accept that both styles are completely normal—some people love to talk and go into detail, while others prefer to keep things short and to the point. Some enjoy chatting constantly, while others are more comfortable with silence.

If you're someone who loves to talk and your partner is quiet and reserved, it's easy to feel like they're being difficult. That's a natural reaction. But from their perspective,

you might seem like the difficult one because you talk too much. That's also understandable.

The truth is, a talkative person doesn't need to force themselves to speak less, and someone who's naturally quiet doesn't have to take courses to become a chatterbox. If neither wants to change, that's okay—they can stay as they are. Whether we like it or not, it's wise to accept that people are different.

Your spouse might talk more or less than you do. That's just part of who they are, and it's not something you have a right to object to. Your attitude toward them shouldn't be based on judging this difference. It's not fair—or helpful—to say things like, "You talk too much," or "You're too quiet." Talking a lot or very little isn't a flaw. These are just normal personality traits.

Try not to say anything that sounds like blame or criticism. Avoid using a tone that could be taken the wrong way. Criticism rarely solves anything—in fact, it often makes things worse. When you criticize your spouse for talking too much or too little, you're likely to reinforce that very behavior. It can shut down any chance for change or growth.

There's always room for a solution. With a bit of patience and effort, couples can gradually find a middle ground when it comes to how much they talk—and grow closer in the process.

Practicing

The exercises in the following pages are for both talkative and quiet partners. When spouses differ in how much they like to talk, practicing together can help them get along more easily and live together more harmoniously.

Before jumping into the exercises, it's helpful to think about a few key ideas: learning, remembering, and putting things into practice. Answering the questions below can make the exercises more effective:

- Why is practice important?
- What can we do to make knowledge actually useful?
- How can we make sure we remember what we learn for a long time?

Why Practice Matters

We're surrounded by useful information—books on our nightstands, documentaries on TV, articles on the Internet. We can gain a lot just by reading, watching, or listening.

But learning usually has two goals: to satisfy our curiosity, and to benefit from the knowledge we gain. After satisfying our curiosity, we tend to remember some of what we learned, but we also forget a lot—especially as time goes by.

We want to remember the important stuff, and ideally, recall it at just the right moment. That's because we want to *use* what we've learned—we want to *apply* it. So, knowledge has to stay in our memory long enough to be useful—sometimes even for a lifetime.

So how do we make that happen? How can we make sure we remember what we need, when we need it?

The answer is simple: practice. By practicing, we not only reinforce what we've learned, but we also gain real-life experience using it.

Learning something is a great first step. But just knowing it usually isn't enough. To make that knowledge *usable*—something we can actually apply whenever we need to—we have to practice it. And that usually means practicing it more than once.

Knowing vs. Doing

We can learn how to do something by reading, listening, or using any of our five senses. Once we've taken it in, we might be able to describe the task in words, write out the steps, and explain the order in which things need to happen. When that happens, the knowledge is stored in our memory.

Knowing something—having learned it, memorized it—means we've stored that information in our brain and can recall it when needed (as long as we don't forget it). But storing knowledge alone isn't enough.

Just keeping information in our head without using it doesn't do much. At best, we can bring it up in conversation, share it with friends, and maybe even sound smart. That might boost our ego or our reputation—but that's about it.

If we want to actually benefit from what we've learned, we need to go a step further: we have to apply that knowledge in our daily lives. That's the only way it becomes useful.

For example, if we want to prevent or overcome TfG in our relationship and build a happy home life, we need to form some key habits as listed earlier:

- Sharing openly at home
- Valuing and respecting our partner
- Giving praise when it's deserved
- Offering criticism in the right way

In the next pages, you'll find some exercises designed to help with these. Reading about them will give you an idea of what they're about, and you might even remember a few. That's a good start. But to *really* benefit, you have to do them—more than once. Practice is what makes the difference.

When we practice, we involve more than just our brain. We also use our muscles and the nerves that control them. If we practice enough, those muscles and nerves “learn” too. That's how we become skilled—able to do things naturally, without overthinking or second-guessing ourselves. And bonus: the knowledge sticks around longer because it's been recorded in more parts of our body.

So if you want to actually use what you've learned—whether it's to improve communication with your partner or to become more articulate—you need to practice. And when it comes to speaking well, that means practicing *out loud*.

Thinking, imagining, brainstorming—they're all mental activities. And sure, they matter. But they have their limits because they only involve your brain. To really get comfortable with something, your body needs to get in on the action too. That's when real learning happens—when your brain, muscles, and nerves all work together.

It's not enough that the exercises are helpful or interesting. It's not enough just to remember them. Useful information won't help you unless you *act* on it. And that means practicing—really putting in the time.

Think of an exercise like fitness equipment. It's nice to have it at home, but it won't do you any good unless you *use* it. And using it once? Probably not enough. To build lasting habits, we need to repeat the exercises again and again.

If you're living with someone who's quiet, calm, and reserved—and you'd like to encourage more conversation—you *can* make a difference. Not completely, of course, but enough to make life at home easier and more enjoyable.

Exercise 1: Engaging a Quiet Spouse

Start by figuring out what topics your partner enjoys. This is easier than it sounds, especially if you live together. Everyone has interests—think about it for a bit, and you'll likely spot them quickly.

Even a quiet person gets excited about certain subjects. They might not be chatty in general, but there are always a few things they enjoy talking about. Being reserved doesn't mean lacking interests—it just means those interests might not be obvious at first.

People's preferences vary, but here are some common examples:

- Many women tend to enjoy topics like home management, shopping, raising kids, fashion, beauty, or plants.
- Many men are often interested in cars, technology, sports, economics, or politics.

These are just general trends—of course, plenty of people don't fit these patterns.

Now, here's the important part: Only do this exercise if you *truly* want to. You need to be sincere about it. If your effort feels forced or fake, your spouse will notice, and it won't work.

Once you've identified a topic your spouse likes, pick one to focus on. Start a conversation about it. You might not know all the details—you might even be completely wrong about some things. That's totally fine. In fact, it's great. Why? Because now you can ask your spouse to explain things. Let them teach you. They'll enjoy filling in the gaps and correcting your misunderstandings—and you'll be showing genuine interest.

Keep this up for a few weeks. Forget about your own favorite topics for now. Set them aside. Instead, focus only on what your spouse likes. Ask questions. Get their opinion. Try to dig a little deeper. Find out how they think and feel about the subject.

This kind of generosity in conversation is powerful. Think of it like this: when a

neighbor brings us a dish, we never return the plate empty—we send it back with something we made. It's a kind and natural exchange, common in many cultures.

Your spouse won't stay indifferent to your effort. They'll eventually notice—whether consciously or not. Sooner or later, they'll start bringing up topics that matter to *you*. That's human nature. When we're treated with kindness, we respond in kind. Just like we don't return an empty plate.

Let's say the husband is quiet and the wife wants to get him talking. If he's into soccer (or football), that's a great starting point. Before bringing it up, she could check the sports headlines to get a sense of what's happening.

Here's how a simple conversation might go:

- *Your team missed a penalty, huh?*
- *No, what do you mean? How?*
- *I don't know, that's what the TV said.*
- *No, they didn't miss. The ref called a double kick instead of giving a penalty.*
- *Oh, so they missed a chance for a penalty?*
- *Exactly.*
- *Got it. How did the team play overall last week?*
- *They played great—kept the pressure on. But they lost. That's just bad luck.*
- *How many games are left in the season?*
- *Four. Why?*
- *Just wondering when the championship race ends. Maybe your team gets the cup!*
- *With this strategy, they're not winning anything.*
- *I agree. They work so hard to get the ball and they kick it away immediately after they have it.*
- *Wait—what?*
- *Seriously. If you fight to win possession, hold on to it. Why kick it away?*
- *(laughs) When did you become a soccer expert?*
- *You made me one! By the way, I've always wondered—what's the ball actually made of?...*

Keep bringing up the topic—start a conversation, ask a question, share a piece of news. Maybe nothing will change at first. Maybe your spouse won't open up right away, or the conversation won't lead where you want. That's okay. Be patient. Stick with it.

Think of it like adding a new ingredient to a simmering stew—it blends in slowly and subtly changes the flavor. Over time, these conversations will become more natural and flow more easily. Eventually, your own favorite topics will make their way into the mix. You'll both begin to *chat*, not just *talk*. Your bond will grow stronger.

Here's the bonus: this exercise boosts your shared experiences. You'll find that the more you share, the easier it is to connect. And sharing is like magic—it grows on its own.

Exercise 2: Whole to Detail, Detail to Whole

Some people love going into detail, while others prefer to keep things brief. If you enjoy explaining details, chances are you're more talkative—and if you don't, you

probably speak less. That's perfectly normal. There's nothing wrong with either style; both are simply different ways of communicating.

When spouses have different levels of talkativeness, they just need to find a balance. With a little effort, they can meet somewhere in the middle. As they practice, they'll begin to understand each other better.

Just like with anything else, success starts with genuinely wanting it. Anyone can develop new habits. You can learn to talk more concisely, or you can become more comfortable with detail. As long as you're willing and put in the effort, it's absolutely possible.

The exercises below are for both types: the one who loves to talk and the one who prefers to keep it short. The only difference is where they begin. One will move from detail to summary, the other from summary to detail.

Let's say this is your original story:

I walked downtown. I bought tomatoes, potatoes, and onions for the kitchen, a raincoat for myself, and cheesecake and doughnuts for the kids. On the way back, I spent some time in a pastry shop and had a coffee. Then I came home.

If you're someone who enjoys sharing every detail of your day with your partner, that's totally normal. It's healthy to share. That's part of what makes living together meaningful.

But let's say your partner isn't very talkative and gets bored or overwhelmed when too many details are given. They like short sentences and getting straight to the point.

You might try saying:

I went downtown. I bought vegetables, a raincoat, and some sweets for the kids. I had a coffee on the way back.

This version is about half as long. It still communicates your day clearly, and your partner is more likely to stay engaged.

If you want to make it even shorter:

I bought vegetables, sweets, and a raincoat—and had a coffee.

That's nearly a 75% reduction in word count compared to the original version. You've covered everything in fewer words, and your spouse will likely appreciate your effort.

Even shorter?

I did some shopping today.

If they're curious, they'll ask for more details. Otherwise, you've respected their preference for brevity.

At the shortest:

Just shopping.

Just two words. If your partner wants to know more, they'll ask: "Where?" "What did you get?" "Why?" Then you can elaborate.

As you can see, you can express the same ideas with fewer words without losing the core message. Each version is like an umbrella covering the meaning of the more detailed ones. The trick is choosing the right words—words that reflect the essence of what you want to say.

If you're naturally detailed and your partner isn't, exercises like these can help you become more concise. Use examples from your everyday life. Try summarizing them step-by-step. Start with the full story, then shorten it gradually.

Say each version out loud as if you're speaking to your partner. This helps your brain and your speech muscles get used to being flexible with word count.

You can also write your thoughts down and then shorten them gradually. Each shorter version should still reflect the full message of the longer one.

Practicing Out Loud Matters

It's essential to say your summaries out loud—not just think them in your head. When you speak out loud, you're training your body: your tongue, throat, jaw, face, and even chest. These are the muscles we use when we talk. The more you practice speaking out loud, the more natural it will feel when you do it in real life.

Mental practice alone can help—but it might not be enough. We're not just solving a brain teaser here. This is real life. Real relationships. And our goal is to communicate better and connect more with our partner.

Another example; let's say your boss gives a speech at a meeting you attended:

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for the results we achieved last quarter. Sales rose by 14%, mainly because we gained new customers. But let's not get too comfortable—we also lost clients. Sales to Group A customers dropped by 12% compared to the same time last year. One reason is a rise in faulty production. Looking at product-level sales, it's clear that customer loss is linked to these quality issues. We need to fix this. By improving production and changing our marketing strategy, we can win them back. Let's stay focused and work hard. Success doesn't come easy. See you at the next meeting.

Now imagine you come home and want to share what happened with your spouse—someone who doesn't like lengthy explanations.

You might say:

Sales are up 14%, thanks to new customers. But faulty production caused a 12% drop in Group A clients. We'll try to fix it with better production and a new strategy.

If your spouse seems tired or distracted, you might shorten it even more:

Sales are up, but production problems caused us to lose clients. We'll try to get them back with improvements.

Or even shorter:

It was about sales and production.

And the shortest version?

Work stuff.

Just two words—but it still gets the general message across. If your partner wants more, they'll ask.

Bidirectional Exercise

Exercises like the ones above should be practiced by both partners—both the one who enjoys talking and going into detail, and the one who prefers to keep things short and simple.

The partner who wants to practice being more concise should start from the beginning of the text. Step by step, they'll try to express the same ideas using fewer words, gradually removing unnecessary details.

On the other hand, the partner who wants to work on speaking more or adding detail should start from the end of the text. They'll move backward, adding a bit more information at each step to make their answers fuller and more expressive. This can be done as a shared exercise.

Finding a text similar to the ones in the previous exercises and then trying to shorten or expand it is a good mental activity. It exercises the brain, which is useful—but it's not enough on its own.

What we want to say has to actually be spoken out loud. When we speak, we're not just using our minds—we're using our bodies. The muscles of the tongue, throat, mouth, jaw, face, neck, and chest, along with the nerves that control them, all get involved. These are the parts of our body that make speech possible. So, when we practice out loud, we give these muscles a workout too, making our practice much more effective. That's how it can really improve our conversations at home.

If we only do the mental part of the exercise, we might feel confident. But when it comes time to speak in real life, we might still struggle. This isn't just about solving a puzzle or feeling good after figuring something out. This is real life. It's about whether we're happy or not.

Our goal is to improve how we talk with our partner—whether that means keeping things shorter or adding more detail. In doing so, we hope to get along better and communicate more effectively.

The bottom line: we need to *speak*. That means practicing out loud—not just thinking, not just forming sentences in our heads, but actually saying them. That's where real improvement comes from.

Practice Increases Sharing

Living in the same house isn't just about sharing food, water, rent, and utility bills. We also need to share *life*—our daily experiences, thoughts, likes and dislikes, hopes, preferences, feelings, and more. And the main way we do that is through talking.

Of course, there are many ways to communicate—email, text, online chat, video calls—but when we live together, it's even more important to connect in person. That's why talking face-to-face is essential.

The exercises mentioned earlier aren't just about adjusting how much or how little we speak. They also help us share more. When two people have different attitudes toward sharing details, these exercises can help them meet in the middle. This makes it easier to open up to each other—and that means deeper sharing.

If you and your spouse do these exercises together, you're already creating opportunities to share, just by doing them. And more sharing is key to preventing and overcoming TfG.

Beyond these exercises, it also helps to learn more about relationships and actually *apply* what you learn. Books, documentaries, helpful websites—these are all great resources. But simply collecting knowledge isn't enough.

Knowledge only matters if you use it. If we want to build a happy life with our partner, we need to go beyond reading and start practicing what we've learned. Turn it into action. Make it part of your everyday life.

And yes, it takes effort. You might get tired or frustrated along the way. That's normal. In real life, nothing truly valuable comes without some kind of cost.

We should work to remove whatever blocks honest, open conversation—and do more of whatever makes it easier to talk and share.

When we show our spouse that we care and value them, they're likely to do the same in return. This kind of mutual care has a powerful impact on our emotional connection. And the stronger that connection is, the less likely we are to face the emotional disconnection that TfG brings.

Because in the end, TfG is deeply tied to the emotional world we create together.

THE WORLD OF FEELINGS

Recognition
Care
Value
Respect
Showing respect
Seeing someone as a human being
Love
Compassion
Tolerance
Being considerate
Understanding
Closeness
Warmth
Kindness
...

These are some of the key concepts that make up the world of feelings. They're the meanings that others attach to our actions. We behave in certain ways toward people, and they interpret those behaviors. Based on what they see and feel, they may associate our actions with any of the ideas above. As a result, they feel appreciated, cared for, loved, respected—and so on.

Of course, sometimes the opposite happens. Our actions might send the wrong message. They might be seen as cold, uncaring, disrespectful, or dismissive. And when that happens, the other person—like our spouse—can end up feeling hurt or devalued.

Unlike the physical world, which we can see, touch, and measure, the world of feelings is abstract. We can't touch love, or see respect with our eyes. These feelings don't have a physical form—they're made up of meanings, impressions, and interpretations. But just because we can't sense them with our five senses doesn't mean they're not real.

We all want to feel good emotionally. Nobody enjoys unpleasant feelings. But most of us haven't been trained in psychology, so it's easy to misinterpret emotional signals—especially when we try to measure emotions using the same standards we use in the physical world. That often leads to misunderstandings and emotional conflict.

The good news is: we *can* improve how we handle this. We can reduce the risk of negative emotional experiences by learning more about the world of feelings—its nature, its rules, and its unique way of operating.

That's why it helps to take a closer look at this emotional world before diving into specific topics like caring, appreciation, love, tolerance, and so on. These are essential when it comes to TfG. If we want to avoid or resolve TfG, we need to understand these emotional concepts better.

Even though we can't see or touch things like love, care, or warmth, they're as real as a desk, an orange, or the air. These feelings are part of who we are. Just because they're invisible doesn't mean they don't exist—they take up space in our lives, even if the boundaries are a bit blurry.

They belong to our inner world, and the rules of the physical world don't really apply. The emotional world has its own set of rules. Here are a few of its key features:

Imprecision

In the world of feelings, things aren't exact. Emotions don't come in standard sizes. Their strength or impact depends on the situation and the people involved. You can't measure them with a ruler or scale.

If someone asks, "How much do you care about me?" you might say, "a lot," "quite a bit," or "more than anything." These answers give a sense of your feelings, but they're not exact. You can't put a number on love or care—and that's perfectly normal in the emotional world.

In the physical world, it's easy to say something like, "I went to the store and bought two kilos of rice." But in the world of emotions, it doesn't work like that. You can't say, "I love my spouse four hundred and eighty-seven kilos." People would just laugh. We all know there's no scale that can measure feelings. There's no tool that can tell us the depth, length, weight, or volume of emotions. You simply can't put units on them.

We might say, "I love my spouse very much," or "a lot," or "so much," or even "as much as the ocean." That's fine—those expressions make sense emotionally. But there's no exact measurement behind them. That's just how feelings work.

And maybe that's why saying "I love you very much" sometimes isn't enough. Because what does "very much" even mean? How much is that, really? We need to show the size of our love through our actions. Our behavior should give our spouse a sense of how deep that love runs. Otherwise, saying "very much" might not mean anything at all.

Hard to Pin Down

When it comes to emotions, the lines between different feelings are blurry. It's hard to define where one ends and another begins. On top of that, the way we understand and experience these feelings can vary from person to person. So even when we

think we've figured out what we're feeling, someone else might see it differently—and that can lead to misunderstandings.

Take this question: “They did something for me—but did they do it out of love, or out of pity?” Sometimes there’s no clear answer. Love and mercy don’t come with visible labels. So it all depends on how you interpret the action.

Or imagine this: “I made a sarcastic joke, and she just gave a slight smile. She didn’t say anything, didn’t react much. Was she tolerating me—or just ignoring me?” Again, these are tough calls. The line between tolerance and indifference can be incredibly thin, and often invisible.

More importantly, how we define these feelings is personal. You might call it tolerance, while I see it as coldness or disinterest. That’s just how it is—we don’t have a tool that can tell us what someone is feeling for sure. Maybe someday AI will help us read feelings more accurately, but for now, we have to live with this uncertainty.

Clear Boundaries vs. Emotional Blurriness

In the physical world, boundaries are obvious. Unlike emotions, they’re easy to define. They’re clear, measurable, and not open to interpretation.

If someone asks, “Is this the sidewalk or the garden gate?”—that’s a strange question. The boundary is obvious. And if there’s any doubt, you can measure and confirm it.

It’s the same with objects and time: glass vs. water, purse vs. wallet, yesterday vs. today. There’s no gray area. Everything is clear-cut.

But in the world of feelings? It’s a whole different story.

- “You underestimated me. I noticed that.”
- “No, you’re wrong. I just wanted to highlight your strengths.”
- “Oh, come on!”
- “Seriously, I never meant to belittle you.”
- “Well, praise and condescension are two different things, okay?”
- “Okay, but...”

Praise and condescension are totally different things—you could even call them opposites. But they often get mixed up. It’s easy to misread them. You might mean to give a compliment, but it could come off as condescending. Or your spouse might interpret your praise as you talking down to them.

