

THE B-E-S-T PLAN FOR NURTURING YOUR SPOUSE

- Blessing
- Edifying
- Sharing
- Touching

BLESSING

Blessing is a New Testament word *eulogia*, taken from two Greek words, *eu* which means “well” and *logos* which means “word.” This will remind you of the first way to bless your partner: Speak well of him or her and always answer with good words even though you feel you have just been scolded, scorned, ignored, or insulted. i.e. Prov. 15:1, 1 Peter 3:8-12

The second way to bless your partner is by doing kind things for him or her—not as a duty but as a gift of blessing. Think about what your partner really likes. You know best how to bless your partner with kindness in action.

The third way to bless is by showing thankfulness and appreciation. Whatever you appreciate in your partner, make it known verbally. Thank your partner with the same courtesy you would show to an outsider—plus a lot more warmth!

The fourth way to bless is by calling God’s favor down in prayer for your partner’s highest good and best welfare. Some people spend time praying for missions and ministries but forget that no one needs or deserves their prayers more than their own marriage partner.

TWELVE WAYS TO NURTURE YOUR PARTNER BY BLESSING

1. Say something good about your partner to another person
2. Answer with positive, loving words, no matter what.
3. Do something kind for your mate.
4. Surprise him or her with a gift or thoughtful act.
5. Do the things you know are important to your loved one.
6. Say “thank you” often and mean it. Say “I love you.”
7. Be consistently courteous.
8. Thank God for your mate. Be specific.
9. Pray for his or her blessing.
10. Choose to forgive if hurt or offended.
11. Avoid proud behavior and never try to get even.
12. Study more ways to bless your partner.

EDIFYING

This biblical term, often used in the New Testament, refers to the building up of individuals. When you edify your partner, you build her up in every aspect of her personality. You cheer him on in every area of life...To edify is to personally encourage. Because edifying builds up and never tears down, you give your partner freedom to grow and develop as a person without fear of failure or hurtful criticism.

Edifying begins in the life of the mind, where Philippians 4:8 is applied. Practice thinking about things you find attractive in your mate—every positive quality your partner possesses. Ask yourself this before you speak: Will these words build up or tear down? And ask yourself: What can I say to my partner right now that will edify and build up, encourage, strengthen, and bring peace?

When you nurture, you provide a place of emotional safety. The husband and wife who are afraid of hurt, rebuff, criticism, and misunderstanding from the other will find it difficult to touch and share freely. So it's important to learn how to establish trust. Let this be your guide:

- 1) Love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8
- 2) Love builds up. 1 Corinthians 8:1

TWELVE WAYS TO NURTURE YOUR PARTNER BY EDIFYING

1. Decide not to criticize your partner again. Back up your decision by action until it becomes a habit.
2. Discern where your partner can use extra encouragement and think of ways to build him or her up.
3. Spend some time thinking about every positive quality you admire in your mate.
4. Edify your partner with words of praise and appreciation. Be genuine, specific, generous.
5. Recognize his or her talents, abilities, and accomplishments.
6. Communicate your respect for the work he or she does.
7. Keep your attention focused on your partner rather than expressing admiration for others of the opposite sex.
8. Seek your partner's opinions and show that you value his or her judgment.
9. Demonstrate your confidence in him or her.
10. Respond to your mate with eye contact, smiles, and body language (turning toward him or her).
11. Treat your partner as a VIP in your home and in the presence of others.
12. Provide a peaceful, relaxed atmosphere of acceptance and unconditional love.

SHARING

The more ways you can find to be in relationship with each other, the less lonely you are, and the stronger your love will become. People are drawn into loving closeness because of what they share. In fact, sharing has been called the central secret of enduring love.

Sharing should touch all areas of life—your time, activities, pleasures, interests and concerns, ideas and innermost thoughts, family objectives and goals, and, most important, your spiritual values and the way you express them.

This might be a good time for you to think creatively about how to give one another the gift of sharing. Consider your life in these five areas, incorporating your ideas and conclusions into your Master Plan:

- ☐ Common Ground. Think of the things you share right now. How can you enjoy it more?
- ☐ Separate Ground. Areas of work and responsibility may be separate, but how can you bridge the gaps to share your different worlds?
- ☐ New Ground for One. What interests can you learn to enjoy because your partner enjoys them? How can you develop new enthusiasms to match your partner's?
- ☐ New Ground for Both. Can you think of some absorbing new interests to develop together?
- ☐ Higher Ground. Are you sharing your spiritual life through prayer, Bible reading, church participation, and special ministries? Is it satisfying to both?

TWELVE WAYS TO NURTURE YOUR PARTNER BY SHARING

1. Enjoy some quality time together every day.
2. Do a special project together.
3. Develop some new interest in common.
4. Learn more about one another's work. Share the challenges and the rewards.
5. Enjoy a special date together once a week. Plan for it.
6. Listen to him or her attentively without interrupting.
7. Be understanding. Share your feelings. Say "I care, I love you."
8. Make plans, set goals together.
9. Do housework or yard work together and make it fun.
10. Study communication skills together and practice them.
11. Treat your partner the way you would treat your best friend. (Your partner *should* be your best friend.)
12. Pray together, grow in faith, share a ministry together.

TOUCHING

Touching, of course represents the physical care and attention we must give to one another, but it means much more than that. Touching kindles a flame which every marriage needs. In fact, physical contact, apart from sex, is absolutely essential in keeping the fires of romantic love lit between husband and wife.

Anyone can learn to touch by doing it. People may claim that they don't enjoy it (usually because their family never learned to touch), but we have found in our work with couples that when people actually try it, they like it!

In marriage touching is the least threatening way to bridge the distance created by other problems. In times of strong emotion, people respond best to physical contact rather than talking... Couples who have learned how to give and receive affectionate touching—a pat on the shoulder, a squeeze of the hand, a caress of the cheek, a strength-imparting hug, physical closeness, whether watching TV or listening to a sermon—say that this brings them feelings of comfort, optimism, support, and togetherness that are truly wonderful.

TWELVE WAYS TO NURTURE YOUR PARTNER BY TOUCHING

1. Hug often for no particular reason
2. Always greet or leave with a kiss. Kiss when there's no occasion.
3. Sit close to each other, whether in church or at home watching TV.
4. Go to bed at the same time and cuddle before you go to sleep. Allow a few minutes in the morning to hold each other before you get up.
5. Show as much concern for your partner's body as you do for your own.
6. Practice expressing your love through the medium of tender touch. Find out what feels good to your partner.
7. Give each other back rubs, massages. Use a pleasing lotion or scented oil. Enjoy!
8. Take your shower or bath together. Be lighthearted and sensuous.
9. Develop positive feelings toward your own body. (See Ps. 139:13,14)
10. Stay in physical contact while going to sleep.
11. Hold hands when you take a walk. Enjoy the thrill of holding hands anytime.
12. Think of ways to say *I love you* by tender touch.

These points are directly quoted from the book "Secret Choices: Personal Decisions That Affect Your Marriage" by Ed Wheat, M.D. & Gloria Okes Perkins, Zondervan, 1989, pages 67-78.