

Foundations

A Newsletter for Married Couples

Late Summer

The Key to Affection

From our earliest life we have needed and looked for affection. We are “hardwired to connect,” researchers tell us. Marriage is where we invest our desire to connect in the one other person we believe will fill that need the best. Our response is most clearly seen in our affection for one another.

The Families We Came From

Each of us reveals the kind of upbringing we had in the way we express affection. If we have received a lot of physical affection we tend to offer that to those we love. If we were from a family where praise was the way affection was shown, we are likely

to lavish praise on our loved one. If humor was the language of affection, then we use that means to express it.

Getting styles to match

Because these messages could have meant different things in your spouse's family, it's good to explore your experiences growing up. If touch meant hurting in your spouse's family, you might find them guarded when you try to reach out. Or if in your family a compliment was a sign that you were about to be asked for something, your spouse might find you a

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A Kindly Gesture

What's your favorite gesture of affection? There's research that tells us that a 20 second hug can do wonders for our blood pressure. A ten second kiss is supposed to up the



endorphins. But if you're not a hugger, or you prefer a peck on the cheek unless you have time for a longer encounter, then guess what? YOU get to choose.

The subtle Approach

Maybe you prefer a more subtle kind of move – like a wink when others are busy talking, or a hand on your back as you pass each other. You might be the kind of person who likes pet names. Sweetie, honey, buddy, or an endearment you two have made up for yourselves.

Thanks Anyway...

Holding hands is something we do often, but I don't like to have my husband take my arm – that speaks of a frail old lady needing help crossing the street. It really

helps if you have something you don't enjoy, that you let your partner know. You don't want to be out on a fun night together and then have him take your arm and then you start crying, or something like that!

Appreciations

But beyond physical demonstrations of affection, there are also verbal ones. And these are words of appreciation that you bestow on your spouse, hopefully daily. Below is a list of appreciations. Each of you are invited to choose three from the list that you would like to share with your spouse. If desired, they can be accompanied by a hug or a kiss.

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The Key to Affection (continued from page 1)



little prickly when they try to praise you. By now you have probably come across some of these differences but you might not even be aware why these things cause you a problem unless you stop to think about your upbringing!

“Happy Wife, Happy Life”

This expression is making the rounds these days, and there’s a lot to recommend it. Letting your spouse know that they are appreciated is a very worthwhile investment. Someone who

feels loved (or as Gary Chapman, author of *The Five Love Languages* says, someone whose love tank is full) is much more likely to want to please you.

Changing with the Times

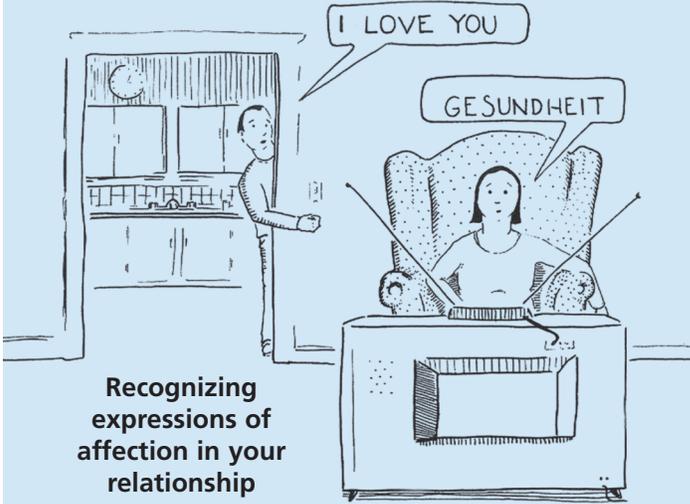
The ways you show affection will probably change over the years. Dinners out might be affordable now, but not when you’re raising a family. Or maybe you’re living on spaghetti now and later you’ll have money to splurge on each other! The other scarcity is time. You may have time now to indulge your signs of affection. Or this may be a hectic time in your life and you will have more time later. The important thing is that you show affection whether you have a lot of money or a little, a lot of time or a little.