That’s just how things go in the emotional world. It’s complex, personal, and sometimes messy.

The best thing to do is simply try again. If your intention was to praise but your partner heard it differently, just praise them again—genuinely.

Don't waste energy trying to prove you were sincere the first time. That rarely helps. Just say it again, in a better way. Talk more, explain more, share more. Try to be natural and open.

Hard to Prove Feelings

What am I feeling? What am I going through? How is this affecting me?

These are hard questions to answer with absolute certainty. The only way I can express what I feel is through my words, my tone, my facial expressions, my gestures, and my behavior.

Even then, others might not see it as solid proof. It gives a clue, but it's not definite. There's no perfect way to provide clear evidence of our emotions. Sometimes we don't need to—our feelings are obvious. But other times...

- I've been lying on this couch for two hours, and you didn't even check on me.
- I thought you were asleep. I didn't want to disturb you.
- Maybe I'm sick, or I fell down. You don't care about me at all!
- That's not true. I stayed quiet *because* I care. I saw you from the doorway and thought you were resting.
- Oh, come on...
- ...

Before jumping to conclusions about how much our partner cares, it helps to pause and really listen. If they explain their behavior and include their feelings, we should consider that explanation as true. Our first instinct should be to accept—not challenge—what they say.

Because in the world of emotions, proof is hard to come by. And that goes both ways: just as we can't prove how we feel, we can't easily prove our partner is wrong about how *they* feel either.

That's why *sharing* is so important. Couples who truly share their lives tend to have fewer misunderstandings like the one above. When there's ongoing communication, no one has to constantly prove their emotions—they just say what's in their heart.

The more spouses talk, the better they understand each other. And the better the understanding, the less room there is for doubt or argument. So talk more. Share more. The more you share, the less you fight.

Hard to Compare Feelings

Feelings are also hard to compare. Who was more upset—me or her? Who appreciates me more—Alice or Janelle? Does she value me more or my brother?

Sure, we can try to answer these questions, but getting a clear, definitive answer that *everyone* agrees on? That's tough.

Feelings don't follow precise measurements. They're not like numbers or weights. That's why making emotional comparisons often doesn't help and can even create more confusion.

For example, saying something like "this makes me as sad as that makes you scared" might stir up disagreement instead of connection. Even though we all make

these kinds of comparisons now and then, deep down we know they're not exact. They're just our best guesses.

In the physical world, things are simpler. Which one is more expensive—this or that? Who's older—Philip or Steve? Which road is longer—this one or that one? The answers to these kinds of questions are clear, precise, and easy to understand. You can measure, compare, and come to a definite conclusion.

But the world of feelings doesn't work that way.

Some of the conflicts between spouses come from trying to make emotional comparisons, as if feelings followed the same logic as physical facts.

For example, let's say you occasionally call your spouse's mother just to say hi and check in on her. But your spouse never calls your mother. You feel upset. It seems unfair.

But here's the thing—you might be hurting yourself for no good reason. The meaning you attach to "calling the mother-in-law" might not mean the same thing to your spouse.

You might think:

"It feels good to me to call my spouse's mom once in a while. My spouse should feel the same way about calling mine."

But feelings don't work like math. You can't assume one emotional action equals another. What feels good or meaningful to you might not feel the same to someone else. *"Calling the mother-in-law"* doesn't automatically equal *"feeling nice"* for everyone.

Or take another example:

"I don't mind that my spouse spends hours on the computer, but they complain when I watch TV shows. That's so unfair!"

This is another emotional equation—trying to say that two different things should be treated the same. But again, we're dealing with feelings, not numbers.

Yes, both involve time in front of a screen. But that's not the whole story. There are other factors—noise, content, how engaging or distracting it is, and most importantly, how each person feels about it. Different people are affected in different ways.

That's why it doesn't work to say, *"Computer time equals TV time."* It's just not that simple.

Instead, each issue needs to be talked about on its own terms. One conversation about time on the computer. A separate one about watching TV. Lay everything out. Talk about what bothers you and why. Don't mix the two or try to weigh them on the same scale.

That's the only way to find common ground. When it comes to emotions, comparison rarely helps—but honest, open conversation just might.

Intertwinement

In the world of feelings, concepts don't have clear-cut boundaries. Emotions are often

intertwined, overlapping, and nested within each other.

For example, caring, valuing and respecting. These can easily be confused or blend together. To care about someone often includes respecting their presence. Likewise, when you respect someone, you usually value them to some degree. Respect, care, and value are not separate compartments — they overlap.

Where does respect end and value begin? How far does care go? We can only give approximate answers like “mostly caring,” “mainly valuing,” or “respect is less obvious here.” There’s no precise formula for emotional experiences.

Think about not interrupting someone while they’re talking. That’s clearly a respectful act. But it’s not just about respect — there’s also care and value wrapped into that moment. You’re silently saying, *“I recognize your right to speak. I respect you as a person. I care about what you have to say. I value your presence.”* These emotions are all bundled together.

Because of these blurred lines, one person might call that example “respect,” while someone else might say it’s more about “caring.” Another might argue that all three — care, respect, and value — are present. And you can’t say any of them is wrong. Even if you disagree, there’s no tool to prove who’s right. So, maybe we just need to accept that all these views are valid.

Here’s another example: when you say, *“I think the same as you do,”* you’re not just expressing agreement. You’re also saying, *“I find your opinion valuable. I care about your perspective.”* But which feeling is stronger — care or value? It’s hard to tell.

In contrast, the physical world has clear boundaries. Maybe this is why explaining our feelings to a partner often takes more effort than describing something like a new green shirt. You don’t need to say much about the shirt — it’s clear what it is. But when it comes to emotions, we need more words. We have to clear up the foggy edges, to make the abstract more understandable. And that takes time, effort, and most importantly — sharing.

Individuality

When it comes to emotions, the meaning of an experience can vary widely from person to person. Words like *standard*, *norm*, or *average* don’t really apply here. Each of us has our own emotional world. What feels like a kind and thoughtful gesture to one person might feel hurtful or annoying to someone else. That’s because there’s no one-size-fits-all definition of happiness—or any other feeling. Emotions are personal.

Here are a couple of examples:

- My spouse might see someone’s behavior as insensitive, while I see it as perfectly normal. That’s because the emotional impact of the same behavior can be totally different for each of us. There’s no rule that says we must feel the same way in the same situation.
- Let’s say a friend makes a comment. One of us might hear it as bragging, while the other finds it clever and funny. Again, we don’t experience things the same way—and we don’t have to.

The material world, however, doesn't work like this. If you break a traffic rule, you get a ticket. Nobody mistakes that for a reward or sees it as just another part of the day. It's clearly a penalty—simple and straightforward.

If the fruit on a stall is apricots, then it's apricots—not grapes. As long as our vision is fine and there's no issue with how we see things, we all agree on what's in front of us. If someone insists they're apples, we know that's incorrect. In the physical world, we can rely on evidence and facts to settle disagreements.

But in the emotional world, it's different. That's why we shouldn't insist that our interpretation of a situation is the only valid one. What makes us feel a certain way might make our partner feel the exact opposite—and that's okay. We don't have the right to say their feelings are wrong just because they don't match ours.

Feelings are deeply personal. Instead of arguing over who's right, it's often better to simply accept and respect how the other person feels.

Reciprocity

In our relationships with people outside the household, we naturally expect some degree of give-and-take. For example, if we tolerate a friend's small mistakes, we expect them to do the same for us. When we feel close to someone, we hope they feel close to us too. Most of the time, we assume that this mutual feeling exists.

When we realize it doesn't, we feel hurt or disappointed. But usually, we don't make a big deal out of it. We often keep those feelings to ourselves. Sometimes we quietly distance ourselves or change how we behave toward that person. But in many cases, we just carry on as if nothing happened.

This approach, however, doesn't apply to our spouse. When it comes to our partner, we expect reciprocity—not just in actions, but in emotions. Often, we want them to respond to our feelings even more than we openly express them ourselves. And we're not very flexible about this. In everyday life, most people expect their partner to reflect their feelings. If this doesn't happen, it can become a serious problem.

When we don't feel emotionally reciprocated by our partner, we often react. We get upset, ask questions, feel wronged, or show disappointment. Some people express their frustration openly, even harshly. Others might stay quiet but still show their unhappiness. Simply put, emotional reciprocity is essential in a close relationship.

From time to time, it's worth reflecting on the emotional exchange we have with our partner. Questions like, "Do I reflect the same understanding they show me? Do I show how much I care? Am I sensitive enough to make them feel emotionally supported?" can be helpful. We should make sure we're giving back emotionally in the same way we expect to receive.

Selfishness

Selfishness is a major emotional theme and a common source of tension between spouses. It's not unusual for partners to accuse each other of being selfish.

The truth is, human beings are naturally selfish. Truly unselfish people exist only in fairy tales, adventure stories, or in our dreams. The real question isn't *whether* we're selfish, but *when* and *how* we show it. Our selfishness varies depending on the situation, place, and time. Except for our children—where we often set selfishness

aside—we all tend to prioritize ourselves to some extent in our interactions with others. Some of us are more so, some less.

Being helpful, self-sacrificing, or generous doesn't mean we're never selfish. These qualities can coexist with selfishness. It's completely normal. We all have moments when we act in our own interest, and that doesn't automatically make us bad people.

This is an important perspective to keep in mind when we feel upset by a spouse's selfish behavior. Rather than jumping to blame, it can help to consider the circumstances. Maybe external factors played a role. Maybe the situation just needs to be understood better.

It's best to talk openly with your spouse about how you feel. But just saying, "I'm upset because you're selfish," without any explanation can easily lead to conflict. Instead, explain what made you feel that way, and share your emotions clearly and calmly.

Discuss specific situations where you felt their behavior was selfish. Hearing their side might give you a different perspective. You might have misunderstood, missed important details, or even realized that your own actions were also selfish. Honest conversation is key.

Some emotional values that play a central role in relationships include: recognition, respect, care, value, and love. When one partner expresses these, the other feels emotionally fulfilled—because we all want to be seen, respected, appreciated, and loved.

RECOGNITION

As individuals, we all want to be recognized in our social environment. Recognition is essential. Sure, everyone dreams of being popular, famous, or well-known—but that's not the kind of recognition we're talking about here.

What we really seek is something more basic: to be accepted as individuals by the people around us. We want to be acknowledged as human beings. That's what we mean by recognition. It's a fundamental human need.

Think of it like this: when a new country is formed, other nations officially "recognize" it. They acknowledge its legitimacy and accept it as a valid, independent state. In a similar way, we want to feel recognized by the people in our lives—especially by our spouse. We want to know that they see us as full, equal members of the community, just like anyone else.

We want them, through their actions more than their words, to say:

"You exist. I see you. Your presence is real, valid, meaningful, important, and necessary."

Being Noticed

Every person has a place in their society. We're not talking about job titles, authority, or social rank. We're simply referring to the position of being a regular, ordinary member of the community—a fellow human being.

Recognition, in this sense, means that others acknowledge our humanity. They

accept us, they're aware of us, and they treat us like we matter. It's about being treated as a person.

This need for recognition is powerful. Under normal circumstances, we never let go of it—because we need to feel that we are real, that we are individuals who matter just like everyone else.

We look to certain people for this recognition: our parents, elders, trusted friends, and most importantly—our spouse. We want these people to approve of us. We want them to find our thoughts reasonable, our choices valid, our views coherent. In short, we want them to recognize us.

We want to be accepted—and more than that, we want them to be glad we're here. It's not enough for them to feel this way silently. We want them to say it, show it, express it—at least every now and then.

Things like sharing, greeting, praising, caring, and valuing are all ways of showing recognition. We want our spouse to recognize us in this way: to share with us, to greet us, to praise us, to care for us, to value us.

When we talk and share with our spouse, we are recognizing them. We affirm their worth, their individuality, and their importance to us. We are saying, in effect:

- You are someone I can share with.
- You're someone I trust enough to talk to about these things.
- Your presence means something to me.
- I feel close to you.
- I accept you.
- I see you as a unique individual.
- I consider your thoughts and feelings.
- I take you seriously.
- You matter to me.

Being mindful of our spouse—treating them with care, respecting their rights, acknowledging their preferences, sharing with them, greeting them warmly, praising them sincerely, talking to them, consulting them, asking for help or advice—these are all ways we show recognition.

If we want to build or protect a healthy relationship, we need to pay attention to these small but powerful actions. They make a real difference.

Being Ignored

Being ignored is the opposite of being recognized. It means being neglected, dismissed, or treated as if you don't exist. And for a human being, that's one of the hardest things to bear.

In fact, even harsh criticism or loud scolding is often easier to take than being completely ignored. At least those reactions mean we've been noticed.

Think about how it feels when a friend walks past you without saying hello. It stings—not just because we feel disregarded, but because we feel invisible.

In extreme cases, like solitary confinement in prisons, being cut off from human contact can lead to serious mental health issues over time—anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and other psychological problems.

That's why many workplaces try to prevent loneliness among their staff. They organize social events like coffee breaks, lunch breaks, weekend outings, team competitions, parties, and more. Sure, each activity has its own purpose—but deep down, they all help people feel connected and recognized.

Now imagine being ignored by someone you live with—your spouse or partner. That kind of silence is especially painful. It can lead to major relationship issues.

There are many subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways people ignore each other at home. Here are a few examples:

- Not saying hello or goodbye
- Ignoring questions
- Withholding personal thoughts or experiences
- Using each other's belongings without asking
- Dismissing or avoiding a spouse's close friends
- Keeping important information to yourself

No matter how strong or confident someone appears, nobody wants to be ignored. We all want to feel seen, valued, and acknowledged.

When others recognize our presence—especially our partner—it gives us a deeper sense of meaning and belonging. It boosts our self-confidence and self-respect. We feel more motivated, more productive, and more alive.

Being ignored, overlooked, dismissed, or not taken seriously—these things hurt. And they slowly erode the emotional foundation of any relationship.

RESPECT

Respect is a warm, positive feeling that grows inside us toward someone we admire or appreciate. It might come from their actions, behavior, skills, character, achievements, thoughts, or knowledge.

When we respect someone, we treat them with care and attention. We're thoughtful, considerate, and often go out of our way to show that respect. We want them to like us, to see us as worthy. We listen carefully when they speak, prioritize their needs, and make them feel valued and important.

Sometimes, respect includes a bit of love—like the kind we feel for a close friend. And just as we can love someone we respect, we should also respect the person we love—especially our spouse. Respect in a relationship isn't just about acknowledging someone's rights. It's more than that. It often includes care and a deep sense of value.

In most marriages, love is the leading feeling—but respect must be there too. In fact, it's hard to live happily with someone we only respect but don't love. On the other hand, it's also hard to sustain love without respect.

Easy to Display

Respect isn't hard to show. Just listening—really listening—to your partner when they speak is a form of respect. So is sharing. When we talk about our workday with our spouse, it shows we value them enough to include them in our world.

Asking for their opinion on important issues, turning to them during tough times, or seeking their support—these all say, “I respect you. I care about you. You matter to me.” In fact, valuing someone might be the strongest form of respect.

And the reverse is true too. When we don't share with our spouse, they might feel excluded, as if we don't see them as important enough to confide in. Even if we respect them deep down, our behavior can suggest otherwise.

Ideally, respect should be mutual in a marriage. It's possible for one person to respect the other without it being returned, but in a partnership like marriage, both people really need to respect each other. Without that, living together becomes difficult, if not impossible.

Sometimes, people express being hurt by saying, “You don't respect me,” when what they really mean is, “You don't care about me.” The line between caring and respecting isn't always clear, which is why feeling ignored can feel like being disrespected.

Like all feelings, respect can't be measured precisely. It can grow, fade, or even disappear suddenly, depending on what happens in the relationship.

Our spouse should be the most important person in our life. We should care deeply about them, and that care must include respect. It's important to show it—not just feel it—at the right moments. And the kind of respect we give our spouse is different from what we give others. It's more personal, more intimate.

One of the common problems between spouses is misunderstanding what respect looks like. One partner might try to help, and the other might take it as interference or disrespect.

“I believe I should be able to make my own decisions when something concerns only me. Of course, I'll ask for my spouse's opinion when I feel the need, but I'd still like to have the final say in those situations.”

I understand that when it comes to matters involving our home or shared life, decisions need to be made together. We should act in ways that we both agree on. But some things are personal—they only concern the individual.

For example: who I choose to be friendly with, who I keep my distance from; whether

I wear this dress or that one; what I eat when we're out at a restaurant; what book I read; or what movie I watch."

Each person should have the freedom to make these kinds of choices on their own. These are personal matters that don't really involve others. Sure, a spouse can offer their opinion if they want, but they shouldn't make a big deal out of it. They shouldn't insist.

Unfortunately, some spouses have a different approach. They get involved in everything—they oppose, interfere, try to control, or push their partner to do things their way. They say it's just to help, or that they're trying to protect their partner from risks. Sometimes, they act like their preferences are the only right ones, without giving any real explanation.

In some cases, the spouse on the receiving end just goes along with it to keep the peace. But other times, it causes problems. The interfering partner pressures their spouse and often gets their way. The other person resists at first but eventually gives in. The cost of that, however, is high.

"It hurts. I feel bad—really bad. I start to think my spouse doesn't respect me or see me as an equal human being. When they keep pushing their opinion into decisions that should be mine, I feel powerless, dependent, and not good enough. I get angry."

Sometimes, we forget about respect because we're so focused on love. We think, "Since we love each other, my partner should do what I want, tolerate my mistakes, and follow my lead." But in a shared life, respect is more important than we often realize. We have to respect our partner's individuality, personal space, and right to make decisions. And we need to show that respect regularly—not just say we care, but also act with respect.

Just like anyone else, our spouse has a life and a world of their own. There are certain things only they should decide. As long as it's not hurting the relationship, we need to accept and live with that fact.

These decisions are theirs alone:

- How they feel in certain situations
- What they like or dislike
- How long they chat with someone
- What clothes or accessories they wear
- Who they choose to be friends with—or not
- And so on...

We might believe our opinion is best when it comes to choices that affect only them. In that case, we can share our thoughts and explain our reasons. But after that, we need to let it go. Pressuring them to agree with us when they feel differently shows a lack of respect.

We should show respect for our spouse and make sure they feel it. Our words and

actions should reinforce the message: *You are worthy of respect.*

If you feel like you don't respect your spouse, that's something to address right away. Try to understand why and find a solution. Living with someone who doesn't respect you is incredibly hard—and the same goes for living with someone you don't respect.

Respect is essential in any relationship, not just between spouses but for everyone sharing a home. Love is a beautiful and powerful bond, but love alone isn't always enough. Mutual respect is what gives that love a solid foundation. At the very least, spouses should respect each other's personal space.

Respect is Essential

Some people might say things like:

- “We love each other so much that respect doesn't even matter.”
- “Respect creates distance—we don't need that between us.”
- “Talking about respecting my spouse feels weird—we're so close.”
- “We've moved beyond needing to show or expect respect. Our bond is stronger than that.”

If you think this way, it might be worth taking a second look. Even in the closest relationships, there's always some level of respect—whether it's subtle or unspoken. It may not be loud or visible, but it's there, quietly holding things together.

Then one day, something starts to feel off: maybe you don't feel cared for, valued, seen, supported, acknowledged, or considered. Suddenly, you find yourself calling the issue what it is: “disrespect.” You realize you're missing something you once thought didn't matter.

By the time that happens, it might be too late to fix things easily.

That's why it's better to recognize now: mutual respect should always have a place in your home and your relationship.

The following behaviors show that you respect your spouse. They also show that you care about them and value who they are.

- When you're chatting with a friend or acquaintance and your spouse is there, you include them in the conversation.
- You don't make household decisions on your own—you involve your spouse in the process.
- If you have criticism, you bring it up privately, not in front of others.
- You respect your partner's choices when it comes to things that are their responsibility. You show this respect clearly by supporting their decisions, even if you don't fully agree.

Things like help, support, guidance, and assistance are also important at home—but

they're not the same as respect. You don't help your spouse just because you respect them. There are other reasons—love, care, responsibility. But when help or support is overdone, it can actually feel disrespectful.

Being constantly helped, guided, or supported in everything can be uncomfortable. Sometimes, the most respectful thing to do is to step back and let your spouse handle things on their own.

