

Improve Your Relationship with One Little Word

We often take a moment to give thanks – for our health and the health of our loved ones, for good friends and family, and for the comforts of home. *But when was the last time you said "thanks" to your spouse or partner?* How often do you show your partner that you value them? When we're busy and stressed out, we often forget to thank the very person we chose to share our life with!

If thanking your partner is something you only do once a year, you would do well to change your ways. *Why? Because saying and showing gratitude will improve your relationship.* Happy and healthy relationships require communication, realistic expectations, and trust. Another very important factor in happy relationships is gratitude – making your spouse feel valued, loved, and supported with simple acts and behaviors. Business managers know that employees perform best when they receive frequent positive feedback. The same holds for your love partner.

My research shows that couples who expressed frequent generosity to each other were the happiest in their relationships. In fact, 61% of the happy couples in my study said that their partners "often" made them feel good about the kind of person they are, compared to only 27% of the other couples. For these happy couples, gratitude came in the form of words, gestures, or acts that showed a spouse that they were noticed, appreciated, respected, loved or desired.

It may sound difficult, but it's easy to say "thanks" and to show that you're thankful by following this simple three-step process.

Step #1: Name what you're thankful for.

Thank-you is maybe the most crucial word you can say to your partner, and the word your partner most wants to hear. But instead of lightly flinging the word around, you can give the sentiment more oomph if you can truly say it like you mean it. To do this, you need to understand why you value and appreciate your partner so much. Take a few minutes and write down five things you are most thankful for when it comes to your partner. For example, he lets you vent. She knows just what you love most to eat. He pays the bills without complaining. She makes your parents feel welcome. He makes you laugh. She is an amazing listener. I guarantee doing this little exercise will make you smile to yourself.

Step #2: Now, genuinely thank your partner.

There are countless ways to tell your partner you care about them. The most obvious is simply to read your list out loud. You can also "thank" your partner indirectly with a heartfelt compliment: "You're so handsome." "Good morning, Gorgeous." "You're the best dad/mom." There is no etiquette or formal rule that verbal gratitude has to be delivered face-to face. You can express this type of gratitude over the phone, in email, or in person. Sometimes a surprise phone call in the middle of the day delivers more bang than a kiss when you get home. Or,

mailing a thank-you card to your partner can be a surprisingly simple way to make them feel appreciated and noticed.

Step #3: Don't just *say* thanks; *show* it.

It's not that hard to show your partner regularly through small acts that they matter to you, and that you are thankful they are in your life. My research shows that men, in particular, are more likely to show than to tell. That is, they gravitate more to actions than to words, and they also respond more to actions than words. Women tend to be more verbal, so if a husband is showing gratitude to his wife, she might not "get it" if he doesn't also say the words "thank-you" or "I appreciate you" or "I'm so grateful." The key to showing gratitude to your partner is to see the world through your partner's eyes. What does your wife or husband need? Think about your partner's habits or some specific challenges they face. Kiss and hug your partner. Whisper something romantic. Spontaneously grab their hand when you are walking somewhere. The key here is to make small gestures regularly that show you're paying attention.

The best part of that magic word and concept – *thanks* – is that if you take the time to say it and show it to your partner, you'll receive gratitude in kind.