

Love Prescription by Gottman

It's never too late to improve your relationship. But there's no time like the present . . . so let's get started.

Key idea 1

Look for small moments to connect.

Most couples say they do not have opportunities to connect. They just didn't have the time too. That's how many couples feel. But actually, it's not true. There are countless opportunities for meaningful connection throughout the day. We just have to spot them.

The Gottman's call these opportunities "**bids for connection.**" A bid for connection might be something really subtle. For example, when your partner sighs. Maybe that's an invitation to ask, What's wrong? Of course, it's difficult to respond in the right way every single time. But you should try to **turn toward your partner's bids for connection as much as possible.**

Key idea 2

Ask the big questions.

Another way to connect to your partner is by asking questions. Think back for a moment and try to remember what it was like when the two of you first started dating. You were probably fascinated by each other, asking a million questions. It's thrilling getting to know the person you could potentially spend the rest of your life with.

But at some point down the road, the questions tend to dry up. Your partner is no longer quite so fascinating, because, well . . . you know them! According to the Gottmans', curiosity

is essential in long-term relationships. **Keep asking each other questions.**

So what kinds of questions are we talking about? Not, Did you remember to call the plumber? That's unlikely to deepen your connection with your partner.

Instead, try asking big, open-ended questions.

It can be something serious, like, What's one of your life dreams at the moment? Or it can be fun, perhaps, If you could design our perfect house, what would it be like?

Another way to make it less awkward is to ask the question when you're walking somewhere together, maybe on a hike. For some reason, moving your body can help the conversation to flow.

Try to make a habit of asking questions.

Key idea 3

Say thank you.

Some things are simple and universal. For instance, everyone likes to feel appreciated. You, your partner, and the rest of the world.

The simple act of saying "thank you" can create a powerful shift in a couple. As well as feeling more appreciated by each other, you will also start to focus on the positive things about the other person.

Criticizing comes naturally to us as the human brain is hardwired to look for problems. But through practice and over time, you can reprogram your brain to look for the positives instead.

Make a point of really observing your partner's behavior, noticing all the good, helpful things they do over the course of the day. It may surprise you just how much they do, from quickly tidying up the kitchen to helping your child get ready for school.

And when you notice these positive things, don't stay silent. Communicate your gratitude to your partner. Get into the habit of saying "thank you" even for the most ordinary, routine things.

By thanking your partner regularly, you're helping to create a culture of appreciation in your relationship. It's a straightforward, simple way to create the foundation for lasting love.

Key idea 4

Give genuine compliments.

Saying "thank you" is one way to express your appreciation. Here's something else you can do that's just as easy: give your partner a compliment. But have you ever considered what kinds of compliments help to strengthen relationships?

According to the Gottmans, you should give your partner a genuine compliment not for what they do, but for who they are. For their personality. If giving compliments doesn't come naturally to you, try this exercise.

First, think of some positive adjectives that describe your partner's qualities. For example, generous, funny, sensitive, or creative. Then, when you're with your partner, observe them closely. Look out for a moment when they're demonstrating one of those qualities you love. And then . . . tell them. With words. I love how generous you are. Or, I really admire your creativity. And in general, don't underestimate the importance of being nice to each other. It really matters.

Here's a good example. The Gottmans did a long-term study of many different couples, examining the ratio of positive to negative interactions in the relationship. They wanted to know the minimum amount of positive interactions needed, compared to negative ones.

The answer? Twenty to one. **In a romantic relationship, you need twenty positive interactions for every negative one.** Give them a compliment not for their clothes or their

cooking, but for who they are.

Key idea 5

Tell your partner what you need. They don't know what you're thinking, or what you need right now.

All too often, tension is caused by miscommunication. A person drops hints and then gets resentful when their partner fails to fulfill their needs. But how can you fulfill someone's needs if you don't even know what they are?

Unfortunately, many of us are pretty bad at expressing our needs. Maybe it's something to do with the way we've been brought up. Men often suppress their needs because they've been taught that their role is to be strong providers. They feel they can't ask for help. Women, on the other hand, are generally trained to put the needs of others first.

In a happy, healthy relationship, you should be able to express your needs directly and without turning them into criticism. If you need a hand with the cleaning, for example, telling your partner, "You never clean!" isn't the way to go about it. So, what should you say instead? Luckily, the Gottmans have a template you can use for expressing your needs effectively.

First, remember that you're talking about you and your needs. Your partner isn't the focus here. During the conversation, describe the situation that you want to change. Keep it focused on the situation and how you feel about it. For instance, if the issue is the state of the kitchen, say something like, The kitchen is really messy, and I feel overwhelmed. Then, clearly express your positive need. Be specific. In the kitchen example, you could say, Please could you help me by doing the dishes?

That's how to communicate your needs without criticizing, and without expecting your partner to be telepathic. Simply explain your feelings about the situation, and tell them how they can help you.

Key idea 6

Touch your partner.

You see, physical intimacy is like a drug. A kiss or a hug releases the hormone oxytocin, which is good for us in so many ways. It reduces stress and lowers blood pressure. And, of course, it also helps us to feel connected to the other person.

So keep in mind that you and your partner may have different preferences when it comes to physical contact. If in doubt, discuss it with them. What do they feel comfortable with?

Once you've established that, the Gottmans recommend looking for touch opportunities. Whenever you have the chance, **hug your partner for at least 20 seconds** - that's how long it takes for the oxytocin to work.

Kissing feels pretty great too, of course. But there are also other, less obvious ways to touch each other, which can still produce a nice boost of oxytocin. For example, when you're sitting next to your partner on the couch, put an arm around them. Or touch feet under the dinner table.

Touch should be a frequent, everyday thing - not something that's reserved for sex or special occasions. Speaking of which . . . when was the last time the two of you went on a date?

Key idea 7

Have regular date nights.

Regular date nights should be nonnegotiable. In fact, the Gottmans say it's something they would prescribe if they could: "Do something fun with your partner!" So to reignite the spark and enjoy each other's company once more, try going on a date.

Committing to date nights is not always easy. Between work, kids, etc. couples can often be

tired and stressed. But with how important it is, couples need to prioritize their relationship.

So, if you want a happy, lasting relationship, keep dating. Make a pact with your partner to have regular date nights, no matter what. If you like, you could even ask them out right now. Start making plans for your next date. You don't need to worry too much about the details. All that matters is that you're spending some quality time together - just the two of you - without screens or other distractions.

Final summary

Love is more than just a feeling. **It's a choice you make moment by moment, day after day.** Whatever the state of your relationship, and no matter how long you've been together, you can always find ways to create more connection and intimacy.

Sometimes, it's as simple as asking your partner a question or putting your arm around them. Over time, these small actions add up, determining the happiness and longevity of a relationship.

Actionable advice:

Each day, choose a time to check in with your partner for 10 minutes. It might be over coffee in the morning, or at night after the kids are in bed. Whenever you do it, spend these 10 minutes focused on each other. Ask your partner, "Is there anything you need from me today?" And then do everything you can to help them with their request. It's a powerful, simple way to build trust and connection.