We want the people around us—especially our spouse—to trust us. We want them to see us as capable and independent. We hope they believe that we:

- are strong enough to face challenges,
- can take care of things when needed,
- and are responsible for our own lives.

If we feel that our spouse doubts these things about us, we start to think they don't value us. Maybe they see us as a burden or even a problem. And that can lead us to believe they don't respect us.

Love, care, value, respect, trust—they're all part of the same emotional world. These feelings are deeply connected. They overlap, blend into each other, and can be hard to separate.

So, should we respect our partner more than we love them? Which matters more—respect or love? Which is more essential at home?

These are tough questions. In the emotional world, it's hard to measure one feeling against another. And trying to compare them can lead to never-ending debates without real answers.

CARING & VALUING

The word “care” has many meanings, but when we talk about relationships, the most relevant one is “to feel affection or liking.” When you care about someone, you're interested in their well-being. You put them before others. Their problems become your problems. You feel their sadness as if it were your own.

To “value” someone means to see them as important, to appreciate them, and to make them feel like they truly matter.

In a healthy relationship, spouses should both care for and value each other. They should put one another before others. They should show, through their actions and words, that their partner is deeply important to them. Aside from their children, each partner should feel that they are the most valued person in the other's life.

Emotions aren't always clear-cut. In the world of feelings, concepts often overlap and blend together. “Caring” and “valuing” are two of the most closely connected—not just with each other, but with many other emotional experiences.

We often respect those we care about. We may also love the people we respect. When we love someone, it's never just love alone. We care about them, we respect

them, and we certainly value them. In fact, it's hard to truly love someone if we don't see them as valuable in some way.

Caring for someone and seeing them as valuable are the building blocks of a potential romantic relationship. When two people first meet and feel interested in each other, they begin to grow closer. Soon after, they start caring for one another and assigning value to the other person—not just as someone they're attracted to, but as someone they truly respect. That mutual respect plays a big role, too. If things go well, those feelings deepen, and love begins to form.

In simple terms, caring, valuing, and respecting each other form the core of a strong relationship. Without these, it's unlikely that real love will take root.

Of course, once we fall in love, we care even more deeply. But it's hard—maybe even impossible—to truly love someone we don't care about, don't respect, or don't see as valuable. Emotions can be messy and complicated, but those three—care, value, and respect—are essential.

Here are some everyday examples of what it looks like to care for and value your partner:

- Ask for their opinions when it matters. Go a little further by asking follow-up questions so you really understand their point of view.
- In group conversations, gently make sure others don't interrupt your partner, and help them finish what they want to say.
- If your child asks you a question and you know your partner is more interested or knowledgeable in that topic, say something like, "Let's ask your mom/dad—they'll have a better answer."
- Try to protect your partner from situations they're uncomfortable with or don't want to be in.
- For decisions that affect both of you, never decide alone. Always talk it through and reach an agreement together.
- Even if a decision mostly concerns you, get their thoughts first. Show them that you value their input before making your final call.
- Don't invite anyone to your home—yes, even your parents, siblings, or close friends—without checking with your partner first. After all, they count as "other people" in your shared space.
- Discuss big purchases ahead of time and make sure you both agree.
- Let your partner speak for themselves. Don't jump in or speak over them.
- Respect their work life. Share your honest thoughts about their job, and if you feel the need to offer criticism, do it privately—not in front of others.

When you pay attention to little things like these, your spouse feels cared for. They start to believe that you truly value them. And in return, they'll often show the same kind of care and attention back. This mutual exchange helps meet one of our core emotional needs—to feel important, cared for, and valued.

On the other hand, feeling unimportant or unappreciated at home can be deeply upsetting. It can be painful and even frightening. At best, it can make you feel alone. Many relationships that struggle or fall apart have this one thing in common: one or both partners feel undervalued, not cared for, or disrespected.

People often complain about their partners, but they don't always come out and say, "They don't care about me," or "They don't value me." Instead, their words sound vague, like they're blaming some invisible force—life, fate, or just bad luck. You'll hear them say things like:

- "I can't tell if I'm really at home or not."
- "I feel like I don't matter."
- "I feel ignored."
- "I feel worthless."
- "I feel invisible."

Even though they don't label it directly, what they're really missing is a sense of being cared for and valued. Interestingly, they tend to feel much better once their spouse starts showing more appreciation and affection. That's because all of us want to feel like we matter. We want to believe that our existence has meaning—that we deserve our place in the world.

This is why it's so important for partners to show care and appreciation for each other. It might not always be visible, but it's one of the most powerful forms of emotional support we can give.

One of the simplest and most common ways to show that you care is by greeting each other. A greeting is more than just a polite habit—it's a way of saying, "I see you. I accept you. Your presence matters to me." In other words, when we greet someone, we're affirming their existence and their value in our lives.

The Power of Greetings

We use everyday phrases like "Good morning," "Hello," "How are you?" "Welcome," or "Goodbye" to show that we acknowledge and accept each other. These words may seem small, but they send a clear message: "I recognize you, and I care enough to connect with you."

And it's not just about words. Sometimes a simple nod, a wave, or even a slight smile can say the same thing. These small gestures—verbal or non-verbal—are meaningful because they tell the other person, "You matter to me."

In the daily rhythm of life, these tiny acts of connection add up. They help us feel

seen, valued, and cared for—and that can make all the difference in a relationship.

Everyone has a few go-to ways of greeting others. Depending on the situation, we naturally pick one and go with it. Most of the time, we just say a few words. Greeting is something we tend to do without thinking—it's a social habit we've internalized. It usually happens spontaneously, without much effort or attention.

Ignored Presence, Noticed Absence

We barely think about greetings. It's like they don't even exist in our conscious awareness. Saying hello or good morning is something we do almost reflexively, and we rarely stop to notice it. In the flow of everyday life, these small exchanges with the people around us barely register. We don't keep track of who we greeted or who greeted us—unless that person is particularly important to us.

Most of the time, we just assume that a greeting happened. If we saw someone and talked to them, we must have said hello first—right? It's automatic. When we run into someone we haven't seen in a while, we instinctively greet them before starting a conversation. Because it's so routine, we often don't even remember whether we actually greeted someone or not.

Now, imagine this: you ran into a friend or acquaintance on the street, at the market, or somewhere else. You chatted for a few minutes. Later that day, you tell your spouse about the encounter. What do you say?

You might talk about how they're doing, what's new in their life, or anything interesting they shared. If they gave you some important or surprising news, you'd probably mention that too.

But what you *won't* say is:

- "I greeted him really warmly, with a soft voice and a friendly tone. I smiled from ear to ear and stressed the first syllable of 'hello.' I stood exactly thirty-seven centimeters away and reached out for a handshake at a forty-two-degree angle. He replied with a smile and a sweet 'good evening,' while his other hand was in his pocket..."

Nobody talks like that. Under normal circumstances, we don't describe how we greeted someone, what exact words we used, or whether our eyes sparkled during the exchange. We usually don't mention greetings at all—because everyone assumes it happened. So why point it out?

Maybe that's part of the reason we sometimes get lazy about greeting our spouse. We don't think it's a big deal. We think it is unnecessary to exchange greetings especially with the person we see every day.

We don't usually think much about greetings—until we're not greeted. And especially when *our* greeting isn't returned, the importance of it suddenly becomes crystal clear. That's when we realize just how valuable a simple "hello" really is.

Imagine walking down the street and spotting a friend. You're sure they saw you, but they walked right past without saying anything. At that moment, the idea of greeting

becomes front and center in your mind. How much this affects you often depends on how important that person is to you. If it's someone close, it can really hurt. You may find yourself thinking about it all day.

Even if it's someone you're not close to or don't consider important, being ignored still bothers you. You might tell yourself they were distracted or didn't notice you, but deep down, it nags at you. You want to hear the reason from them directly. You wonder, you question, you try to find out what happened.

When someone doesn't say hello to us, we might shrug it off by saying, "Maybe they just don't want to be close to me." Sure, that stings—but unless the person really matters to us, we move on more easily.

But when *we* say hello and *they* don't respond? That hits differently. It doesn't matter whether we like them or not, whether we're close or distant. It still hurts. We feel rejected. We start asking ourselves, *Why didn't they return my greeting? What did I do? Did I do something wrong? Was something misunderstood?*

Greeting is like health—we don't notice it when everything's fine. No one walks around saying, "Wow, I feel so healthy today!" But the moment we get sick, we realize how precious our health really is. Greeting works the same way. We do not pay much attention when it's there. But its absence is hard to ignore. We realize how much it matters when it's missing.

This is especially true in close relationships, like between spouses. Greeting each other can become one of the most neglected habits in daily life. But it's incredibly important. Spouses are the most important people to each other, and not greeting—or not responding to a greeting—can quietly hurt feelings. Even if no one says anything, it still leaves a mark. It creates distance, even if unintentionally.

Why Greeting Matters

Some people might think greetings are unnecessary or even a waste of time. They might say, "Why bother? We see each other every day." But greetings aren't just social niceties—they're a basic human need.

When we ask people why greetings matter, we get all kinds of answers:

- Our cultural or religious values emphasize it.
- It's a key part of our traditions.
- It shows respect.
- It's a sign of acknowledgement and care.

But at the heart of it, greetings affirm our sense of worth. They help us feel seen and recognized. A simple "hello" can make us feel valuable, important, and connected. That's why it stings when someone doesn't greet us or doesn't respond. It's not just about manners—it's about being acknowledged as a person.

In short, greeting is more important than we often realize. It may seem small, but it has a powerful impact. So don't underestimate the value of a simple "hi." It matters—more than you might think.

- *“We’ve been living together for so many years. Do we really need to greet each other? What’s the point? Is a simple ‘hello’ going to make my spouse feel important?”*
- *“My spouse and I have moved past all that. We don’t need to greet each other anymore.”*

But here's the thing—when couples stop exchanging greetings, it becomes easy to start taking each other for granted.

TfG is the sense of getting used to someone’s presence and to stop reacting. You become indifferent. Unresponsive. And when you stop greeting your partner, that’s exactly what you’re doing.

Don’t brush off or ignore greetings. Make an effort to notice and respond—especially to your spouse. They’re your life partner, after all. You don’t need to greet them every time you pass in the hallway or move from the kitchen to the living room. But do make a point to connect when it counts—like when you:

- Start your day in the morning
- Leave the house for a while
- Come home at the end of the day
- Go on a trip
- Return from one

When greetings disappear, your partner might not consciously notice. They probably won’t think much of it or see it as a problem. In fact, they might feel the same way you do—like greetings aren’t really necessary after all this time.

And the same goes for you. When your spouse doesn’t greet you, you may not pick up on it either. You might not care—at least not consciously. But this is exactly what TfG is about. You stop noticing. It does not matter at all. But over time, it shows up in other ways: a sense of coldness, irritability, feeling distant, getting offended over little things, sulking for no clear reason...

Now, when we say “greeting,” we’re not talking about anything grand or ceremonial. You don’t even have to say a word. After years together, you’ll naturally develop your own way of greeting. It doesn’t have to be verbal. A warm smile, a touch on the shoulder, a stroke of the hair, a nod from across the room, or even just kind eye contact—these all count. As long as your expression shows affection (and not frustration or anger), it’s enough.

Your spouse may not suddenly realize, “Oh, they greeted me—that means I’m important.” They already know they matter to you. But when you greet them—or respond to their greeting—they *feel* that importance again. They experience it, in that small moment, one more time.

So no matter how long you’ve been together, don’t skip the greeting. It’s a small act that helps protect something big.

It's like this: imagine you have a jar full of candies at home. You know they're there, but it's not knowing that gives you joy—it's actually *eating* one. The same goes for your spouse. Sure, they *know* you care about them and think they're important—but don't just let it stay as a thought in their head. Knowing is not enough. Let them *feel* it. Show them—again and again.

Just knowing someone cares isn't enough. Knowing is abstract—it's invisible, untouchable, and after a while, it can fade. For that knowledge to really matter, it has to take form. It has to be seen, heard, touched, *felt*. It has to come alive. That's why something as simple as greeting each other—warmly, intentionally—is so important.

Life Doesn't Help Us

Modern life doesn't make it easy to keep up habits like greeting one another with care. The internet, TV, and all kinds of digital communication constantly reshape our lives—changing even how we think about what's right or normal.

We're busier than ever, and every day seems shorter. Time for genuine connection—including simple greetings—is getting squeezed out. On top of that, we're exposed to other cultures and ways of life through media, travel, and more. These influences can subtly shift how we behave in our own homes and communities.

Every new technology or convenience we adopt adds more to our already overwhelming list of daily tasks. It's like trying to swim in an ocean that keeps getting bigger. And when we feel pressed for time or energy, greetings are often the first thing to go. They seem small. Easy to skip. But we forget how big a role they play.

Technology has given us more options, more distractions. But the day still only has 24 hours. So when we're forced to cut something out, we tend to cut what we think is "nonessential." And that often includes the small acts—like greetings—that actually keep our relationships healthy.

Yes, life pushes us to go faster. We're juggling more things every day. But that's exactly why we *need* to protect the lifelines of our emotional well-being. Like greetings. Especially at home.

Home is where our most basic needs should be met. If we can't get them at home, then where?

Greeting each other—really acknowledging each other—is one of those basic needs. It's as essential as food, water, or air. We need to treat it that way. We need to *care* about it. Home is where it matters most.

When Opinions Overlap

People are different. Everyone has their own preferences, opinions, and priorities—because every brain works differently.

And today, life gives us more and more choices. That makes it harder to agree on things. Shared opinions and preferences between partners are becoming rarer, which makes them more valuable when they do exist. So, when you do find those moments of agreement, those overlaps—cherish them.

Back in the day, if we needed an armchair, we'd go downtown, check out a few shops, pick one from maybe five or ten options, and buy it. Simple. These days, you can find hundreds—maybe thousands—of armchairs online. So, the chance that two people (like spouses) end up picking the same one is much lower than it used to be.

And this isn't just about armchairs—it's true for everything. There are so many choices and so much information now that it's harder to decide what to think or feel about something. That also means it's less likely that you and your partner will naturally land on the same opinion.

Feeling cared for and valued is one of the most important parts of life. So when you notice that you and your spouse share the same thoughts or views, say it out loud! Finding common ground brings you closer. It's like sharing—it bonds you. These little points of connection are the glue of living together. So don't just notice the overlap—talk about it. Point it out. Celebrate it. Don't miss that chance. It might seem small, but it matters. When you share those moments, your partner feels good. They might think, "Hey, I make solid choices. I think like my partner does! This means I'm capable. I am okay."

Don't just keep it to yourself—let them know. Enjoy those moments when you're on the same page. When you do this, your spouse will feel appreciated and cared for, because they'll take it as a compliment: Your opinion matters just as much as mine.

What you say has to be real. Say it only if it's true—not just to sound sweet or to please your partner. Not just to make conversation. It has to come from a genuine place.

- *"What's the point?"*
- *"I didn't disagree, so there's nothing more to add."*
- *"If I had an issue, I would've said something."*
- *"Since I stayed quiet..."*

Arguments like above are missing the point. It's not about whether there's a problem. It's about strengthening your bond. The more you share, the stronger your connection. And that makes both of you feel better. That's what leads to a happier, more peaceful life together.

Each spouse is like a reference point for the other. When one sees that the other shares their view, it feels good. It means, *"I'm understood. I'm accepted. I'm on the same wavelength."* That kind of acknowledgment builds confidence and trust.

And the best part? Your partner will likely start doing the same. And you'll feel great too. As this positive cycle builds, your relationship becomes easier and more enjoyable. Tension, frustration, or misunderstandings will have less room to grow—or fade away altogether. TfG will not find space to exist or will be eliminated easily.

The choices and preferences we're talking about here aren't just about picking a meal from a menu or choosing between tea and coffee. They're not only about big issues like sustainable energy or politics—though those are important too.

We're also talking about the everyday decisions that might seem small but actually

have a big impact on our daily lives, like:

- What do we think about a mutual friend's behavior?
- Where to begin when we're putting a plan into action?
- How should we travel—by plane or by car?
- What do we think on topics brought up at a school parents' meeting?
- Which subject should our child focus on?
- How often should we visit our relatives?
- How many cups of coffee are too many?
- ...and many more.

These may seem like minor things, but they're the ones that make up most of our lives. That's why it's important to recognize how similar our views are on these "little" topics. They may seem small, but because there are so many of them, they actually shape our daily reality more than the big ones do. After all, we don't have that many major issues in life—if we did, they wouldn't be called "major," right?

Caring about the person you live with doesn't just make them happy—it helps you too. When you share thoughts and preferences with your partner, it gives you a sense of belonging. You feel reassured that you're not alone. Deep down, you tell yourself:

"I see things the same way my spouse does, so my presence matters. I'm not an outsider. I'm not weird. I exist for a reason—I'm okay. I'm enough."

One simple but meaningful way to show care and recognition is by saying "thank you." It is one of the most basic yet powerful ways to express appreciation.

MAGIC WORDS: THANK YOU

In the world of emotions, many concepts often overlap, and "thank you" is a great example of that. This small phrase can carry a range of meanings—care, praise, appreciation, recognition, respect, and more. Though it's just two words, it sends a powerful message:

"I noticed what you did, and I'm grateful."

"I'm happy with your action."

"You're a good person."

In relationships, especially between spouses, the habit of saying "thank you" helps maintain warmth and positive feelings. It's a small gesture that can go a long way in preventing misunderstandings or emotional distance. It heals TfG or gets in the way of progress. When it's the right moment, partners should thank each other—whether with words, body language, a warm smile, or a thoughtful act.

In everyday life, though, we often overlook the power of "thank you." Maybe because we hear it so often, it starts to lose its impact—or we say it automatically, without really thinking about it. We're used to it at work or in public spaces, but sometimes we forget to say it at home, with the people closest to us.

We don't always remember the times we say "thank you," and we might not even notice when someone says it to us. Still, while we may not always be aware of its presence, we notice its absence. A missing "thank you" can leave someone feeling unappreciated.

It's funny how we don't always notice when someone forgets to thank us—but when we do, it still stings a little. It doesn't feel great, though it's usually not as upsetting as when someone doesn't greet us at all. Most of the time, we brush it off, thinking they were distracted or in a rush. We rarely take it personally.

Still, thanking someone is such a simple, quick way to show appreciation. It's a form of praise. It tells the other person, "What you did matters to me. I value your effort. I'm glad you did that." A small "thank you" goes a long way in building connection. It creates warmth. In a way, it's a little bit of magic.

Words like "thanks" or "thank you" strengthen our relationships—especially when we use them sincerely and in the right moments, instead of forgetting or skipping over them. This is especially true for spouses. We should get in the habit of thanking our spouse when it's deserved.

Often, our spouse may not even notice that we didn't thank them. If you asked, they probably wouldn't say, "I'm hurt because you didn't thank me." They're likely unaware. Even though they deserved acknowledgment, it just goes unnoticed. That's human—we can't catch every detail. But that's exactly why it's worth making the effort.

Saying thank you at home shouldn't be optional—it should be second nature. Of course, sometimes it feels awkward or forced to say it out loud. If that's the case, show your appreciation in other ways: a hug, a smile, a wink, a quick gesture, a kiss, or a friendly tap on the shoulder that says, "Well done." What matters is that your gratitude comes across clearly.

Here are just a few moments when a simple "thank you" goes a long way:

- When your spouse fixes something around the house
- When they make a delicious meal
- When they take care of something you couldn't do
- When they comfort or help your child
- When they pick up your medication

These might seem like small, everyday things—but they're the building blocks of your life together. They're meaningful. They deserve recognition. Take time to acknowledge these moments. Mention them, praise them, highlight them. When it fits, say thank you.

Expressing gratitude is a simple but powerful way to avoid TfG or reduce it before it grows. And it's easy.

Of course, life gets busy. You might forget to say thank you in the rush of daily tasks. Or you just might not feel like it. Sometimes, those two little words just don't come

out. That's okay—it happens. You can always leave yourself a reminder and say it later, when it feels right.

Why should we make the effort to thank our spouse?

- To keep our shared life running smoothly
- To be a kind, respectful person
- So that our partner feels loved and seen
- Because it's what society expects from decent people
- To maintain a peaceful, comfortable home

All of these are good reasons. But the most important one is not listed above: It is us. Our needs.

We also need to feel valued, cared for, and appreciated. That's why we give it first—so we can receive it in return.

