

“Caring Days” – When You Decide You Will Care

Most of us forget how to be affectionate once we have been married a bit. Work, traffic, raising kids, conflicting over money and sex, and lots of other real circumstances make us forgetful of how to care. I ask couples, “When was the last time you felt romanced?” and often they follow with an awkward silence or a bit of a giggle.

When you decide you will care, you will be creating “caring days,” days that express your affection and care. Good marriages do this all the time and marriages that don’t work well, don’t use the skills much.

Carole and I have had great fun over the years teaching “Caring Days” to leadership couples across Canada. We have discovered that couples are not so different from each other and that men are not so different from women as far as their hopes for care and affirmation.

In the developing the skills of caring, each spouse is asked to answer the following essential question:

1. "Exactly¹ what would you² like³ your partner to do⁴ as a means of showing that he or she cares⁵ for you⁶?"
 - It is unfair to answer, “He/she does everything perfect now. I’m always happy.” It is also cheating to answer, “I don’t know! Ask her/him first.”
1. The caring requests must be **positive** -- a blessing. A positive request aims for an increase in constructive behaviours, not a decrease in unwanted responses.
2. The requests must be **specific** — a do-able thing. A specific request is one that can very easily be understood.
3. They must be "**small**" behaviours that can be carried out at least once daily -- practical, measurable and probably less than \$5 (if there is a cost involved). Small and potentially high-rate responses are what are asked for. Not big and huge but do-able things. These behaviours encourage a couple to believe in their marriage.
4. They must not have been the subject of a recent sharp **conflict**.

This is some of what we have learned in doing our marriage seminars. These are written responses from men and women who are asking their partner to care more than “care less.”

What Women Have Requested

- Give me a “level 1” kiss before we get out of bed in the morning (level 3 is life-saving!).
- Bring me pussy willows or daffodils some times for no reason.

¹“Exactly” means exactly, precisely, measurably, realistically. Global “candy-floss” generality is not what is asked for.

²“You” means “you” and not women or men, or your friends, or what you think others expect!

³“Like” does not mean that it has to be perfect. Just your request for what pleases you. Simple is best.

⁴The caring activity needs to be a behavior and not an intent or an attitude.

⁵“Cares” means “loves” or “likes.” It connotes simple human affection.

⁶Not your in-laws, your siblings, your kids, the girl at the IGA, etc. It relates to you.

- Take full responsibility for a date – organize the baby sitter, the dinner reservations, the works – and then surprise me with it!
- Touch me in public. Hold my hand or put your arm around my neck.
- Share the TV remote control!
- Phone me from Starbucks and ask what I might like.
- Tell me that you love me with a smile on your face and a hug in your heart.

What Men Have Requested

- Wash my back with that ‘gravely cloth’ thing.
- Appreciate my affectionate advances. Smile and moan a bit.
- Invite me to tell you about the details of my work. It will only take 5 minutes or so.
- Massage my shoulders and back like you did when we were dating.
- Touch me while I drive. Sometimes put your head on my shoulder.
- Tell me that you want me sexually. Don’t hint -- just say it.
- Pray for me and the problems I talk to you about.

Do you note that there is a lot more physical requests for men? Many husbands want touch in almost any way they can get it. It does not mean, of course, that women don’t want caring touch as well. But it does seem that women have more channels or languages of affection.

Caring Days Chart – Being a Blessing

Now this section is simpler than it seems. What I am asking each of you to do is to record with a check mark, or a smiley face, or the date when you have received a blessing or caring act from your partner.

The “Caring Request” column is a word or two about what you have asked for (e.g., “backrub in bed”, or “ask about my day”, or “pick me up a coffee”). When this gift is given, the recipient indicates it has been received. I have given space for 12 requests.

It is interesting that when one spouse requests a caring behaviour that the partner also wants the same behaviour and both will start giving these behaviours to each other.

The chart should be placed somewhere it is easily available to the couple but perhaps not to your teenaged kids! Check the chart often to mark the requests that you have received.

We recommend 3-5+ caring behaviours each day for 30 Caring Days. It doesn’t take long and it costs less. What it involves is a commitment to being well-wed. Some will object to the mechanical or intentional nature of this because it is not natural. Well that is interesting – every new behaviour is not natural until you have done it 30 times are so.

Have fun and see you soon in my office.

Man Receipts**Caring Requests****Woman Receipts**

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				2.				
				3.				
				4.				
				5.				
				6.				
				7.				
				8.				
				9.				
				10.				
				11.				
				12.				

Make sure that you record your “receipts” on your chart frequently, at least daily. It is fun to watch when your spouse notices that you have made an investment in the marriage and in you.