It all turns on affection

That’s the name of an essay by Wendell Berry in which he talks about people who have an affection for the place they come from. He calls them “stickers.” Let the affection you have for each other turn you into “stickers” too! ■



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Prepare and prevent, don't repair and repent
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We use Zoom to provide six interactive sessions of marriage preparation. Contact us at foundationseditor@gmail.com for more details



Recognizing expressions of affection in your relationship
Step 1 - *Listen!*

Exercise

Write A-agree, D-disagree or U-uncertain next each of the statements below.

I know/understand:

Our need for affection is not always the same.

Yes No Uncertain

Your family was not very affectionate.

Children can sometimes make it difficult to express affection between us.

Our pets seem more excited to see me when I come home than my spouse.

I believe:

Affection is important in our marriage.

Yes No Uncertain

We are less affectionate than we were before we married.

You sometimes forget to show me affection.

We should talk about ways we might keep affection strong in our marriage.

I will:

Make an effort to be aware of times my you need affirmation and affection.

Yes No Uncertain

Ask for what I need.

Respond positively to signs of affection from you.

Make sure we hug or kiss at least once a day.

For most couples affection is the lifeblood of their relationship. It provides a tangible sign of the love that exists in the marriage and the means to grow in that love.



A Kindly Gesture (continued from page 1)

- Thank you for telling me what you need.
- Thanks for giving me some time by myself.
- Thank you for taking care of me when I was sick.
- Thank you for telling me how you feel.
- I appreciate what a loyal partner you are.
- Thanks for making coffee for me.
- Thanks for paying the bills.
- Thanks for making breakfast for the kids
- Thanks for respecting my space when I work from home.
- Thanks for taking care of the inspection/registration of the car(s)
- Thanks for letting me enjoy hobbies that you don't enjoy.
- Thanks for spending time with me.
- Thank you for caring about what I need.
- Thanks for bringing me flowers.
- Thanks for putting on music that I love.
- Thank you for listening to me.
- Thank you for being there when I felt sad.
- Thank you for being on my side.

“Affection is responsible for nine-tenths of whatever solid and durable happiness there is in our lives.” —CS Lewis

We are a witness. Our public proclamation by word and action of our love for one another through our affectionate words, glances and actions, gives witness to the possibility of enduring love. Our friends, parents, siblings, children see us and know what love “looks” like. Others may admire our love for one another, others may imitate us and still others may be given hope that they might rediscover the love and affection they once had.

Book Review

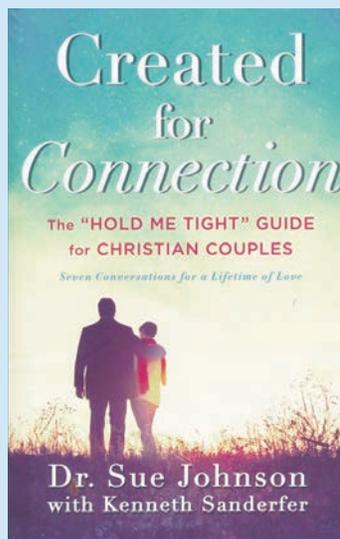
Created for Connection

by Dr. Sue Johnson, with Kenneth Sanderfer

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Attachment theory is very closely related to affection. People who have not experienced secure attachment in their childhood often have a hard time expressing affection. They also may not understand the important role that affection plays in a loving relationship.

Sue Johnson is a researcher and therapist who originated Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT). Her work is based on solid research, both of the use of the theory in clinical situations, and more recently on brain research. Her first book, *Hold Me Tight*, led couples through seven conversations to help deepen their relationship and strengthen their marital bond. In *Created for Connection*, she joined with Kenneth Sanderfer, therapist and devoted Christian, to provide the seven conversations but with a deeper message. As one reviewer put it,



“Sue Johnson and Kenny Sanderfer revised *Hold Me Tight* to include reflections on the harmony between the science of love and the teachings of love found in the Christian scriptures.”