We all need to stand tall with confidence and self-respect. And while we can build some of that on our own, we can't do it alone forever. To truly thrive, we need support from the people closest to us—especially our partner. We need to feel seen. We want our efforts recognized. We want our achievements acknowledged and our progress noticed.

That kind of emotional nutrition fuels our sense of self. And the most reliable way to get it is: to give it first. Your plate will not be returned empty.

Care for your partner. But more than that—**show it**. Let them feel it. Thank them when they've earned it. Greet them warmly. Praise them when it's deserved. When you give that kind of love and attention, your partner is far more likely to reflect it back to you. And in the end, that's how we all grow—together.

Below are some reasons why we decline to thank our spouse.

Barriers to Saying Thank You

Some people think there's no need to thank their spouse. They offer justifications like:

- *"My spouse is the closest person to me. Saying 'thank you' feels like it creates distance."*
- *"We've been together for so many years—thanking them now feels awkward and fake."*
- *"They're not strangers. Why would I thank them?"*
- *...and so on.*

But the truth is, saying “thank you” doesn’t create distance. Quite the opposite—it strengthens the bond. When we stop thanking our partner, we risk overlooking or ignoring their efforts and kind actions. In other words, taking the efforts and good behaviors for granted, TfG.

When someone feels unappreciated, they may start thinking things like:

“I went out of my way to help, and they couldn’t even say thank you.”

“You didn’t even bother to thank me.”

“You couldn’t spare a simple thank you...”

Other common attitudes include:

- *“Taking care of the kids is just what a parent should do. Why thank them for that?”*
- *“We live together—we both have responsibilities. Why should I be grateful?”*
- *“They’re supposed to do that. If they didn’t, we’d have problems. What’s there to thank?”*

Hiding behind these excuses only feeds into the cycle of taking each other for granted. And yes, these thoughts not only cause TfG but also come from it. They get in the way of a happy relationship.

Even when your spouse is doing something they’re supposed to—whether it’s part of their job, a daily chore, or just something that has to get done—it’s still worth saying “thank you.” Why? Because emotions aren’t mechanical. We’re human, and we all want to feel appreciated, even when we’re just doing what’s expected of us.

Think of it this way:

If a bucket is already filling quickly, you don’t need to turn the tap any more.

If your car is moving fast enough, you don’t need to press harder on the gas.

That’s how the physical world works. But relationships aren’t physical systems. Emotional needs are different. When your partner does something they “should” do, showing appreciation still matters. Gratitude is one of the most effective ways to avoid taking each other for granted.

Some people say,

“When I thank my spouse, it feels like we’re strangers. Like there’s too much formality between us. Aren’t we supposed to be close?”

These feelings are understandable—but worth challenging. Try flipping the situation. If you were in their shoes, wouldn’t you want to feel appreciated too? Chances are, your answer is yes.

Of course, you don’t have to say “thank you” every minute. Each household is different, and every couple finds their own rhythm. Over time, partners get a feel for when gratitude is needed and when it’s understood. It all depends on the dynamics of your relationship. That’s what we mean when we say “when it’s appropriate.”

You might also hear:

"I don't think spouses need to thank each other. Isn't it enough that I value my partner?"

Well, not really. It's not enough to value your spouse in your mind. You have to *show* it. People feel valued through actions, words, and small gestures. And saying "thank you" is one of the simplest, yet most powerful, ways to show you care.

How to Respond to "Thank You"

Saying "thank you" is a sign of good manners, and it's something we should appreciate and encourage—especially from our spouses. We wouldn't want them to stop saying it. That simple expression can do a lot to nourish our hearts and strengthen our connection.

When someone thanks us, it's important to show that we value their gratitude. A smile and a bit of eye contact go a long way. You can also say something in return like, *"Thank you,"* (emphasizing the *you*), or phrases like *"That's very kind of you,"* or *"You're very polite."* These are all nice ways to respond and keep the positive energy flowing.

What's less helpful is brushing it off with things like:

"It's nothing," "No big deal," "What did I even do?" "It doesn't matter," "It's not worth mentioning," or "I didn't do anything."

Responses like these may seem modest, but they actually dismiss the act of thanking. In effect, you're saying that what you did wasn't important—so the other person was wrong to thank you. That can come off as belittling, even if you didn't mean it that way.

A lot of us respond this way because that's how we were raised or what we've seen from elders. We think it's polite to downplay what we've done. But let's think about it: is it really kind or respectful to tell someone their appreciation is unnecessary? That they've made a mistake in judging what's worth gratitude?

Saying *"you're welcome"* is a common and polite response. It works well as long as it's received as a genuine acknowledgment. But keep in mind that in some cultures, *"you're welcome"* might be understood as *"It's nothing"* or *"Don't mention it"*—which can carry that same dismissive tone. So, especially with people from different backgrounds, it might be wise to respond in a way that clearly shows you value their thanks.

People often treat "thank you" as something small or routine—but it can have a powerful impact. It helps prevent emotional distance and keeps relationships warm and respectful and thus prevents TfG. That's why it's important to show appreciation when someone, especially your spouse, thanks you. Let them know it meant something to you. Let them feel good about saying it.

Exercise: Saying "Thank You"

Most of us already know how to say "thank you"—we've had plenty of practice since childhood. But this exercise isn't about how to say it. It's about *what* to say thank you for.

It's worth taking the time to explore what you and your partner think deserves appreciation. What actions or behaviors do you each feel grateful for? Let's break

this down into three simple parts:

Part One: What Are You Thankful For?

Grab a pen and paper—or your phone or computer, whatever works for you.

Ask yourself:

What things does my partner do that I truly appreciate?

Make a list of the actions and behaviors you're thankful for. Think about what they do well, and what makes you feel supported or cared for. Have your partner do the same. Each of you should create your own list.

Once you've both made your lists, sit down together and share what you wrote. Talk about what you agree on, and where your opinions might differ. Take your time with this conversation. The goal is to better understand each other and ideally, reach some kind of mutual understanding or agreement.

Part Two: Walk in Their Shoes

Now flip the script.

Put yourself in your partner's shoes and ask:

If I were them, what would I thank me for?

Write down the things you believe you do well—the actions and qualities in yourself that you think deserve appreciation. Again, have your partner do the same from their own perspective.

Share your lists with each other. Talk through the items, explore the differences, and try to come to a shared understanding. Just like in Part One, give this step the time it deserves.

Part Three: Make It a Habit

Now for the real challenge—put your insights into action.

Whenever your partner does something on your list, say “thank you.” Every time. Don't let it slide just because it seems routine. Gratitude only works when it's expressed. Try to make it a habit—something that becomes second nature over time.

This part is ongoing. It's not a one-time thing. In fact, it's something you'll want to practice for the rest of your life—especially if you want to avoid TfG or reduce its effects.

A Note on Tools

You don't have to stick with pen and paper. Feel free to type your lists in a shared note, send them via text, or use whatever tool works best for you both. What matters most is that you make time to reflect, share, and talk through your thoughts until you find common ground.

PRAISE

To *praise* someone means to express approval, admiration, or appreciation. In simple

terms, we praise when we find someone's actions, behavior, or qualities better, more pleasant, more beautiful, or more useful than we expected.

When we praise, we use words like:

"Great job!"

"Well done!"

"You're amazing!"

"I really appreciate it."

"You're so thoughtful."

"Bravo!"

"Nice work!"

"Bless you!"

Sometimes, we praise people in writing—through a text, an email, or even a little note. In fact, written praise can often have a stronger impact than spoken words.

Praise doesn't have to be verbal. We can also use gestures and facial expressions: a smile, a thumbs-up, a pat on the back, a hug, or applause. Even liking or reacting to someone's post on social media can be seen as a form of praise these days.

So, when do we typically receive praise?

- When we complete an important task
- When we succeed at something difficult
- When we achieve an unexpected positive outcome

But we don't have to *do* something to be praised. People can also be praised for what they *have*—skills, talents, education, possessions, power, age, or experience. Any of these can be a reason to praise someone.

Praise is like nourishment for the soul. It reassures us that we matter—that our actions are seen, that we're useful, capable, and appreciated. When someone praises us, we feel proud, confident, and motivated. That's why praise is so powerful—it uplifts our spirit and boosts our self-esteem.

Purposeful Behavior

As human beings, we all want to feel appreciated and valued. Sometimes, we even go out of our way just to receive a bit of praise—and that's completely normal. Praise and appreciation are like fuel for our self-confidence. Just like we need food and water to survive, we need recognition and encouragement to thrive emotionally.

That's why we pay attention to how we act and what we do. We want to make sure our behavior is "right"—which usually means it aligns with the values and expectations of the society we live in. In short, we want to be liked and accepted by others. So, we try to act in ways that will earn approval and praise.

We often have little conversations with ourselves: "This is the better way to think," or "That sounds more acceptable," or "This makes the most sense." And, more often than not, these thoughts come with a hidden desire to be appreciated. And that's okay. It's human nature.

It's important to understand that wanting praise isn't something to be ashamed of. As long as your actions are ethical, genuine, and kind, there's nothing wrong with doing things that others will appreciate. In fact, it's a smart and thoughtful approach to relationships.

If we're willing to behave in ways that please society, then why not apply the same care and intention in our personal relationships? Especially with our partner. Choosing to act in ways that make your spouse happy can bring mutual benefit. After all, when you act with love and consideration, and receive praise in return, it strengthens your self-worth and deepens your connection.

Now, try looking at your partner's actions from this perspective. Maybe they did something just to make you smile. Maybe they acted a certain way because they thought it would please you. When you look at things this way, it opens your heart to appreciation.

Praise Barriers

We should praise our spouses when they deserve it. And not just once in a while—we should do it *every time*. But often, certain barriers get in the way of giving praise.

One common barrier is the fear of being misunderstood. We worry that if we express appreciation, it might come across the wrong way. Maybe we think it'll sound forced or awkward, or that our spouse will misinterpret our intentions.

But the answer to this problem isn't to hold back. The best way to avoid misunderstandings is to be genuine. If your praise comes from the heart, it will be received that way too. And if, by chance, you *are* misunderstood, you can always clear it up. What you shouldn't do is stay silent. That silence could come across as unfair or dismissive.

Don't let the fear of miscommunication stop you from giving well-deserved recognition. Appreciation and praise are a form of human respect. When someone does something good or kind, they *deserve* to be acknowledged. That includes your partner.

What's getting in the way of showing appreciation to the person who matters most to you? Why do we sometimes withhold praise from the very person we love?

Here are some common barriers to think about:

TfG

Out of all the obstacles in a relationship, one of the most common—and most damaging—is TfG.

We stop noticing our partner's efforts and achievements. What once impressed us now seems ordinary. We assume it's normal, that anyone would do the same. Over time, we stop seeing the value in what they do. It no longer feels special, and we don't think it's worth recognizing. Why? Because we've gotten used to it. We've started taking them for granted.

Little by little, their actions start to seem too simple to deserve praise. We may even find ourselves annoyed by them instead of appreciative. It's not that they're doing anything wrong—it's that we've stopped noticing.

The tricky part is, TfG sneaks up on us. We usually don't even realize it's there. The partner who doesn't give praise might think there's nothing worth praising. If you asked them, they'd probably say, "What is there to praise?"

Meanwhile, the partner who isn't being praised doesn't always notice it either. But gradually, they start to believe their efforts aren't anything special. They figure, "This must just be what's expected."

Both people fall into the same trap. Neither sees praise as the issue, but they can feel something is wrong. They might call it poor communication or say they've grown apart. One might think, "*My partner has changed. They seem distant. It's like they come home just because they have to. They barely even acknowledge I'm here.*"

Instead of recognizing a lack of appreciation, people often blame other things: indifference, lack of understanding, insensitivity, or even bad intentions.

So what's the solution?

It's simple:

Share more.

Show you care through your actions.

Praise your partner when they do something good.

Offer fair, respectful criticism when needed.

And don't just see what they do—**say it**. Let them know you notice. Be specific. Use more than one sentence. It doesn't have to be a speech, but a few heartfelt sentences can make a big difference.

Words matter—but so do actions. Make sure your behavior reflects your appreciation. Let them feel it, not just hear it.

Not Being Used to It

One major reason we struggle to show appreciation is simply because we're not used to it. If we haven't learned how or when to praise others, especially in close relationships, we might not even realize that we *should*. It just doesn't cross our minds.

Our upbringing, the behaviors we observed from parents or elders, and our personal beliefs may have kept us from developing the habit of giving praise.

Maybe you're not in the habit of praising others—especially your partner—and that's okay. Habits can be learned. With some conscious effort, they can even become part of your daily life. The exercise given later can help with this. All you need to do is praise your partner whenever they do something you've identified as praise-worthy in that exercise.

Don't just say it—explain it. Tell them *why* what they did was great. Make a moment out of it. Don't just drop a quick compliment and move on—let it be a real conversation.

Not Noticing

Another reason we often don't give praise is that we simply don't *notice* things that deserve it. Good behavior or thoughtful actions might happen right in front of us, but we're too distracted to see them. Or, even if we do notice something, we don't

recognize it as praise-worthy at the moment. Sometimes we're just tired, in a rush, or caught up in our own priorities.

There are many reasons for this. An important one is that we're too focused on our own tasks, responsibilities or plans. When we're wrapped up in our own world, it's hard to see the good things happening around us—especially the small, beautiful efforts our partner makes every day.

When we're stressed and trying to do our own job well, it's easy to overlook everything else. It feels like the world revolves around us, and everything unrelated to our goals gets pushed to the background.

Now, staying focused is generally a good thing. But every now and then, we need to pause and pay attention to the people around us. That includes knowing what your partner is up to—what they're working on, what's important to them, what challenges they're facing. We need to make an effort to understand our partner's world in detail.

Not noticing things is understandable. But how can we get better at it? One simple step: talk more. The more we talk with our partner, the more we share, the more we see. Regular conversations open a window into their life, and the more we understand what they're going through, the more likely we are to spot moments that deserve appreciation.

Ask them how they're doing. Ask what they've been working on or what they've accomplished lately. The more we know, the more we notice. And somewhere in all those details, there's almost always something worth praising.

Sometimes we don't recognize something until much later. Maybe you were out together, and later—while you're alone—you remember something kind or thoughtful your partner did. You realize how meaningful it was and feel genuine admiration for it.

If that happens, don't worry about being late—*still say it*. Even if it's been days, weeks, or months, it's always better to give praise late than not at all. Those moments don't come around often, so when they do, don't let them pass unnoticed.

Postponing Praise

We often notice something good but think, "*I'll say it later.*" In other words, we postpone it. For some reason, we just don't feel like giving praise at that moment. But we really shouldn't do that!

It's always better to say it as soon as we can. Nothing should hold us back. We should express our praise at the first good opportunity. We should not wait. And even if we do delay, we shouldn't let that stop us from praising later. No matter how late it is, it's still worth saying.

Here's an example:

- I loved the song you sang.
- What song, dear? I don't sing, you know that.
- You did sing—and beautifully!
- Which song was it?
- "*You Are the Sunshine of My Life.*"
- I don't remember at all. Are you sure?
- Yes, absolutely. You sang it perfectly.

- I can't believe it... When was that?
- At our friend's party, the night before we got engaged.
- Oh wow... It's just hitting me now! That was 45 years ago.
- ...
- I actually stopped singing after that, thinking you didn't like it.

Pampering and Praise

Sometimes, elders, teachers, or bosses hesitate to praise others. They're afraid that if they do, the person might:

- misunderstand the compliment,
- get the wrong idea,
- stop working as hard,
- become overly confident,
- try to replace them,
- or act arrogantly toward others.

This kind of hesitation can also happen between spouses. One partner might hold back praise because they fear their spouse will:

- lose their good habits,
- change for the worse,
- become full of themselves,
- take the praise the wrong way,
- or misuse it somehow.

But here's the truth: most adults don't get "spoiled" by sincere praise. That's something we more often see in children—especially when they're given praise they didn't earn, or it's over-the-top.

Adults usually handle deserved praise with grace and maturity. They've worked for it, they know they've earned it, and they feel proud without becoming arrogant. Why would someone be "spoiled" by getting exactly what they deserve?

Even if there's a slight chance that someone misinterprets the praise, that's no reason to withhold it. If your partner reacts poorly, you talk it out. If they act in a way you don't like, you express that honestly. If they misunderstand, you clear it up.

Praise should never be held back out of fear. It's one of the simplest and most powerful ways to connect.

The Fear of Sounding Fake

Sometimes, giving praise can feel uncomfortable. It might seem like we're putting ourselves beneath someone else, just to get something in return. We might worry that it'll come off as fake, or that the other person will think we have some hidden agenda. These thoughts are normal—we're human, and it's natural for all sorts of doubts to pop into our heads.

We might see appreciation as flattery or sycophancy, or worry that praising someone for doing a good job will make us look like we're trying too hard to be liked. And yes, in social situations, even sincere praise can be misunderstood. The other person might think we're just trying to be charming or "look cute"—even if that's not what we mean at all.

That's the tricky thing about human relationships: how someone *perceives* our actions isn't fully in our control. Perception isn't just about what we intend—it's also shaped by how the other person receives it.

Still, just because there's a chance of being misunderstood doesn't mean we should hold back praise. Even if someone thinks, "Oh, they're just trying to be nice," that doesn't change the fact that recognizing good work or kind behavior is the right thing to do. We can always add a little clarification if needed—like saying, "I genuinely mean this," or "I'm not saying this to smooth things over." But don't let the fear of being misunderstood stop you from saying something positive.

Sometimes, especially after an argument, it can feel awkward to give a compliment. We might avoid it because we don't want to seem like we're trying to patch things up or admit we were wrong. So instead, we ignore the good in the other person—we let it pass by unmentioned. That can feel easier in the moment, but we end up missing a chance to connect.

But if something deserves to be praised, then we should praise it—right then, or as soon as we can. Even if our partner thinks we're doing it just to make up for a mistake, that's okay. We can always say, "I'm saying this because it's true, not because I'm trying to fix anything."

There's a simple rule worth following: *Never ignore a good deed or kind act. Praise it.*

And here's something important to remember—offering praise, especially after a disagreement, isn't a sign of weakness. It's actually a sign of strength. It says, "Even though we had a conflict, I can still appreciate you. I'm not holding onto negativity. I'm strong enough to be fair."

One important barrier to offering praise is how our praise is received. Sometimes, we hold back from giving praise because of how the other person might respond.

How to Receive Praise

One of the main things that stops us from expressing praise is the way our spouse takes it. How does your spouse respond when you praise them? How do you respond when your spouse praises you? Do you seem annoyed, happy, indifferent? Sometimes, without even realizing it, our attitude can actually block praise.

The ideal response to praise is simple: show you're pleased and say "thank you." We humans enjoy being praised in everyday situations, and it's totally normal to feel good about it. The key is to express that pleasure sincerely, without going overboard.

We shouldn't hide our happiness when someone compliments us. A clear, confident "thank you" is enough. Try to make eye contact rather than looking away.

Also, don't just say thanks while continuing whatever you're doing—this can come across as dismissive. It's better to pause for a moment, turn toward the person, and listen. They might want to say more, and it's respectful to give them that space.

A small smile helps too. Your face should light up a little—maybe even your eyes sparkle. You don't need to act overly humble. Being humble doesn't mean you can't be pleased. The two aren't opposites. Accepting praise graciously doesn't make you arrogant.

But many people freeze up when they're praised. They get embarrassed, look down, and speak so softly or unclearly that you can barely hear what they're saying—if you can understand them at all. You might catch something like, "Thanks, but it's no big deal..." mumbled under their breath.

At first, this might seem modest or sweet. But in reality, it can discourage the person who gave the compliment. They may feel like they said something wrong, or that their kind words weren't welcome. Next time, they might just stay quiet.

Another common reaction is to minimize the praise:

- "It was nothing."
- "You're exaggerating."
- "It's not worth mentioning."
- "I didn't really do anything."
- "Forget it."

Even when well-intentioned, these kinds of replies can make the other person feel awkward or unappreciated.

Accepting praise isn't about showing off—it's about acknowledging someone else's kindness. And that's something we can all get better at.

Sometimes, it becomes a habit to shrug off praise with phrases like, "*Come on, it's nothing,*" or "*Why are you making a big deal out of it?*" Maybe it's something we picked up from how we were raised — a pattern we've learned over time.

