

Caring Days (Building “Positive Sentiment Override”)

“Don't tell me you will love me forever. Tell me that you will love me Thursday afternoon at four o'clock.” (W. H. Auden quoted in "The Five Things We Cannot Change" by David Richo)

1. In developing the skills of caring days or blessing, each spouse is asked to answer the following essential question:

- “Exactly¹ what would you² like³ your mate to do⁴ as a means of showing that he or she cares⁵ for you⁶?”

Answers should be written in the columns of the chart. To be entered on the list, the behaviours should meet the following criteria:

- 1.1. They must be **positive** -- a blessing. A positive request aims for an increase in constructive behaviours, not a decrease in unwanted responses.
 - “Let’s take 10 minutes to do a ‘couple dialogue’ so we can ask how we spent our days,” is a positive request that could be used in place of the negative request, “I just wish you wouldn’t ignore me so much.”
- 1.2. They must be **specific** -- a do-able thing. A specific request is one that can very easily be understood.
 - “I’d like some time with my friends doing athletic things – I am thinking of joining a running club” is a specific request that might replace the vague and negative “I never get any time with my friends now that we are married.”
- 1.3. They must be **measurable** 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.
 - “I really like it when you take the kids bike riding or a picnic lunch on some Saturdays so that I can have some quiet time at home” is a much more manageable request than “I really wish that you would just look after the kids some time.”
- 1.4. They must not have been the subject of a recent or a sharp **argument**.
 - Not “all I am asking for is that you don’t humiliate me in front of my father.” Better to leave this stuff for a later stage and keep your focus on blessing rather than problem solving. Problem solving comes later.

2. Caring Days Chart (an example)

Wife Wishes	Both Wish	Husband Wishes

- 2.1. The point is to keep a complete record, so that both husband and wife can review what has occurred over a week or so in an objective, unambiguous fashion.

¹“Exactly” means exactly, precisely, measurably, realistically. Global “candy-floss” generalities 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 Safeway, etc. It relates to you.

- 2.2. The couple should list 15 - 20 caring behaviours that they would like to receive from his or her caring spouse. Each person then agrees to read the list every day and pick out 4 or 5 caring behaviours so as to bless his spouse each day. Couples can add to the "agreement" list as time goes on. In fact, the list can get pretty long!
- 2.3. This is important. To complete the communication, the receiver of the blessing needs to "tell" the giver that the gift has been received. This can be done by a check mark on the chart, a hug in the kitchen, a thank you over dinner – some kind of acknowledgement that the receiver is thankful.
- 2.4. The point of this activity is to learn and practice pleasing each other. Couples fall out of this delight. It is all too easy to misuse this technique as "another thing I've gotta do." The better way of approaching this activity is "returning to your first love and doing the things you did at first." Enjoy.

3. What Women Really Want (Some examples to get you started)

- 3.1. Give me a "level 1" kiss before we get out of bed in the morning (level 3 is life-saving!).
- 3.2. Bring me pussy willows or daffodils some times for no reason.
- 3.3. Write me a love note and mail it to me at work.
- 3.4. Cook a dinner for me, including planning and buying the groceries while I read my book.
- 3.5. Touch me in public. Hold my hand or put your arm around my neck.

4. What Men Really Want (Some examples to get you started)

- 4.1. Listen to me without interruption and take my side without telling me what the other person meant.
- 4.2. Wash my back with that 'gravely cloth' thing.
- 4.3. Smile and say you're glad to see me when you wake up in the morning.
- 4.4. Call me at work without some need-oriented agenda. I just like to hear your voice.
- 4.5. Appreciate my affectionate advances. Smile and moan a bit.

5. Primary Love Language

It is pretty easy to discover one's primary love language by expressing how it is you wish to be loved. Try to figure out yours.

- 5.1. **Physical touch** – any kind of warm and physical expression of affection.
- 5.2. **Acts of service** – help or assistance in a task.
- 5.3. **Gifts** – not limited to birthdays or anniversaries but occasional and thoughtful.
- 5.4. **Words of affirmation** – being on one's side and seeing the best.
- 5.5. **Quality time** – deeper friendship communication one-on-one.

33 More Ways to Love Your Lover

1. At the movies, share the armrest.
2. Save the last cookie or last piece of cake for your spouse.
3. **Don't hog all the Jeopardy questions on TV.**
4. Squeeze toothpaste on your partner's toothbrush when you're doing your own.
5. **Get your spouse's pajamas out and lay them on the bed.**
6. Leave a favorite snack on the seat of your spouse's car.
7. Compliment your mate in front of friends or family.
8. **Light a candle in the bedroom.**
9. Put down everything to greet your spouse at the end of the day.
10. Fill the gas tank in your mate's car—as a surprise.
11. **Light candles with dinner.**
12. Make a snack for both of you before bedtime.
13. **Turn your socks right-side out before throwing them in the hamper.**
14. Be adventurous—meet for lunch at an ethnic restaurant you've never tried.
15. Choose a novel then read it out loud to each other in the evenings.
16. **Rent a movie you watched during your courtship days.**
17. Buy an "I Love You" card and mail it to your spouse at work.
18. Make plans to re-create your first date.
19. **When the dryer buzzes, instead of looking at your mate, volunteer to fold the clothes.**
20. When one of you is indoors and the other outside, knock on the window and blow a kiss.
21. Don't put away stuff your spouse might want left out.
22. **When you're finished driving, put the seat back to your mate's preferred position.**
23. **Hold hands instead of holding the remote control.**
24. On cold mornings, go ahead and bring in the newspaper.
25. **Kiss at stoplights.**
26. Hide love notes around the house where your spouse will find them.
27. When you disagree, always acknowledge the possibility that you could be wrong.
28. **When stopping for gas while traveling, buy a treat for your partner without buying anything for yourself.**
29. Next time you shop for clothes, let your spouse vote on an outfit.
30. **Get involved in a new ministry together.**
31. Shower together and wash your spouse's back.
32. When your mate lies down on the couch, get him or her a pillow.
33. **Get to know your in-laws.**

(The above ideas have been generated from various marriage enrichment weekends with the Ducklows. You are welcome to steal from this list!)