

Getting the Love You Want



Call today about workshops and other help for
your relationship

Imago Center for Relationships
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SEASON'S GREETINGS YEAR 'ROUND

By Betsy Bergquist, Imago Therapist

Gifts, cards, appreciations, caring gestures and behaviors, and surprises are the stuff of the holiday spirit, especially for those who are married or in committed relationships. But a year-round deep and loving connection of course requires more than seasonal recognition.

John Gottman PhD, the well known marriage and couples researcher and author, regularly makes note in his lectures and writing of what he has discovered through interviews with thousands of couples: namely, that there are very specific predictors of successful marriages.

One of these predictors is the ratio of positive to negative interactions in everyday communication between partners. He has concluded that there needs to be at least a 5:1 positive to negative ratio for a marriage to remain solid.

In other words, what a successful marriage needs in order to stay vibrant is year-round attention to appreciations, words of encouragement and understanding, pleasant surprises, noticing expressions of spontaneous affection, and frequent expressions such as touching, smiles, unexpected favors, thank yous and even nods and uh-huhs.

Conversely, even small doses of criticism, blaming, defensiveness, discourteous interruptions and subtle non-verbal expressions like frowns or scowls can quickly serve to contaminate and unravel the pleasure, safety, and passion of even the healthiest relationship.

So we suggest as a holiday gift for your partner (and yourself!) a gift that keeps on giving all year long: that you be always on the alert for the positives in your partner - physical characteristics, personality traits, abilities, behaviors, anything and everything - and then tell your partner what you notice, no matter how much of a stretch this may seem at times! Remember, LOVE is an action word. The feeling it creates is connection.

We recommend you do this at least five times a day for starters if this is new territory for you. If you get good at it and then make it more and more a habit, which is of course the goal, you can probably do it dozens or more times daily without it ever seeming contrived or artificial!

We know of nothing that can do more to enrich an already good relationship, give new vitality to one that is getting stale, or open the door of possibility to one that is in crisis.

And remember: these daily gifts are just that - gifts. They do not entail any requirement that they be reciprocated. If you have that expectation, please let it go. As noted above, they are after all gifts to yourself as well - in your own sense of increased connection and awareness as well as safety and pleasure you can create in

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your relationship.

Season's Greetings All Year Long!