I want to praise my spouse, but I hesitate. It's hard to say the words. Because when I do try, the reaction isn't always what I expect. Sometimes my spouse responds as if I've said something wrong — they get upset, maybe even angry, and say things like:

"Where did you get that from?"

"Come off it."

"No way."

"What have I done?"

"Forget it."

"Don't we have anything better to talk about?"

Reactions like these stick with you. They discourage you from giving praise again —

not just in that moment, but in the long run too. And that's a real loss, because it creates emotional distance.

Ironically, the people who praise often react the same way when they're on the receiving end. Maybe that's why they don't think too much about it. But these kinds of reactions slowly chip away at the habit of expressing appreciation.

It makes you wonder:

"Why should I praise someone if it doesn't seem to matter to them?"

"Why go out of my way if they brush it off?"

The truth is, when someone praises us, they're offering their honest evaluation. They've noticed something good — something they believe is worth acknowledging. But when we respond with dismissive comments like *"It's nothing,"* or *"It's not a big deal,"* we're not just being humble — we're unintentionally rejecting their perspective.

That sends a message:

"You think this is praiseworthy, but you're wrong. What I did isn't worth your praise. You're seeing it the wrong way."

This can hurt the person giving the praise. It can even make them doubt themselves. Over time, they may stop noticing or mentioning the good things they see — not because they don't care, but because they've learned it's not welcomed.

It's not just how we respond to praise that matters. What we do when we **don't** receive praise is just as important.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were some kind of emergency alert we could send to our spouse when we feel underappreciated? Or maybe a praise station where we could stop by and refuel our emotional tank?

Sometimes, a partner might say, "Why don't you appreciate what I've done?" But often, they don't say anything at all. They just assume what they did wasn't noteworthy. Even if they felt proud of their effort at first, that feeling fades if no one — especially their partner — acknowledges it. They start to question themselves, think they overestimated what they did, or believe it's better to stay humble and not expect praise.

It's not always easy to say, "What I did was good, even beautiful—why don't you praise me?" In many cultures, saying something like this might seem strange or even uncomfortable. It might feel okay to expect praise from others, but when it comes to our spouse, we often hesitate—even though that's exactly where open communication should happen.

Spouses should feel free to say things like, "I did something well. I acted kindly. You could have praised me." If we feel we deserve recognition but don't get it, we should be able to tell our partner. That kind of honesty helps build connections.

The problem is, many people stay silent. Even when they know they did something praise-worthy, they don't speak up. This silence becomes one of the reasons why praise is so rare in relationships. It would be helpful if we were gently reminded whenever we forget to acknowledge something good. If that happened, more kind or thoughtful actions would get the recognition they deserve. Eventually, we'd all become people who give praise more naturally.

Imagine if we had a built-in alert system—a voice in our head that said, “That was praise-worthy. Don’t let it pass without saying something.” Or what if a loud, annoying siren went off every time we failed to notice something good? Unfortunately, we do not have such technology.

Breaking Down Barriers

When it comes to our spouse, we often find it difficult to express praise—even when we genuinely believe they deserve it. Something seems to block us. It’s not that we don’t want to praise them; it’s that one or more inner obstacles get in the way.

We might ask ourselves:

"Why is it so hard?"

"Why can't I say it?"

"What's wrong with me?"

"Why am I so insensitive or incompetent?"

"What's stopping me?"

But we don’t need to waste time questioning ourselves like that. Whatever the reason, set it aside. **Focus on what matters**—the act or behavior that deserves praise. If something makes you feel that your spouse did a good job, hold onto that thought. Study it. Look at it closely. Reflect on it.

Imagine walking on the beach. You find a shell buried in sand, pebbles, and mud. At first, you can barely recognize it. But you take it home, clean it off carefully with tools, and eventually reveal a beautiful ornament. The shell was always beautiful—you just made that beauty visible.

Similarly, if you find it hard to express appreciation, take a moment to really notice what your spouse did. Look at it from different angles and try to understand the thought or effort behind it. The more attention you give to it, the easier it becomes to find the right words. As you see the value more clearly, the barriers fade—and expressing praise feels more natural.

Weak Forms of Praise

Covert Praise

Sometimes, praise isn’t spoken at all—but it’s still there. No words, no gestures, no direct expressions. Yet both people know it exists. This is covert praise.

For example, when a home-cooked meal is eaten completely and the plates are left clean, the cook feels proud. There were no compliments, but the message was clear: the food was appreciated. Of course, we’re talking about well-off households here. In less well-off homes, every dish that’s served usually gets eaten quickly and completely anyway.

Another example: a teacher always picks the same student to read aloud in class. The student understands that their reading is appreciated—even if no one says so directly. They feel proud, even if the praise is silent.

Indirect Praise

“Your child speaks so well! So smart—bravo!” This is an indirect praise. The parent feels proud, because the praise reflects back on them.

Another example: Guests compliment your home: “The curtains match perfectly with the paint and flooring—it’s so harmonious here.” While the praise is about the house, it actually acknowledges your taste and effort.

Indirect praise, while flattering, should not replace direct praise between spouses. In a close relationship, praise should be given face-to-face. We tend to do well with covert or indirect praise, but we often avoid praising someone directly. And that’s a problem.

We must make time to express appreciation directly to our spouse. Don’t beat around the bush. Say kind, thoughtful things plainly and sincerely. Talk openly about what they did well. Avoid relying only on hints or subtle gestures.

It’s true—many people struggle with direct praise. Some don’t verbalize appreciation at all, preferring to show it through behavior. Others never say it, even though they feel it deeply.

Still, direct praise is essential, especially between spouses.

Well-educated or financially secure individuals might find it easier to express praise. But regardless of background, the reality is that praise is not a common practice. And that’s understandable—most people are busy grappling with life’s difficulties, and when you’re under pressure, praise might be the last thing on your mind.

However, covert and indirect praise are often not enough. They lack the emotional nourishment that direct praise provides—especially in intimate relationships. The impact is too small, too subtle. The person being praised doesn’t truly feel it.

If your spouse has done something admirable, tell them directly. Be generous with your praise. Be clear, specific, and sincere.

Diluted Praise

There’s another kind of weak praise—diluted praise. This happens when someone starts off trying to praise but ends up watering it down so much that the praise disappears.

They list every possible reason for a success—except the person responsible.

For example, Taylor is a regional manager in a sales department. His team wins a major award. That evening, he’s talking with his spouse:

Is that the guy I met once? He still works with you?

Yes, he does.

He’s a natural salesman. Some people are just born for it.

He’s definitely talented.

Are the others like that too?

Mostly, yes.

Well, great employees lead to great results. Even if you do nothing.

...

Last year was a good market year. Not just in your industry. Everything was booming.

True.

Just look at car sales—soaring! It was a very easy year.

...

Your boss is incredible. So generous. Best conditions ever.

...

Money motivates people. Even the laziest get moving. That's how success happens.

...

Why are you so quiet?

Taylor has so many reasons to be quiet in the above example. His spouse is unintentionally dismissing Taylor's leadership and contribution. Yes, many factors might have played a role—but Taylor led the team. At the very least, he managed those factors effectively.

This is praise gone wrong. It started with good intent but ended with no real appreciation for Taylor's effort. Instead, the credit went to everyone and everything else.

When spouses praise each other, they should use "you". Focus on what your partner has done—the choices they made, the skills they showed, the results they achieved. Even if others helped or conditions were favorable, your partner still played a central role. That deserves recognition.

We all want to feel seen, valued, and appreciated—especially by the person closest to us. Therefore, our praises should focus on the act or achievement. It should be personal, specific, and sincere.

Don't let praise get lost in silence, subtle hints, or diluted words. If your spouse has done something good, say so. Let them hear it from you—clearly and wholeheartedly. Praise is closely connected to love. A kind word of praise can plant little drops of love in your partner's heart.

Praise Isn't Easy

For some people, the obstacle is the act of praising itself. It can feel like hard work, and not everyone enjoys that kind of effort.

Praise isn't always as simple as it seems. Compared to other actions that affect emotions, giving praise often takes more thought and intention. It doesn't usually come naturally—it requires effort and mindful attention.

We have to:

Notice what the people around us are doing

Recognize what's good or beautiful

Understand what makes it special

Overcome our internal resistance

Choose the right words

And then say them out loud

That's a lot of mental work. It takes time and energy. And that's one of the reasons we don't praise as often as we should. It's not that we don't want to—it's just that we often miss a step in the process.

When we're not paying attention, we miss the action that deserves praise. Paying attention, staying aware, making thoughtful evaluations—these things are mentally tiring. So, praise often falls by the wayside.

Saying thank you, greeting someone, or replying to a greeting—these are simple, automatic behaviors. By the time we're adults, we've practiced them so many times. They've become second nature. These acts of caring or showing appreciation don't require deep thought or careful weighing.

But praise is different. It's not automatic. You have to be conscious of what you're saying and why. You have to mean it. And that takes energy and intention. That's why praise can be so difficult—because it's something we really have to do, not just something we say.

Praise is a bit of a rare gem. It's not something we come across every day, and it's not always easy to get. Outside of home, praise isn't handed out often. And even at home, it's not guaranteed. How often we get praised really depends on what's happening around us.

Sometimes, we might get praised a few times in a single day. Other times, weeks, months, or even years can go by without hearing a single kind word. It all comes down to what we do and the circumstances we're in.

Doing things that earn praise isn't simple either. In today's world, people's opinions and tastes are all over the place. What one person likes, another might not care for. So, getting praised is becoming harder than ever. That's why it's important for spouses to praise each other whenever they can. Because praise is like a rare nutrient—it feeds the soul, but it's hard to find.

When we do get praised, certain conditions make it feel truly rewarding. We need to feel like we've earned it—through our own time, energy, effort, skill, intelligence, and perseverance. When we know we've genuinely worked for something and someone acknowledges that, the praise hits differently. It feels amazing.

The behavior that gets praised should be intentional too—not done just for the sake of praise, but because we believe it's the right thing to do. When we've consciously chosen to act a certain way—over other easier or more tempting options—and

someone notices and appreciates it, that's when praise feels meaningful. Otherwise, it can feel empty.

That's why praise is hard to come by. It takes effort. It takes trying, failing, getting tired, not giving up, pushing through, being persistent—sometimes even being stubborn.

Praise is one of the most nourishing things for our sense of self. But it's both hard to earn and doesn't show up in our lives as often as it should. Good, kind, and positive actions often go unnoticed. People aren't always great at recognizing the good in others.

To be praised, we usually have to put in real effort—mentally or physically. Do the work, get a good result, and hope someone notices. But even then, people can be stingy with praise. They might like what you've done, but they don't say it. So you don't get the credit you deserve.

It's a bit better in group settings—like at work, social gatherings, hosting guests, picnics, or company events. In those spaces, accomplishments are more visible and more likely to be acknowledged and appreciated.

In communities where people spend time together, achievements often get shared and celebrated. But in one-on-one relationships, it's a different story. People tend to be less generous with praise. There are reasons for that.

There is one time, though, when people seem to have no trouble giving praise—when we're falling for someone. During that early flirtation phase, we become experts at noticing and pointing out all the good things about the other person. We're overflowing with kind words and compliments.

But once couples have lived together for a while, they often stop praising each other. Over time, they start to take each other for granted. They stop seeing the small, thoughtful things the other does. It's like the good qualities they once admired become invisible.

Wouldn't it be great if things stayed the way they were at the beginning? During those early days of dating, everything felt exciting and full of joy. Praise came naturally. The flowers bloomed, the birds chirped, and the two of them couldn't stop appreciating each other.

Both men and women tend to be really good at caring for and praising their partner during the dating phase. When we're caught up in that whirlwind of romance, nothing feels too hard. It's like we're living in a dream world.

Back in those special days, it was so easy to praise the person we liked and enjoyed spending time with. We could see all their good qualities so clearly, and expressing them came naturally—no effort at all.

They bumped into each other on a sunny spring day, right in the busiest street of the city. Saying "they bumped into each other" sounds simple, but making it happen was anything but. He had to go through a lot just to cross paths with her—pushing through crowds, taking wrong turns, crossing countless streets. But finally, he made it. There they were, face to face.

She spoke first. She could see he was too excited—and too nervous—to say

anything. What else could she do?

"Hello," she said.

"Hello," he replied.

Then she asked casually, "What's up? What are you doing downtown?"

That caught him off guard. What was he doing downtown? He couldn't just say he was wandering around hoping to run into her. He needed an excuse—fast. Glancing around, he spotted a bunch of shoe stores.

"Shoes," he said. "I'm looking for shoes."

That wasn't true. He wasn't looking for shoes at all. He was just trying to find a chance to talk to her. But he went with it, leaning into the lie.

"You have great taste—I can tell by how well you dress. Would you help me? Could we look for shoes together and pick the right pair?"

She agreed, and off they went, popping in and out of stores. He used every moment to show how much he admired her, finding something to praise in everything she did and said.

"You're so clever. You have such a kind personality. Not only are you beautiful, but you're also incredibly warm-hearted..."

The girl was kind, too. Every now and then, she'd return the compliments. She found what he said interesting and thoughtful. She told him there was a logic behind his words. She praised how attentive and sincere he was, how he didn't fall for the salesman's tricks and wasn't easily fooled.

He tried on every pair of shoes she picked, without a single complaint. They examined each one in the mirror, discussing the details. He hung on her every word and responded sincerely each time.

"You're absolutely right. I hadn't thought about it that way. That's such a smart point. I have so much to learn from you..."

Eventually, they found a pair they both liked. He thanked her endlessly, telling her how grateful he was. She'd saved him from the "terrible" task of choosing the right shoes.

But the real trouble started when he paid for them. The price was way more than he'd expected, and now he was wondering how he'd make ends meet for the rest of the month.

As they walked to the bus stop, he kept admiring his new shoes and repeating how great her taste was and how helpful she'd been.

It was the first—and last—pair of yellow shoes he ever bought or wore in his life. But so what? It didn't matter. Life was beautiful. Trees were chirping, birds were blooming... Wait, that's not right. Trees don't chirp. Oh well! Who cares? Does it really matter?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our hearts could feel that same joy in every moment of our

lives? Back then, praising someone came so easily. We appreciated everything about them. Imagine if we still did that for our spouse, without hesitation or second thoughts.

But reality is different. Time changes us. As the years go by, we become different people. Other priorities take over. We start focusing on flaws—on what needs fixing—rather than on what’s beautiful and worth praising.

As humans, we’re wired to spot the bad stuff more easily than the good. We tend to see the negative first. It’s just how we are. We notice what needs fixing before we notice what deserves praise. Seeing what’s positive, beautiful, or kind doesn’t always come naturally. But it’s a skill we can—and should—get better at.

This tendency likely has deep roots in our evolution. Over thousands of years, our survival depended on being alert to threats: “Watch out for danger. Focus on what could go wrong. Spot the risks. Notice what’s harmful.”

That mindset has helped us survive—but it doesn’t help much when it comes to appreciating the good things in life, especially in our relationships. If we’re always focused on what’s wrong, we miss a lot of what’s right.

Imagine dropping black and white marbles into a jar. The more black marbles you add, the fewer white ones can fit. It’s the same with attention: the more we focus on what’s negative, the less we notice the positive.

We often apply this same lens to our spouse. We’re quick to spot mistakes or annoying habits, even when they’re small. And while our intention might be to protect or help—“I just want to make sure things go well”—this habit can overshadow the good things our partner does.

To shift this perspective, here’s a simple but powerful exercise:

Exercise: Find the Praiseworthy

This practice helps you become more aware of what’s good and admirable in your partner.

Step 1: Make a Praise List

Grab a pen and paper (or use your phone, computer, whatever works).

Write down the good things your spouse does—the kind, thoughtful, helpful, or simply nice things.

Don’t worry about how long or short the list is. Take your time—you can spend a few days or even a week on this.

Ask your partner to do the same: they’ll make a list of the things they appreciate about you.

Once you’ve both made your lists, sit down and share them with each other.

Talk about what you each wrote—why you chose those items, why they matter, and how they make a difference.

Discuss where you agree and where you see things differently. Keep the conversation going until you both feel heard and understood.

Update your list based on this conversation.

Step 2: See Yourself Through Their Eyes

Now, try to put yourself in your partner's shoes.

Ask yourself: "If I were them, what would I appreciate about me?"

Make a new list—this time, of the things you believe your partner would praise you for. List what you think you do well.

Have your partner do the same.

Share your lists again and talk them through. Explain your choices, discuss what you agree on, and explore any differences.

Then, update your original praise list based on what you learned from this step.

Step 3: Practice the Praise

Going forward, whenever your partner does something from the updated list—say something!

Praise them. Thank them. Highlight what they did and why it matters.

Make it a habit. Each time they repeat one of those behaviors, acknowledge it. Let them know you noticed. Show appreciation.

Tell them how their actions reflect the good, kind, thoughtful person they are.

This step isn't a one-time thing—it's a lifelong practice. If you stick with it, you'll not only avoid TfG, but also build a stronger, more loving connection.

Why This Exercise Works

"Find the Praiseworthy" is about building awareness. When you write things down and talk them through, you start to notice all the good qualities that may have slipped under your radar.

Try it. Encourage your partner to do it too. You might be surprised by how much beauty is already there—waiting to be seen.

Noticing the good and beautiful things your spouse does can help break down the barriers that stop you from giving praise. When we focus too much on what's wrong, it becomes hard to appreciate our partner. We end up missing their accomplishments and positive behavior. Naturally, if we're always on the lookout for mistakes, we won't notice what they're doing right.

Shifting your mindset about what's "right" and "wrong" can help you become more open to giving praise. Keep in mind, nature doesn't label things as right or wrong — we do. That means we can also change how we define those things. Of course, it's not just our tendency to focus on the negative that gets in the way of giving praise. As mentioned earlier, there are other obstacles too.

Care vs Praise

The Mighty Nutrient

Care, praise, and similar expressions are like nutrients for our soul. They feed our inner world and help build the self-confidence we need to navigate life's ups and downs.

It's hard to speak in absolutes when it comes to emotions, but it wouldn't be wrong to say that among all these emotional "nutrients," praise is the most powerful. It gives a major boost to our self-confidence—making it the ultimate fuel for our inner self.

Still, the impact of these feelings depends on the situation. Sometimes, the most meaningful thing might not be praise at all—it could be as simple as a small smile. That one gesture might give us more confidence than anything else ever has. Emotions are unpredictable like that—they don't always follow rules or patterns.

Praise Takes Effort

One thing about praise: it usually doesn't come easy. It often requires hard work, effort, perseverance, intelligence, and some form of success. You typically have to *do* something to earn praise.

But care? That's different. Feeling cared for, being noticed, having your existence acknowledged—these are also emotional nutrients. They don't demand much effort. They're easier to come by and usually don't require achievement or action on your part. They might not be as potent as praise, but they're still essential.

"Feeling Cared For" Is Easy

In everyday life, we naturally receive small doses of care. A greeting, someone asking how we are, a casual conversation, someone seeking our opinion—these moments show we matter. We feel seen and valued. These are things we get almost every day, without needing to go out of our way or accomplish anything extraordinary.

Of course, if you isolate yourself—stay at home, avoid talking to others, and don't engage with the outside world—you'll miss out on those moments. But just stepping outside, chatting with someone briefly, or simply saying "hello" can make a huge difference. Even a single greeting can bring a feeling of being acknowledged.

Anyone who's out in the world—working, studying, socializing—naturally receives these small acts of care. You run into acquaintances and exchange greetings. You hear things like, "Hi," "Good morning," or "How are you?" You feel recognized when someone calls your name in a waiting room. And when you're talking with friends and they nod in agreement, or say, "You're right," it feels like approval. It feels good.

Unlike praise, these small emotional boosts—care, attention, acknowledgment—are easy to come by in our daily lives.

Showing Care Is Easy Too

Most of us also naturally express care to those around us. We don't usually ignore people we know or avoid saying hello. In fact, we often make an effort to acknowledge others because we don't want them to feel ignored or slighted. Unless

we're deeply distracted or in a rush, we don't forget to say hi. We don't usually delay those little moments of connection.

It's easy to show care. A kind word, a friendly nod, a small gesture—these are all simple ways to show someone they matter. In fact, many of these behaviors have become second nature. We don't have to think about them much—they just happen. Caring doesn't take effort.

Words and gestures that show care and connection are deeply familiar to us:

"Hello."

"What's up?"

"Good afternoon."

"Nice to see you."

"You're right."