Many who have read both books found it easier to use this version. It is both readable and quite easy to relate to. The fit between the original material and the scriptural references seem natural – not just superimposed to make more religious couples happy.

If you struggle for emotional connection in your marriage, or if you even just want to find a way to connect more deeply, this book is a great resource. The authors tell us, “This longing for emotional connection with those

nearest to us is the emotional priority, overshadowing even the drive for food or sex. The drama of love is all about this hunger for safe emotional connection...Loving connection is the only safety nature ever offers us.” ■

Spirituality

In the book, *A Place on Earth*, Wendell Berry reports a conversation between Mat and Margaret, husband and wife whose son has died in World War II. This loss has been hard on their marriage, with Mat pulling away into his grief. They are trying to repair their relationship. Here's how their conversation goes:

Mat," she says, "we belong to each other. After all these years. Doesn't that mean something?"

It is a long time before he answers. The night has nearly come...

"I don't know what it means," he says finally. "I know what it's worth."

Worth

There's a deep truth in that conversation that speaks to all marriages. It's the importance of letting go of what things mean in the interest of keeping in mind what they are *worth*. If we place a value on our relationship, a value beyond what is right in front of our faces, which reaches back into the years we have spent together and the effort we have put into making each other happy, we can rejoice in the richness we have created.

Pearl of Great Price

Jesus told a parable about keeping one's eye on the worth of something.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

What we create in a marriage is that pearl of great price. It is divine love come down to earth and made evident in our love for one another. And our affection for each other keeps the polish on the love, keeps it fresh for us and unclouded by the demands of life and the frustrations of our imperfections.

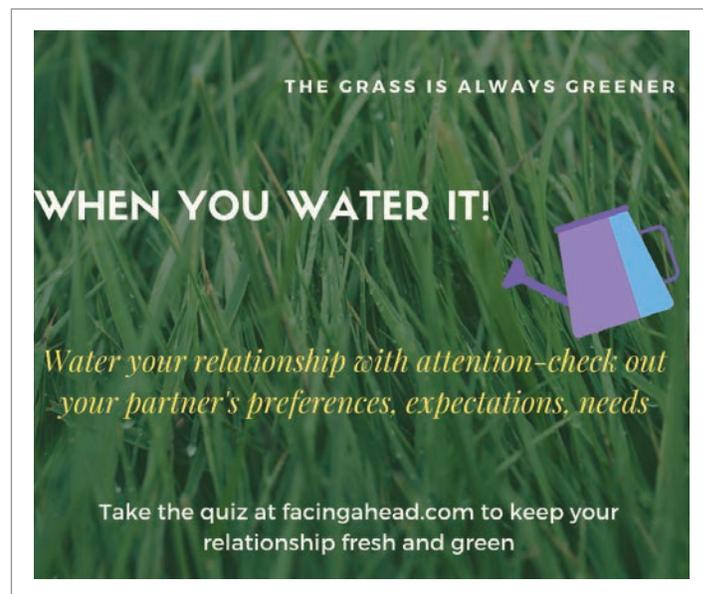
Affection and Faith

Do we see affection reflected in the lives of the saints? Indeed, even those saints who were not married often had friends that

they were fond of and with whom they shared deeply. St. Francis and St. Clare, St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier – there are many instances of affection in the lives of the people we revere and consider especially holy. Sometimes it seems like caring about the faith is a solitary pursuit. Not so. The love God has for us is reflected in the human love we share with others around us, and our affection for our spouse, siblings, parents or others in our lives means that much more of God's life that is part of our own.

For What It's Worth

"For what it's worth" is a saying that usually refers to a piece of advice given, and indicates that the speaker is trying not to put a value on what they're saying. Instead, suppose we think of nurturing your marriage, embracing your spouse for what it's *worth*. Its worth is the worth of the kingdom of heaven, the love of God recreated in your love for each other. ■



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Contact us at PO Box 1632, Portland, ME 04104-1632, or by email at:

foundationseditor@gmail.com

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