"I agree with you."

But praise? That's different. Praise doesn't come as easily. It usually needs a reason—something someone did or achieved. And that's what sets it apart.

Praise is an important and powerful source of self-confidence. From time to time, we need to give it to ourselves and acknowledge our own strengths.

FEED YOUR INNER SELF

Every now and then, we all judge ourselves. We think back on our choices, our decisions, and the thoughts we've had. We reflect, evaluate, and sometimes realize we've made mistakes—and that can make us feel bad. Occasionally, we're even harsh with ourselves, criticizing or blaming ourselves more than we should.

But if we can be that critical, shouldn't we also be able to do the opposite? We shouldn't just focus on what we don't like about ourselves—we also need to recognize what we *do* like. We need to acknowledge our strengths and the good things about who we are.

Even if we do sometimes think positively about ourselves, we often keep those thoughts private. We don't talk about them out loud, especially not in front of others. We're afraid it might come off as arrogant or self-centered.

And that's okay. You don't have to shout it from the rooftops. But taking time to recognize your own worth is important—and really helpful. Just keep it realistic. Praise yourself when it's truly deserved. Every now and then, it's essential to remind yourself that you *matter*—that you're valuable.

Focus on what you do well and allow yourself to feel good about it. Don't be shy about appreciating your own efforts when they're meaningful. You have every right to celebrate your achievements. When you do something kind, smart, or meaningful, say to yourself, "Well done." Or, "That was a good idea," "Bravo, me," "I'm glad I made that choice."

Liking yourself doesn't mean you're full of yourself. Giving yourself credit when it's due isn't vanity—it's healthy. You're not looking through a funhouse mirror or pretending to be something you're not. Maybe you're not one in a million, but you're not some item on sale at a market stall either.

And don't keep it all to yourself—share it with your spouse. Let them know what you're proud of and why. Get their feedback. Maybe they'll see things a little differently, and that's fine. But just opening up can make the whole experience more meaningful. When they acknowledge it too, it'll feel even better.

As he was about to leave, he took one last look at himself in the mirror. His expression looked too stern, so he tried to relax his facial muscles. After a few attempts, he gave up. A serious face with a slight pout actually seemed more appealing to him anyway.

He studied his reflection for a moment, checking his hair, face, and clothes. He liked what he saw. He knew how to dress well and take care of himself. He was confident in that, and he knew others noticed it too.

As his eyes moved across his reflection, a flood of thoughts ran through his mind—things he had done, things he hadn't. His dreams, goals, accomplishments... Then, for a while, he just stood there—seeing nothing, thinking nothing.

Eventually, he pulled himself together.

"This is me," he said. "And I'm happy to be me. I'm glad I'm not anyone else. Sure, I have flaws. I've made mistakes. But I've done good things too... and I'm okay with who I am."

With that, he stepped outside, feeling grounded. He felt strong. Maybe not strong enough to move mountains or fix everything overnight, but strong enough. He picked up his pace and disappeared into the crowd.

Being humble is a beautiful quality, and it matters in many cultures. But it shouldn't come at the cost of your self-worth. There's no point in being unfair to yourself just to seem humble. We need to value ourselves and acknowledge our strengths. There's nothing wrong with that—as long as it's honest. It's especially important if we want to be good partners at home, ready to face challenges, including things like TfG.

To live a happy life, we need to be at peace with ourselves. We need to believe that we matter—that we have value and that we're important to the people around us. That's really all we need. Not to be the best, or a hero, or excellent at everything. Just to be an ordinary person who counts—who is seen as a unique individual.

We feel this need is fulfilled when we sense that others care about us and value us.

But when that need isn't met, it becomes hard to live a healthy life. That's when problems start to appear—feelings of insecurity, low self-confidence, unhappiness, boredom, restlessness, depression, emotional distress, even breakdowns.

That's why it's so important to find meaning and value in ourselves. To do this, we reflect on what's happened to us, what we've done, what we believe in, and what principles we live by. We want to prove—to ourselves, at the very least—that our life has some significance. We want to believe that our presence matters.

Sometimes we share our achievements with others—not just to brag, but because we want to say out loud, "Here's why I belong. Here's why I'm here." We're trying to reassure ourselves that we have a rightful place in the world around us.

There used to be a ruined house in a large garden right next to ours. Its roof had collapsed, and most of the walls had fallen. But one small room was still

standing—partly intact. One side was solid, with a triangular entrance that led into a sheltered space. That was where Mihı lived. It was his home.

Mihı was an old man who moved slowly. I don't remember his real name or why people called him Mihı.

When the sun was out, he would come outside and sit on a rock or a piece of wood among the ruins, always with his back to the sun. He wore a worn, brown coat that was too big for him and sat quietly, doing nothing. For some reason, I only remember seeing him in the winter—sitting silently on a pile of rubble, his coat wrapped around him, his face partly hidden by his beard.

We didn't know much about how he lived. What did he eat or drink? How did he stay warm? What did he do all day? We had no idea. All we knew was that, every now and then, he would slowly come out and sit in the sunlight. I never saw him doing anything—not even drawing in the dirt or pacing around. He would just sit and stare ahead.

His son visited him from time to time. He was a young man, probably in his early twenties. I don't remember if he ever brought anything—clothes, food, or supplies. They would just sit together and talk for a while.

One sunny day, I saw them outside having a conversation. Curious, I wandered closer to try to hear what they were saying. I couldn't catch much, but I clearly remember one thing Mihı said to his son:

"I'm struggling for you, son."

That sentence stayed with me. I was surprised to hear it, because I had never seen Mihı do any kind of work. How could he be struggling for anyone—let alone his son? If he had the strength to struggle, wouldn't he use it to help himself first?

But over time, I realized what he meant. Mihı needed to feel like his life still had purpose. So he told himself—and his son—that he was struggling for him. Maybe, for Mihı, just thinking good thoughts for his son felt like doing something meaningful. Who knows?

Every person needs to make sense of their existence, no matter how much or how little they have. From the wealthiest to the poorest, we all search for meaning. We all need to feel useful, valuable, and important—in whatever way we can.

You need to take care of yourself—really take care of yourself. Treat yourself like you matter, because you do. Give yourself a little praise now and then. Self-worth plays a big role in coping with TfG.

But no matter how much we try to see ourselves as important or valuable, it doesn't always work. Life doesn't always back us up. It doesn't send us messages that we're special or needed.

The world isn't exactly set up to highlight the positive. Quite the opposite—negativity is everywhere. Bad news, disturbing events, and problems are pushed in our faces constantly. It's no wonder it's hard to feel good about ourselves.

On the bus, there was nothing but the steady hum of the engine. No one was talking. It was a busy evening, and the silence felt like an effort to make the ride go faster. Everyone just wanted to get home.

He hadn't had a good day. His coworker was out sick, and he had to cover both workloads. By the end of the day, his neck was stiff and his eyes ached.

He only noticed the radio when the music stopped and the host started reading the news. The voice was flat, the stories were grim. Each headline was worse than the last. Another murder. A drug bust. Conflicts in different cities. Wars breaking out. Natural disasters somewhere in the world. He tried to tune it out and think about something else.

Eventually, the driver called out his stop. He got off quickly, stepping into the cool of the evening.

He walked into his building and started up the stairs. From the first floor, the familiar sound of his neighbors arguing floated up. The shouting hadn't started yet, but the tension was there—you could feel it. It was only a matter of time.

As he climbed the stairs, a heavy feeling settled over him. Life felt overwhelming.

When he walked into his apartment, he remembered the kitchen drain was still leaking. And he'd forgotten to take out the trash that morning. That made him feel even worse.

Negativity dominates our lives. Most conversations center around what's wrong, what's upsetting, or what's gone bad. If there's something unpleasant, people will definitely talk about it. Good things? Sure, they get mentioned too—but not as often, and not with the same intensity. We're drawn to the negative.

When we talk with friends or acquaintances, bad news usually takes center stage. We talk about it more easily and more often than the good stuff. Maybe it's just how we're wired. Problems, mistakes, and danger grab our attention.

That may go all the way back to our ancestors. They survived by staying alert to threats—by always scanning for what was wrong or dangerous. Noticing trouble kept them alive. So, focusing on the negative became a habit of survival.

Because of this, feeling valuable and important doesn't come easily. We need support. We need reminders, evidence—even little ones—that we matter. And these reminders have to be ongoing. One moment of feeling good isn't enough—we need something that lasts.

People differ in how they see themselves. Some overestimate and think they're the best thing that ever happened to the world. Others feel completely worthless. Most of us fall somewhere in between.

The truth is, it *is* possible to feel good about ourselves and find meaning on our own. We can learn to do that. But keeping that feeling going—sustaining it over time—is tough to manage alone. The world around us often works against that effort.

That's why we need others. We need support from the people around us—especially from our spouse or life partner. That kind of support helps us stay grounded and reminds us that we matter.

How to Get Support

Asking for support all the time isn't the most effective way to get what you

need—especially when it's something ongoing. Sure, you might get the response you're looking for a few times, but after a while, repeated requests can start to lose their impact. And let's face it—nobody wants to be in a situation where they have to keep asking for the same thing over and over.

Eventually, it gets frustrating for both you and your partner. You might get tired of always having to ask, and they might start feeling uncomfortable or even resentful. But here's the thing—you're going to need your partner's support for a lifetime, not just now and then.

So what should you do instead?

The answer is simple: show your partner that you care about them and that they're important to you.

You might wonder,

"Why should I focus on caring for my partner when I'm the one who needs care?"

Because that's how it works. When your partner feels valued and appreciated, they're more likely to respond in kind. When they sense that you truly care about them, they'll naturally want to support you. Relationships, despite what some may say, are largely reciprocal. That's human nature—and there's nothing wrong with that.

An Easy Way to Show You Care

Caring for your partner isn't just about being physically present. It's also about respecting and valuing their thoughts, opinions, and choices.

You can show this in simple, everyday ways—by agreeing with what they say, appreciating their ideas, and letting them know they matter to you. When your partner sees that you're aligned with them, they feel seen, respected, and important.

- "You're right."
- "I think so too."
- "Exactly."
- "I agree with you."
- "Yes, what you said is so true."

These simple words can go a long way. They show that you're not just hearing your partner—you're truly listening, understanding, and valuing their perspective.

It's always refreshing when others accept and embrace our choices. It makes us feel validated, understood, and included. We feel like we're on the same level as those who acknowledge our point of view. Our self-esteem and confidence get a boost. We start to believe that we're just a normal person, part of the community. No different from anyone else. That we matter and have a place in the world.

- *I'm a normal person—there's nothing wrong with me.*
- *I'm just like everyone else.*

- *I'm as capable as anyone.*
- *People think the way I do, so I must be thinking normally.*
- *My choice isn't wrong.*
- *I'm not alone.*
- *I'm just as human as the next person.*

These thoughts might not run through our heads word-for-word, but we feel their impact just the same. We feel relieved, stronger, freer. More relaxed, better able to solve problems, more confident in handling challenges. We feel smart, capable, and motivated to move forward.

When it comes to relationships, especially with our spouse, one of the simplest and most powerful ways to show we care is to acknowledge and accept their thoughts and opinions. When we do that, our partner feels seen, valued, and respected. That feeling is powerful—it gives them the strength to stay grounded and resilient.

Of course, you don't have to agree with your partner all the time—that's not realistic. Sometimes you'll see things differently. Sometimes they won't agree with you. That's completely normal. In those moments, talk it through. Try to find common ground. Make an effort to soften your edges, to meet in the middle. And if you can't agree, that's okay too.

But if you find that you don't like *any* of your partner's thoughts or preferences—if there's constant conflict with no common values—that could be a sign of a deeper issue. In that case, it might be worth talking to a professional. Sometimes the hard truth is that you may not be right for each other. We all make mistakes in judgment, and it's okay to question whether being together is the best choice.

Putting kids aside, in most adult relationships, what you give is what you get. When you show your spouse you care—when you treat them as important and valuable—they usually respond in kind. And that's how both of you get your emotional needs met.

Some of the ways we show care and appreciation for our partner often go unnoticed. Take something as simple as giving a heads-up. For instance, if you need to turn off the electricity at home to fix something, you let your spouse know in advance. You might say, "I need to take out the socket, so I'll be turning off the power for a bit."

Or maybe you're about to do something noisy around the house—letting your partner know ahead of time gives them a chance to move to a quieter spot. It's a small gesture, but it shows that you're thinking about them. It says, "I care about how this might affect you."

Even when you're coming home late, giving your partner a quick message can mean a lot. You're essentially saying, "Hey, I haven't forgotten about you. I care about how you might feel if I don't show up when expected. You matter to me."

Asking for permission or giving a simple notice can have the same effect. Let's say you want to use something that belongs to your spouse. You could just grab it—but

taking a second to ask or let them know shows respect.

Some might argue, “We share our lives—we don’t need to ask permission from each other.” But the truth is, skipping this step can create distance. What drives a wedge between people is using or taking something that belongs to the other without any notice. It might seem small, but it can come across as disrespectful or thoughtless.

Worse still, your partner might waste time looking for something you’ve moved or used without telling them. And while some couples have clear understandings about what doesn’t need to be discussed, others place a high value on their personal belongings—and don’t appreciate having their things used without permission, even by their spouse.

In the end, showing care, respect, and appreciation doesn’t take much effort. All it takes is being thoughtful and communicating clearly. None of the examples above are difficult or time-consuming. Paying attention to these can go a long way in preventing TfG or to reduce its effects. If not, tension or misunderstandings will be frequent.

SUSTAINABLE LOVE

Words Are Not Enough

All of these examples point to one big idea: what really matters isn’t just the words we use, but the actions we take.

Do you respect your spouse? Do you value them? Do you care about them? Do you love them?

Most of us would immediately say “yes” to all of those. And we probably mean it. We do care. We do love. We think about our partner when we’re apart and feel happy and lucky to have them.

But here’s the thing—your spouse might not feel the same way. They might feel unloved, unappreciated, and disrespected. It doesn’t matter what’s going on inside your head or heart if your partner can’t feel it.

Your feelings only matter to your spouse when they’re expressed—out loud, clearly, and often. You might feel deeply for them, but if you don’t say it, how will they know?

But even words aren’t enough. Yes, saying “I love you” helps. Telling your partner they matter to you is important. But that alone won’t carry the relationship. Words have limits.

Love, care, respect, and appreciation need to be visible. They need to take shape through your actions and behavior. They need to be something your partner can see, hear, and feel in real life. Words disappear—but actions stick. Sometimes they leave a lasting impression that your partner won’t forget.

We need to behave in a way that leaves no doubt in our spouse’s mind. They should be able to say, without hesitation, “This person truly loves and values me.”

So, yes, it’s great if you love your spouse. It’s great if you say it. But even more important—show it. Let your actions, your expressions, and your tone all match your

words. Because if there's a mismatch, the words won't stick. They'll just fade away. Sustainable love requires actions, too. Not just words.

Love

Love is one of the strongest emotions we experience as human beings. It's a deep, intense feeling of affection for someone else. There are many types of love—we may feel love for our spouse, children, siblings, parents, relatives, friends, even for nature and animals. Each kind is unique. Here, we're focusing on romantic love—the kind we feel for our life partner.

In the beginning, romantic emotions often develop spontaneously. It's usually sparked by physical attraction: dark eyebrows, hazel eyes, beauty, charm, elegance, charisma, how someone dresses or carries themselves... All these things can play a role.

As we get to know each other better, we begin to admire how the other person speaks, laughs, their tone of voice, their values and life goals, how they see the world, what makes them laugh, and more.

At this stage, people often start flirting, trying to learn more about each other from different angles. If the things we like about them outweigh what we don't, we spend more time together. If all goes well, we fall in love. And if that continues, we begin to think about living together.

But falling in love is just the beginning. The real challenge is keeping that love alive in the long run. Without ongoing care, love can fade. If couples don't work to maintain their love, they risk living together without real happiness.

Love, even the deep bond between parents and children, isn't indestructible. Under enough strain—conflict, neglect, emotional distance—it can weaken, and in rare cases, even disappear. Romantic love is no different.

That's why couples need to take action to preserve their connection, especially when facing TfG. One of the best ways to do this is by actively nurturing their love. When love is strong, there is little room for resentment or indifference to grow. TfG can not find space to develop, or it can not erode their connection.

Love is like a magical carpet—it cushions the bumps and fills the gaps in a relationship. If you take care of it from the start, you'll be better prepared to handle future challenges. And even if problems have already appeared, the right steps can help soften their impact. TfG has no chance in the presence of strong love.

But sustaining love takes more than time. It needs a foundation: caring, appreciation, respect. You can't truly love someone if you don't value or care about them. It's just as hard to keep loving someone who doesn't see you as important.

As humans, we naturally seek love—especially mutual love. It's one of our deepest desires. That's why we should do whatever it takes to protect and strengthen the love we already have. We can't afford to take it for granted.

The most powerful way to maintain love is by caring deeply about your partner and truly valuing them. One of the strongest protectors of love is showing respect. Love, care, respect, and appreciation are all deeply connected—they're part of the same emotional universe.

Simple actions like caring, greeting warmly, listening attentively, showing appreciation, praising, and treating your partner with respect can all help build love. If love already exists, these behaviors make it grow even stronger. They're some of the main reasons your partner continues to love you.

It's hard to measure how much love each of these actions creates. Sometimes a kind word or a small gesture—like brushing a strand of hair away—can spark a deep emotional response. Other times, the same action might seem minor. But generally, praise is one of the most powerful ways to generate and deepen love.

These kinds of behaviors are like rubber balls—whatever you throw out tends to bounce back to you. When you treat someone with love and respect, chances are they'll respond in kind, sooner or later. If you don't, you may be met with indifference. It's simple: you give, you get. If you don't give, you don't get.

No Reason, No Love

Love doesn't just happen out of nowhere—and it certainly doesn't last without effort. It needs a reason to begin, and it needs reasons to keep going. Thankfully, life gives us plenty of those reasons: caring, showing appreciation, saying hello with warmth, paying attention, respecting each other, being thoughtful, offering compliments... So yes, lasting love is possible.

Most couples decide to live together because they love each other—maybe a little, maybe a lot. Under normal circumstances, you don't want to share your life with someone you don't even like. That's why it's important to talk about how to *keep* loving each other. In other words, how to build *sustainable* love.

So, how do you keep the love alive? How do you make sure that love, the beautiful feeling, sticks around at home?

You've probably heard things like:

- Love is beautiful.
- Life is unbearable without love.
- Everyone should love each other.
- You *must* love your spouse.
- You *must* love all people.
- You should love nature and every living thing.
- Love your partner so they'll love you back.
- Love is the beginning of everything.
- There's no door love can't open...

These are sweet thoughts, heartfelt advice, and warm wishes. Hard to argue with them. But in these lines, love is often treated like it's something simple—like taking a walk, helping a neighbor, or watering the garden. As if all it takes to love is deciding

to do it.

It's like love is a task you can just check off your list. And if you don't, maybe it's because you're lazy, or not emotionally mature enough. The message seems to be:

"Come on, just try a little. Be a good person and love. You can do it!"

But it doesn't work like that. Sure, love is beautiful, noble, even sacred. No doubt about it. But you can't love someone just because love is nice. You can't protect or strengthen love just by wanting it to stay.

Because love isn't something we can force. It has to come from something real. It needs a reason—one or more.

Without reasons, we can't:

- start loving,
- keep loving,
- deepen our love,
- or protect the love we already have for our partner.

We need to like something about the person we love. We need to see something special in them. Outside of our children, it's rare to love someone completely out of the blue.

You can't just say, "I *must* protect the love I feel for my spouse," and expect it to work. It doesn't work that way.

Across cultures and throughout history, love has always been a major theme—songs, poems, novels, movies, epics—so much of our art is about love. It praises how beautiful and necessary love is. And it *is* beautiful.

But even with all that inspiration, love isn't easy. You can't just decide to love someone more, or to keep loving them, whenever you feel like it. It takes reason. And if you want someone to keep loving you, you need to give them reasons too. To keep love alive, to protect what you already have—it all takes reason.

Over time, the love between partners changes. It doesn't feel the same as it did in the early days. People change—what they like, what they want, how they see the world. The things that sparked love at first may no longer be strong enough to sustain it.

Another important factor is TfG, the woodworm of relationships. After some years, the slow, silent wear of partnership begins to show. It quietly eats away at feelings, like a slow illness that chips away at physical health. You barely notice it until the damage is done.

That tender feeling that once bloomed between two people can fade. The ups and downs, the emotional tremors over the years, create little cracks in the foundation of love. Those cracks cause slow leaks, and the "love tank" starts to empty. Love's intensity and strength weaken with time.

A Continuous Supply of Love

Living together means love needs constant care—it has to be fed and maintained every day. It's not something that just exists on its own. Think of it like a fire that needs regular sparks to keep burning. You have to keep adding small bits of love to the relationship, little by little, all the time.

You might think your partner will just keep loving you because of how they felt about you in the beginning—what they saw in your heart, what they imagined in their mind. But love doesn't work like that. Love is created in the moment, right in front of their eyes. Your partner falls in love with you by seeing you, by watching how you act, how you behave. First, they feel something because of what you do, and then they carry that feeling into their heart.

They can't keep loving you just based on what you once said or how you once made them feel. Back in the early days, when everything was new and exciting, you told them all the good things about yourself—how kind, thoughtful, helpful, and caring you are. That made them love you. But you weren't living together then. They didn't see your everyday flaws.

Now you live under the same roof. They've seen it all—your strengths and weaknesses, your habits, your ups and downs. Things have changed. Now, words alone aren't enough. What's in your head or heart is no longer visible to them unless you *show* it.

If you want your partner to keep loving you, you need to turn those thoughts and feelings into real actions—something they can see, hear, feel. Your behavior should spark something warm in them. Not because you're naturally charming or charismatic, but because of what you *do*.

Love needs to be made visible. What you feel for your partner should come alive in your actions—so they can see it with their eyes, feel it in their hearts, and know it's real. Their reaction—whether they smile at you, light up, or simply feel closer to you—will depend on what you do.

If you stop making this effort, love slowly fades. If you're indifferent for too long, you risk becoming just roommates—two people sharing a space, but not much more. And that's not the love most of us want.

You might wonder, "*But shouldn't my partner try too?*" Of course! But if you're both waiting for the other to make the first move, you might be waiting a long time. So why not start? Take the first step. Most people respond warmly when they're treated with love—they won't leave that kindness unanswered.

Think about what you can do. Your mind might jump to gifts, flowers, or money. Those things are nice, but they're not the heart of it. This message isn't just for men, by the way. Women can and should do this too. Acts of care can be anything—like cooking a favorite meal or just saying something kind.

Love doesn't come from nowhere. It needs a reason to be felt. In our everyday life, we need to *create* the conditions that allow love to grow.

Only parents can love without needing a reason. Between adults, love has to be *built*. It takes effort, intention, and care. It needs a reason to appear—and we create that reason.

Here are a few simple ways to start:

- Say something kind and genuine.
- Celebrate your partner's successes—truly cheer them on.
- Praise their efforts, with real feeling in your voice and eyes.
- Let them know when you agree with them or support their decisions.
- Show them you see them, that you notice and appreciate what they do.
- Talk about the good things they've accomplished and how it's helped both of you.
- Never criticize them in public, and always follow the golden rules of fair feedback.

These are the things that create those “tiny drops” of love: appreciation, awareness, kindness, respect, attention.

You might think, *“But I already feel these things. I think about my partner all the time. I love them deeply.”* That's great—but if you don't show it, it stays locked inside you. Unless those feelings are expressed, they won't mean much to your spouse. Thoughts and emotions are wonderful—but they need to become visible through words and actions.

Say it. Show it. Act it out. Prove it.

That's how you help your partner keep loving you. One small drop at a time.

Even simple things matter. Greet each other warmly when you've been apart. Say thank you when it's deserved. Tell them when you agree with their ideas or admire their choices. Celebrate their wins, big or small.

Doing these things once helps—for a short while. But to keep love alive, it has to become a habit. Something you do regularly.

And here's the beauty of it: when you make that effort, your partner will likely respond in kind. That's how love grows. That's how it lasts.

It's not enough to just have good intentions or loving thoughts if they stay inside you. Let them come alive in your actions. That's how love becomes sustainable—lasting and real.

The Love–Praise Cycle

We need to praise the person we share our life with. We need to say out loud the good and beautiful things they do. When they do something kind, thoughtful, or impressive, we should say it—highlight it, point it out, even brag about it a little.

When you love someone, you naturally love the things they do, too. The way they stand, speak, move, laugh, or walk—these little things matter. And when you notice

them, you should say so. Praise what you appreciate.

Celebrate their wins. Show your appreciation when it's deserved—and do it every single time. Even if they've done the same thing a hundred times before.

"I've already told my spouse they play guitar beautifully. Do I have to say it again?"

"I've mentioned how persuasive they are so many times. Do I really need to keep saying it?"

"Everyone knows I love the smoothies they make. Should I still tell them again?"

Yes. Every single time. Say it. Let them know.

Each time your spouse plays a lovely song, acknowledge it. Each time they convince someone with their words, praise them. Every time they hand you that smoothie you love, thank them like it's the first time.

Because when you praise your partner, it's like adding a tiny drop of love into your shared cellar. They feel it. And at the same time, you do too.

Love and praise go hand in hand—they multiply each other. If you praise, you love. If you love, you praise. If you praise, your spouse will love you, if you love, they will praise you. It becomes a beautiful, positive cycle. The more you give, the more you get.

Say, "Thank you," "You nailed that again," or "That was such a great song." Give a hug, a playful nudge, a big smile, a heart emoji—applaud, wink, high-five. Use whatever gesture feels natural to show: I noticed. I care. I loved it.

What you say or do doesn't have to be grand—but make sure you do something. Every time. But only if you genuinely mean it. Praise should be sincere. Praise only what you truly find good, lovely, or worthy.

And if you didn't like it? That's okay. You don't have to fake it. You can just say thank you and stay quiet. Or, if it feels right, share your thoughts on how it could be better—with kindness.

But if we stay silent when something beautiful happens—if we never mention the things our partner does well—we increase the risk of TfG. Over time, they'll start to feel invisible or unimportant. Their efforts will feel unnoticed. Their talents will seem irrelevant. Because no one said anything.

Thinking to yourself, "Oh, of course they played well—they always do," and saying nothing? That silence says more than you think. It says: "This is expected. This is normal. Nothing special."

But we don't lose anything by appreciating the same thing more than once. Praise doesn't run out. We won't find ourselves in some "praise shortage." There's no downside to being generous with your appreciation—only upside, for both of you.

We all need to feel seen, appreciated, and cared for. You can't buy that with money. You can't order it online. You can only receive it from people around you—especially from your partner.

And here's the best part: the surest way to receive praise... is to give it. Praise your partner, and they won't stay indifferent. It may not be immediate—but give it a few days, a week or two—and they'll start praising you back. That's just human nature. We're wired to return kindness.

Now, let's be clear: this isn't about flattery or buttering someone up. It's not about sweet talk for the sake of it. This is about genuine praise—given only when it's deserved. And you're the one who decides when that is.

If both partners build this habit, the love-praise cycle will repeat often. And with each round, a drop of love is added to the emotional bank you share.

Because love isn't just a feeling—it's built on moments, on reasons, on meaning. Loving someone isn't just about wanting to love them. It's about giving yourself reasons to love them more—every day.

Compassion and Love

We often mix up compassion and love, but they're not the same thing. Not every warm, heart-softening feeling is love. You might feel compassion for someone you just met, or for a stranger you see on the street—but that doesn't necessarily mean you love them.

For something to be called love, certain things need to be present. Love involves a deeper bond—a genuine interest and attachment to the other person. Their happiness makes you happy. When they're upset, you feel it too. If they hurt, it hurts you as well. Just thinking about them should make your forehead relax and bring a smile to your face. Hearing their voice should spark something in you—it should change you, even if just a little.

Compassion is a one-sided emotion. You feel it because of someone's situation, or something that's happened to them—but that's it. You don't expect anything back. Love, however, is mutual. It's about both people caring for and being cared for by each other. We expect to be loved by the person we love, we dream that to happen.

We don't usually say our compassion out loud, and often we try to hide it, because people don't like being pitied. It can make them feel small or ashamed.

Sure, in hard times, we might want others to show us some compassion. But in everyday life, being seen as someone who needs pity can be upsetting and offensive. On the flip side, being loved—especially by someone you love—is one of the greatest joys in life. Mutual love is something we all want and need.

Of course, compassion has its place. It's a beautiful feeling when felt at the right time, in the right context. But compassion alone isn't enough for a life shared together. If you're in a relationship, especially a marriage, your partner needs love, not pity.

Many spouses affected by TfG say they feel pitied rather than loved. This is a common complaint:

- “I feel like my spouse is with me out of pity.”
- “It's like I'm not a real partner, just someone weak that you feel sorry for and can't leave.”

- “Like I constantly need help.”
- “I’ve never felt like an equal in this relationship.”
- “I feel like I’m in a lower category.”
- ...

If you find yourself feeling compassion *for* your spouse rather than *love*, it might be time to reflect deeply on your relationship. Ask yourself what you can do to avoid wasting both your lives. Being in the position of the one who’s pitied is also hard—it comes with serious emotional costs. Relationships can’t thrive on pity alone. That kind of imbalance can be damaging.

TfG creates an environment where compassion can take over. But when compassion becomes the dominant emotion in a relationship, it can do more harm than TfG itself.

CRITICISM

Life isn’t always about praise and happy moments. We all experience things at home that we don’t like. Sometimes, our partner does something that bothers us, makes us sad, or even hurts us. In many of these moments, we tend to blame our spouse—we hold them responsible.

Disagreements and arguments are a normal part of living together. Nobody’s perfect. Both we and our partner are bound to make mistakes now and then. After all, we’re only human. And sharing a life with someone—no matter who it is—is never easy. It’s just not realistic to expect complete agreement on everything.

What is Criticism?

Criticism, complaining, reproaching, blaming... These all revolve around one basic idea: pointing out something wrong or unpleasant to the person who caused it. “Criticizing” is the most commonly used term, though each of the above words can carry a different emotional weight. While the basic goal is to make someone aware of a mistake or a problem, the tone and intention can vary.

In the simplest terms, criticism is letting someone know they’ve done something wrong—whether it’s a behavior, a habit, or a specific action. But how we do it matters a lot.

Blaming, complaining, and scolding can damage relationships and make communication harder. These approaches often create distance instead of connection. They rarely lead to positive change and can easily push a relationship toward a dead end.

Criticism in a Relationship

When it comes to our spouse, criticism shouldn’t just be about pointing out what’s wrong. It should be a conversation—a dialogue. The goal is not just to report the mistake but to talk about it, understand each other, and find a solution together.

Sometimes, we may realize that what we thought was wrong wasn’t actually a

mistake at all. Other times, we may agree that it was, and figure out how to fix it. Or we might land somewhere in between. The important thing is to reach an understanding that both people are okay with.

Mistakes should be addressed and resolved as soon as possible to keep living together peacefully and healthy. We need to talk about them, understand what happened, decide what to do, and try to prevent the same issue from happening again.

Every negative feeling or thought we have about something our partner did should be discussed—not buried. If we don't address issues, resentment can quietly build up, making it harder to live together over time.

If we realize our partner didn't mean any harm, acted absentminded, or the outcome was simply an accident, then it's okay to let it go. But if it bothers us and keeps bothering us, we should talk about it. Ignoring or brushing off problems isn't being kind or patient—it can actually mean we're neglecting the health of the relationship.

This isn't about being harsh or unforgiving. It's about caring enough to want to fix things and value the life you're building together.

Common Excuses for Avoiding Criticism

"I'll let it go just this once."

"You can't say something the first time it happens."

"Everyone makes mistakes."

"I don't want to rub it in."

"Maybe it won't happen again."

"I don't want to hurt their feelings."

"I make mistakes too."

"Forget it—I did the same thing the other day."

These justifications might sound reasonable at the moment, and sometimes they are. But if we make a habit of avoiding honest conversations, problems pile up. And comparing mistakes—thinking "well, I messed up too"—can backfire. It can lead to a cycle where each person excuses the other's actions without ever addressing them, which can slowly wear down the relationship.

In the end, healthy criticism isn't about blame—it's about care, communication, and making life together better.

If we speak kindly and criticize in the right way, we can correct mistakes and avoid negative consequences—without hurting our partner. We can even prevent the issue from happening again in the future.

Criticism is a big topic, especially when it comes to living with someone. When we know we've made a mistake, we already feel bad—whether a little or a lot. But when someone else points it out, that feeling usually gets worse.

Even though we often say we're "open to criticism," most people don't actually enjoy being told they're wrong. Because we're usually trying our best. But what we think is "our best" may not always work for others. So being criticized can feel like proof that we didn't get it right—and that stings.

That's why criticism has to be done with care. Poorly delivered criticism can cause tension, resistance, and emotional reaction. In situations where emotions are already running high—like during times of frustration or emotional growth (TfG)—criticism can trigger strong, even exaggerated, reactions. So, instead of fixing the issue, we might accidentally create more problems.

We need to keep these truths in mind when giving feedback to our partner. No one likes criticism, no matter how sweetly it's delivered. But constructive criticism—when done with respect and care—can help. It can actually make our partner feel valued and supported, rather than attacked.

“Correct” Criticism?

Correct criticism leads to a good outcome. But that outcome must feel good for both people, not just the one doing the criticizing. That's only possible through calm conversation—and, more importantly, compromise.

Think of criticism not as a speech about what went wrong, but as a discussion aimed at understanding each other and finding a solution together.

Criticizing is like using a one-time ticket—you don't get another shot at the same mistake. Sure, if the same thing happens again, you can bring it up. But saying, "I already criticized you for this, and it didn't work, so I'll do it again" won't help. That usually just leads to more frustration.

So make that one chance count. The goal is to walk away with a solution that feels good to both of you. Here are some key things to keep in mind:

Privacy

Have the conversation in private. No one else should be around when you give criticism—not family, not friends, not even your kids. It's a conversation for just the two of you. Others don't need to know it happened at all.

Why? Because no one likes their flaws exposed to others. We all want to feel safe, respected, and protected in our relationships. When you talk privately, your partner will feel you truly care. They'll appreciate that you didn't bring up their mistakes in front of others, which protects their dignity and strengthens your bond.

Remember, "others" include everyone—parents, siblings, children, relatives, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. It should be just the two of you.

This kind of private care builds trust. It helps your partner feel emotionally safe and loved—and in the context of TfG, it can be one of the best ways to deepen connection. Correct criticism helps prevent TfG or reduce its damages.

Timing Is Everything

Choose the right time. Your partner needs to be feeling physically and emotionally well when you bring up a concern. If they're unwell, stressed, or in a bad mood, the

conversation can easily backfire. Someone who's not feeling great isn't in the right mood to reflect calmly—they may lash out or shut down. It's better to wait for a more balanced moment.

But joyful times aren't the best either. Don't disrupt a happy occasion with criticism. Let the good moments stay good. Wait for a calm, neutral time.

Also, this applies to you, too. If you're feeling sick, angry, or upset, it's better to pause and collect yourself before initiating a sensitive talk.

The best approach is to give feedback as soon as possible—without keeping a mental list of grievances or storing them up for later. However, that's not always realistic.

You can't exactly call out a mistake during a fun conversation with friends, or while rushing somewhere together. And when your partner walks in the door exhausted, they probably won't be in the mood for criticism. Sometimes, it's best to hold off.

In fact, some situations call for no criticism at all, at least not in the moment. Blurting something out as soon as it comes to mind can escalate tensions quickly. In those moments, even a single word—or just a sigh—can stir up a storm.

There are also times when your spouse already knows they messed up. They're frustrated with themselves. Adding your criticism on top of that can feel like rubbing salt in the wound. In these cases, it's better to stay silent and give them space. Let the dust settle. Then, when emotions have cooled, you can bring it up more constructively.

When it comes to praise, the best time is usually *as soon as possible*. The closer to the moment, the more impactful it is. That said, don't force it. Praise should feel natural and come from the heart. If you need a little time to reflect, that's okay. Just try not to wait too long—once the moment passes, your words might lose their impact.

Criticism, though, *really* depends on timing. Done well, at the right moment, it can actually strengthen your relationship. It shows care, honesty, and trust. In fact, well-delivered criticism can sometimes be even more meaningful than praise.

"I" Statements

Use "I" statements. Speak from your own experience. Say how the situation affected you—not what your partner did wrong. For example:

"When that happened, I felt hurt and confused."

This approach feels less like blame and more like sharing. Your partner is less likely to become defensive and more likely to stay engaged in the conversation.

Avoid saying things like:

"You did this, and that's why everything went wrong."

Statements like that come off as accusations and usually make people put up their walls. Using "I" statements shows that you're taking emotional responsibility and creates space for your partner to respond calmly.

When you don't make them the villain, they'll feel that you're looking out for them—not attacking them. That makes it much easier to work together toward a solution.

Be Solution-oriented

Focus on what to do, not what not to do. Telling someone what not to do can be confusing and hard to follow. It's more helpful to suggest a clear, doable action.

For example, instead of saying:

"Don't forget to turn off the oven," you could say: "Why not set a timer?"

That's constructive criticism. It doesn't just point out the problem—it offers a solution.

Humans aren't great at remembering what not to do in the moment. But creating a habit of what to do is much easier. Repeating a positive action just a few times can help it stick.

Speak Calm

Stay calm and talk clearly. Your tone matters just as much as your words—maybe more.

Speak softly, slowly, and clearly. Don't raise your voice. Don't use complicated language or make the conversation feel like a lecture. Keep your tone warm and respectful.

Avoid things like:

Pointing fingers

Glaring eyes

Dramatic gestures

Sarcastic or reproachful comments

These things shut people down or put them on the defensive.

Instead, sit across from your partner, look them in the eyes, and speak with care. Avoid blame, nagging, or complaints. These tend to cause friction rather than resolution.

When we speak in a thoughtful, respectful way, the outcome is usually positive. It might not be easy—but it's almost always worth it.

If you want to avoid yelling, start by noticing the moments when you're tempted to raise your voice. In those moments, pause and take a deep breath. You'll often find that your anger eases. Shouting or criticizing loudly isn't real criticism—it's either a fight or the start of one.

Real criticism doesn't look like:

- Giving advice

- Teaching a lesson
- Trying to win or prove a point
- Making the other person feel guilty
- Holding them accountable like a boss or judge
- Interrogating them
- Keeping them “in line”
- Disciplining
- Educating
- Intimidating
- Scolding
- Hurting
- Making them “pay” for what they did

And when it comes to our partner, we shouldn't even think in these terms. Home isn't a school or a workplace—we're not their teacher or manager. It's not a courtroom either, and we're definitely not the judge or prosecutor.

If your partner does something wrong or something that makes you uncomfortable, that *doesn't* give you the right to act in those ways. What it *does* give you is the right to speak up respectfully and seek a solution. You have the right to talk calmly, compromise, and look for a way forward together.

Explain Consequences

Explain the impact of the behavior that bothered you. Share why it made you uncomfortable.

Remember: At home, the phrase “What do I need to explain? It's obvious!” is more of a joke than a reason not to speak.

Here's a good example that uses “I” language and explains how a behavior made someone feel, without blaming:

Carolyn and Paul live together. One day, a close friend of Paul's came over, and they spent some time hanging out. Paul and his friend joked around a lot. Some of the jokes made Carolyn uncomfortable, and later, she shared her feelings with Paul:

“I felt a bit uneasy when those kinds of jokes were made. I get it—it's great to hang out with close friends, and I'm glad you two are so close. I really enjoyed the conversation overall—we had a good time. But some of the jokes, especially with me there... made me feel a little strange. It was like I'd said something wrong or upset someone, and there was no way to fix it. I know it's weird, but that's how I felt.”

“He’s your friend and you’re close, but I’m not that close to him yet. So I feel like I need a bit of distance in those moments. Or maybe it’s just that I feel uncomfortable when things get too relaxed. Maybe later I’ll feel closer and I’ll joke around like that too. But for now... does that make sense?”

This is a great example of “I” language. Carolyn talks about *herself* and how *she* felt. Most of her sentences start with “I.” She isn’t blaming, accusing, or trying to dig into what happened—she’s just sharing how she was affected. And that’s the key when giving feedback or criticism: stick to how it impacted you.

What’s missing in this example is a proposed solution or compromise—but that can always come later. Because with “I” language, the conversation will easily flow forward.

Avoid generalizing

Phrases like “You always do this” are unhelpful. If “You always...” comes to mind, pause and try to rephrase it more positively or constructively.

Don’t bring up past mistakes.

Rehashing old problems doesn’t help either of you. It doesn’t move the current conversation forward, and it usually just leads to more conflict.

Your home isn’t a logbook of every mistake made. If it were possible to learn from the past just by being reminded of it, your partner probably would’ve changed already.

The past *can* be helpful, but only if you use it wisely. Instead of saying, “Remember when you did this before?” try sharing what you learned from that experience—without pointing fingers or naming your partner directly.

Giving good, respectful criticism is a skill—and it’s a big topic. But if we keep these basics in mind, criticism won’t damage our relationship. In fact, it can make our bond stronger. TfG will ease, and our love and understanding will grow.

Verbal or Written?

The best way to give praise or criticism is face-to-face. If that’s not possible, a phone or video call can work just as well. Thanks to technology, there are lots of ways to connect—texts, emails, emojis, or even a good old-fashioned letter.

Gestures can also say a lot. But whatever method you choose, remember: *in-person is always best.*

When you praise someone, the most important thing is that your message is clear and genuine. Let them know specifically what they did that you appreciated. Don’t wait for a big moment—look for reasons to praise, but be sincere and realistic.

Criticism, on the other hand, is tougher. That’s why it’s crucial to choose your words carefully. Whether you’re speaking or writing, make sure your message is clear and respectful. Face-to-face is again the better option here, too.

Be a Witness

It’s ideal to praise or criticize based on what you’ve personally seen. It gives your

words more weight. But we can't witness everything. Sometimes we hear about things secondhand—and that's okay. We can still respond to those, just be mindful.

Whenever possible, use your own observations. If not, don't ignore what you've heard. Praise or address it thoughtfully.

These days, life moves fast. We don't always have time to stop and notice the good around us. That makes it even more important to speak up when we see or hear about something praiseworthy. Recognizing good behavior matters.

At the same time, we shouldn't hesitate to give respectful, constructive criticism about things we don't agree with—especially when we've seen them ourselves. But even if we haven't, we can still talk about it, as long as we're thoughtful and fair. Face-to-face is best when possible.

In Short

Here's an example of respectful, clear criticism—where the impact of the behavior is fully explained:

I know you're trying to protect me, and I really appreciate that. It means a lot to feel your support. But sometimes, I need to handle things on my own. If you step in too quickly, I end up feeling weak or incapable.

Please don't take this the wrong way—I do need your help at times. But sometimes I need space to manage things myself.

I agree that spouses should support each other fully. I'm just asking for one simple thing: let me ask first. Let me come to you when I need you. Please don't jump in unless I say so. Okay?

Criticism, when done with care, is not the enemy. It can actually bring couples closer—especially when paired with understanding, patience, and good timing. When we learn to express our concerns the right way, and respond thoughtfully, we create a stronger, more open connection. And we stop taking each other for granted.

Criticism and TfG

Over time, couples can fall into a routine where they stop noticing, appreciating, or praising each other like they used to. From this perspective, the *right kind of criticism* can actually help combat TfG. In some cases, it might even be more effective than praise.

If we pay attention to these key aspects, TfG doesn't stand a chance. When our spouse sees that we're attentive, they feel closer to us. They feel loved, valued, and cared for.

But here's the catch: criticism is a double-edged sword. Done the wrong way, it causes more harm than good.

Most of the time, it's not the *content* of criticism that causes tension—it's the *delivery*. One partner may criticize with good intentions, but if the tone or style is off, the other person reacts negatively—not to the point being made, but to how it was expressed. The critic, in turn, misreads that reaction and assumes their *words* are being rejected. This miscommunication snowballs into arguments, which can grow into bigger conflicts.

In relationships affected by TfG, poorly delivered criticism is a common spark that ignites conflict. When communication is limited and both partners are quick to react, even minor criticism can trigger hurt feelings. Tempers flare. A single comment leads to clenched teeth, furrowed brows, and a tense showdown. The bickering begins.

TfG and bad criticism work on different timelines:

- TfG is slow and sneaky. It creeps in over time.
- Bad criticism is fast and explosive. It's the match that lights the fire.

But when used correctly, good criticism can actually cool things down and help heal the effects of TfG.

The “Purification Day”

Life is busy, and quality time is hard to come by. That's why it helps to set aside a dedicated time each week (or every two weeks) to talk things through. You and your partner can sit down without distractions or time pressure and just talk. Think of it as a “purification day”—a time to clear the emotional clutter.

On this day, you both take turns sharing what's been bothering you. You can calmly explain what hurt, what annoyed you, or what felt off. Your spouse does the same. No interruptions, no defensiveness—just listening and sharing. The goal is to clean up the emotional build-up before it turns toxic.

If once a week feels too often, once every two weeks works too—but don't let too much time pass, or details get fuzzy. And if something urgent comes up, you can always schedule an *extra* purification day.

In short: criticize when it helps, wait when necessary, and make space for reflection. Jumping into criticism too quickly can lead to heated exchanges, raised voices, and hurt feelings. A regular, calm setting for feedback gives you both the chance to express yourselves without turning it into a battle.

How to Respond to Criticism

If your partner brings up a valid point and you recognize your mistake, **own it**. The best response is a sincere apology. Apologizing shows that you care about their feelings and respect their perspective. You're saying, *“You're right. I messed up. Thank you for pointing it out so I can make it right.”*

It also means you acknowledge that they made a fair and thoughtful observation. If your mistake caused them trouble or inconvenience, you can offer to make it up to them. That kind of gesture shows empathy and maturity.

But if you truly believe you didn't do anything wrong, explain your side clearly and calmly. Don't dismiss their feelings or get defensive. Don't just complain about being criticized. And definitely don't accuse them of having hidden motives.

Instead, talk it through. Share your perspective. Ask questions. Try to find common ground.

QUALITY COMMUNICATION

Do sharing, caring, valuing, criticizing, and praising have *quality*? Absolutely. These behaviors between spouses can be done well—or poorly. And when it comes to emotions, quality matters even more, because feelings are fragile. They're full of unknowns and often unpredictable.

Think of care, praise, and similar expressions as food for the soul—if they're low quality, they lose their nourishing power. Trying to show care or offer a compliment can actually backfire if it's done poorly. If your words lack warmth and sincerity, their impact drops immediately. And even when you *are* sincere, the message might not come across the way you intend if you miss some key points.

For instance, if you don't pay attention to tone or emphasis, your words might sound sarcastic or mocking. A simple "bravo" or "well done" can easily be misunderstood without the right delivery.

So when it comes to praising, greeting, thanking, appreciating, criticizing, or sharing with your partner, the *how* is just as important as the *what*. Here are a few basic guidelines to help get it right:

- Turn toward your spouse
- Give them your full attention
- Look at their face
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly and understandably
- Choose the right time to speak
- Use appropriate, thoughtful words
- Pay attention to your tone and emphasis

Your words should be complete and clear. Avoid abbreviations, half-sentences, or mumbled speech. If what you say isn't fully heard or understood, it might do more harm than good.

Be fully present when you speak. Don't let it sound like you're just going through the motions. Your partner shouldn't feel like you're doing it out of obligation or routine. That's why sincerity matters so much. If you genuinely agree with them, say so. Use phrases like "You're right," "I completely agree," or "That makes sense to me" when you truly mean them.

At the same time, don't overdo it. Repeating praise too often, or saying it at the wrong time, can feel fake or even manipulative. Timing and context matter.

It's better to stay silent than to speak half-heartedly. Use a warm, natural tone. Put energy into your voice—it shows that you care and take the conversation seriously. Because you *should* take it seriously. This isn't small talk; this is about emotional

connection.

Whenever possible, talk face-to-face—especially when giving praise or criticism. Of course, it's not always doable in today's busy world, but when you can, choose in-person over text or phone.

And don't forget eye contact. Words without eye contact often lose their meaning. That said, eye contact doesn't mean staring unblinkingly. It's about looking at your partner's face naturally, making eye contact now and then as you speak. Let it flow. There's no need to obsess over it with thoughts like, "Did I look long enough?" or "Should I make eye contact now?" Trying too hard can break the connection you're trying to build.

Just be present, be warm, and be real.

When we're talking to our partner—whether we're praising, criticizing, or just chatting—it's important to be natural. That doesn't mean forcing laughter or tears to show how we feel. But it *does* mean we should be open and genuine. If we feel like crying or laughing, that's fine—as long as it comes naturally and feels appropriate. Our emotions shouldn't overwhelm us or our partner.

The simplest definition of being natural is being yourself. And there's one guaranteed way to do that: if you truly believe in what you're saying, it will come out naturally. For example, don't give praise unless you truly believe your partner deserves it. If it's not sincere, it won't come across well and might even feel fake.

Also, when you're talking with your partner, try to give them your full attention. If you're doing something important and can't focus at the moment, that's understandable—just explain the situation briefly. But if you're busy with something that can wait, your partner might feel ignored or unimportant. They may think, "*You're not paying attention to me. You don't care about me.*" And honestly, at that moment, they're probably right.

Your partner can sense when you're not fully present. If you're distracted or unable to focus, just say something like, "*I'm sorry, I can't concentrate right now because of [reason].*" Being honest helps avoid misunderstandings.

Even a simple "*hello*" matters. Your partner should feel like you're really taking the time to greet them—that you care that they're there. How we communicate with our spouse matters, because our partner is the most important person in our life. Yes, even more important than our children—because a child's well-being depends on the health of their parents' relationship.

Quality Praise, Quality Criticism

Praising and criticizing might be opposites, but they share some basic rules. Whether you're giving a compliment or pointing out a problem, your partner needs to understand what you're saying. Don't use fancy or complicated words just to sound impressive. Keep it clear and simple. Explain what they did well—or what went wrong—and why it matters. If there's time, talk about it a bit more.

Our family, especially our spouse, should always be a top priority. But sometimes we forget this and make excuses like:

- "*I don't need to praise my partner—they already know how I feel.*"

- *“If there’s a problem, I just say it and move on. No need to make a big deal.”*
- *“Why praise small or obvious things?”*
- *“Thinking too much before giving criticism just slows things down.”*

If these sound familiar, it might be time to rethink them. Everyone needs praise and appreciation—it’s one of the most basic emotional needs. And your spouse is your closest source of encouragement. If you want to feel appreciated, start by appreciating them.

Even small criticisms can sting. That’s why we need to be thoughtful and follow a respectful approach. Be kind, specific, and honest. Don’t overdo it. Don’t criticize in front of others—it makes even gentle feedback feel harsh and embarrassing.

Praise and criticism should both be sincere and clear. Say what you mean. Don’t give half-hearted compliments or empty praise that sounds forced or fake. People can tell when your words don’t match your feelings.

The Right Way to Praise

When you praise your spouse, give it your full attention. It’s not just a casual comment—it’s something meaningful for both of you. It boosts their confidence and strengthens your bond.

But don’t throw around praise carelessly. If your spouse knows they didn’t really do anything praiseworthy, empty compliments will feel hollow. They might think you’re just going through the motions or trying to please them artificially.

To avoid this, stay relaxed and sincere. Only praise when you *really* mean it. That way, your words will feel real—and they’ll be received with appreciation.

It’s okay to say things like *“You’re amazing,” “You’re so smart,” “You work so hard,”* if you feel that way. But don’t stop there. Add context. Otherwise, those words might sound nice but fade quickly.

Instead, explain:

- What did they do that you appreciated?
- Why was it good?
- What did it lead to?
- How did it make a difference?

For example, instead of just saying, *“You’re hardworking,”* you might say, *“I saw how much effort you put into organizing the event. It turned out great, and I know it was because of your dedication.”*

Explaining *why* you’re praising someone makes your words more meaningful. It helps both of you understand exactly what was done well or appreciated. When we don’t

give a reason, our words can feel empty—like they're just floating in the air.

No one should be left thinking, *"My spouse said something nice, but I don't even know what I did right."* That can lead to confusion or even suspicion—*"Did they just say that to make me feel better?"* Plus, we might have one reason in mind while they're thinking of something completely different. Taking a moment to explain removes that disconnect.

Example of meaningful praise:

- Come here, I have something to tell you.
- Go ahead, I'm listening.
- No, come sit down first.
- Must be something serious.
- It is. Really important.
- Okay, okay, I'm here. What's up?
- I really liked how you talked to Barbara today.
- Oh?
- You chose your words so carefully. I admire that. You didn't offend her, you didn't take it too lightly—you handled it perfectly.
- Hmm.
- Now it's up to her. We've done our part.
- I actually worried I was being too tough on her.
- Not at all. It was the perfect balance. You got the message across, and she still left on good terms. You did great!
- Thanks. I appreciate that. I'm glad you saw it that way.

The Right Way to Criticize

The same goes for criticism. Don't just say, *"You did this wrong."* Explain:

- What behavior or action you're addressing.
- Why it wasn't okay or didn't work.
- What negative result it caused.
- How it led to that result.

If you skip these steps, your partner might not understand what the real issue is. They may misinterpret your message, draw wrong conclusions, or just feel hurt. But if you're clear and kind, criticism can actually help you grow closer—as long as it's delivered with respect and love.

Be yourself. Be honest. Be present. Speak with care. Praise when it's deserved, and criticize with kindness and clarity. Your relationship will be stronger for it.

In short:

- Praise and criticism are both essential.
- Give clear reasons.
- Choose the right time.

- Be sincere.
- Speak from your experience whenever possible.
- And above all—do it with care.

EPILOGUE

Woodworms live in things like parquet floors, doors, windows, furniture—basically anything made of wood. The female woodworm beetle lays her eggs in tiny cracks at the edges or ends of the wood. After a few weeks, the eggs hatch into larvae. These larvae, which we commonly call woodworms, live inside the wood for anywhere from two to five years.

As soon as it hatches, the tiny larva—just about two millimeters long—starts eating. Slowly but steadily, it bores its way through the wood, creating a thin tunnel. And it's not alone. Over the years, other larvae nearby do the same, forming a network of tunnels that gradually weaken the structure of the wood. Eventually, it becomes so fragile that it can fall apart with just a small impact.

When the larva is ready, it transforms into a pupa. It carves out a little chamber near the surface of the wood and stays there until it becomes an adult beetle. Then, it chews through the last thin layer between itself and the outside world. That's how those tiny holes you see in old wood are made.

The adult beetle, now free, finds more wood, lays more eggs, and the cycle begins again.

The thing is—we usually only notice the woodworm's presence at the very end, when the damage is already done. Quietly, slowly, and without us noticing, it has hollowed out the wood from the inside.

TfG is the woodworm of relationships.

TfG eats away at the bond between two people—quietly and invisibly—until one day, living together becomes almost impossible. Things like yelling, constant criticism, giving each other the silent treatment, holding grudges, and endless arguments—often labeled as "incompatibility"—are actually signs of something deeper: TfG.

TfG—taking for granted happens after years of living together. We stop noticing the person beside us. We get used to their voice, their appearance, their efforts, their presence. What once felt special becomes routine. Eventually, it can feel like they don't matter anymore—as if it makes no difference whether they're there or not.

TfG is sneaky. It's not loud or dramatic. It's slow and subtle, like a rasp, wearing away at the feelings we once had. And by the time we realize it, the damage may already be deep.

After years of sharing a life, we start thinking:

"I'm already with my spouse. I can talk to them whenever I want. They're always here. I don't need to try—they're just there."

That's the trap. Usually, both partners fall into it. Both start taking each other for granted. And before they know it, they're both feeling unappreciated, unnoticed, and unloved.

But the good news? TfG is not irreversible. You *can* stop it—or at least lessen its impact. It just takes a conscious effort to live differently. Here's how:

A New Way of Living:

- Share more. Talk to your partner more often.
- Value and respect them.
- Remember to greet and thank them.
- Praise them when they deserve it.
- Criticize in the right way, when necessary.

Let your spouse know when you agree with them or when they do something right. Don't miss the chance to say it. Praise them when they deserve it—every time they deserve it.

Don't get stuck thinking praise is unnecessary or awkward. Everyone needs appreciation. Praise might not come naturally, but it's powerful. Every sincere compliment you give adds a drop of love to your relationship. It keeps the connection alive.

If you're just starting life together, make praise a habit from day one. It's one of the best defenses against TfG. And if you're already struggling with it, start being more generous with praise now. Catch every chance to appreciate your partner.

This isn't about flattery or sugar-coating. It's about recognizing genuine effort and expressing it. Praise the behavior, not just the person. And only when it's deserved—but *always* when it's deserved. And every time when they deserve it.

We all need to feel seen, valued, and important. But these needs can't be fulfilled by shopping or ordering online. You can't buy love, care, or attention in a store. You *can* only get them—from the people around you, especially from your partner.

Here's a little secret: praising your spouse is the easiest way to *receive* praise. It really works. When you make your partner feel good, they'll want to return the favor. It might take a few days or weeks, but it will happen. That's human nature—we respond to kindness with kindness.

Of course, living together isn't always smooth. Disagreements and mistakes happen. Criticism is part of any close relationship—but it needs to be done right, especially with a spouse.

How to Criticize the Right Way:

- Do it privately. Never in front of others.
- Choose the right moment. Both of you should feel calm.
- Use "I" statements. Talk about how *you* feel, not what *they* did wrong.
- Focus on what you want. Instead of saying what you don't want them to do, say what you'd *like* them to do.
- Speak calmly. Never raise your voice.

- Avoid blaming. Don't complain or bring up the past.
- Be specific. Say how their behavior affects you and why it bothers you.
- Avoid generalizations. If you catch yourself thinking "You always..." stop and rephrase it more positively.

Good communication is key to avoiding TfG. When you're sharing, praising, or even criticizing, how you say things matters just as much as what you say.

Here's what good communication looks like:

- Face your partner
- Give them your full attention
- Look at their face
- Make eye contact
- Speak clearly and understandably
- Choose your words carefully
- Pay attention to your tone and emphasis

TfG is avoidable. And if it's already present, its effects can be healed. But only if you act before it's too late.

BIOGRAPHY

Abidin Sönmez was born in Hisarcık, Türkiye, and grew up in Antakya. He's married and has a daughter.

He completed his secondary education at Antakya Ata College and Clatskanie High School in the U.S., both on scholarships. He started studying electrical engineering at Middle East Technical University but later changed paths and earned a medical degree from Aegean University.

After fulfilling his compulsory state service in Erzurum and completing military service in Izmir, Sönmez moved into the private sector. Over the years, he worked in various fields including pharmaceuticals, training, translation, and consulting.

For nearly 20 years, he worked for the world's largest company in its field, holding roles such as division manager (in Istanbul, Cairo, and Dubai), international product manager (Paris), general manager for Türkiye (Istanbul), and vice president at the regional office in Paris.

He has delivered training programs on topics like human relations, communication, quality, leadership, management, time management, and mind mapping—often invited to speak at conferences and seminars.

While working in the pharmaceutical industry, he also studied economics through an open education system. In 2017, he completed a family counseling program at Muğla University and became a certified family counselor. The following year, he founded the Marmaris Family Counseling Center.

Sönmez has translated many books on topics such as human relations, quality, leadership, management, personal performance, electronics, microprocessors, and medicine. His articles have been featured in newspapers, magazines, and online platforms.

He is the author of the following books:

- *Gelişmiş Ülke Adamı* (Memoirs/Stories, 2008)
- *Eleştirme Sanatı* (How to criticize effectively; Interpersonal Relations, 2015)
- *Gezegende Gezerken* (Poetry, 2020 – awarded the Golden Pen in 2022)
- *Kanıksama* (Interpersonal Relations, 2022)

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BACK COVER

You can't love just because you want to. And you can't keep loving your spouse just for their sake. Love needs reason—it requires something to build on. It needs moments and actions that create and nurture it. You both have to keep producing those little “love droplets” for each other. You need reasons to love, and shared experiences that keep the spark alive.

It's hard to make someone love you just by telling them what's in your heart. That might have worked in the beginning—back when you first met, when you opened up freely, sharing your thoughts and feelings. You talked about who you are, all your good qualities: how kind, romantic, sensitive, and caring you were.

But that was then. Things are different now. Time has passed, and your spouse knows you on a much deeper level. Words alone don't cut it anymore. What you feel has to come to life—it has to show up in your actions. Real love is in what you do. Your behavior should make them feel warm inside. Their eyes should light up when they see you. That's how love lasts.