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life advice

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Get Your Spouse to Appreciate You

The answer on how to receive appreciation for all that you do in your marriage may surprise you.

BY DR. NOELLE NELSON



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For you and your spouse to both be happy and feel appreciated, you need to first share your feelings.

You scrimp, you save, you wash dishes, mop floors, endlessly pick up dropped sweaters, towels, CDs, dirty dishes, endlessly put away said sweaters, towels, and whatever else needs to be done; regardless of how tired you are or how early/late/inconvenient it is—and that's on top of your 40-stretching-to-50 hour work week. Does your one-and-only appreciate it? Does he stop to say "Wow, good job! Sparkling clean dishes, great floors—thanks!" or "Gee, Honey, spot-free glasses and a neat house. You're awesome!" Noooo. OK, so you can understand that others might take you for granted, but your spouse? Grrr.

And how about the effort you make outside the home? No matter what the morning was like (the cat threw up on the couch, you were up with the baby all

night, you were out of coffee *and* Diet Coke), you square your shoulders, take a deep breath and walk in to work with a smile on your face and your very best positive attitude. You do your job with 100 percent effort so you can keep your salary coming in and keep your job secure given the present economy—again, do you hear any thanks for it? Do you get even an ounce of appreciation from your mate for your day-in-day-out work ethic? Noooo. All you get is, "Is dinner ready yet?" or "Did you check the oil in my car?" Grrr.

What does it take? How can you get your spouse to appreciate you?

You need to appreciate your husband or wife. Oh, I know that's not the answer you were looking for. But you see, appreciation is an energy and it attracts like energy. As you start appreciating your spouse, he/she will begin appreciating you, and if you are persistent and consistent, they will eventually express their appreciation to you in dozens of unexpected and delightful ways.

How does it work? Appreciating is basically valuing, paying attention to and acknowledging the worth of someone or something, and being grateful for how that worth contributes to your life. So appreciating becomes something you do proactively, before anyone has done anything for you. You're simply recognizing their value and expressing it to them. You can't wait until someone comes along and does it for you. You could be waiting—as you have—a very long time.

Mouthing an empty, "You're great" won't work. It takes more than that. You have to identify the specific qualities and attributes that make up who your spouse is, cherish them, and feel a deep sense of gratitude for them. Here's a simple way to consciously appreciate your spouse:

Take a sheet of paper and draw a vertical line down the middle. On the left side, list the inner qualities and traits you value about him or her. On the right side, write down why you are grateful for each one of these qualities and traits. Spend some time, every day, noticing and valuing your mate. A moment or two is all it takes. And in case you're thinking "that's a weird thing to do" or "who has the time?" remember this is something you used to do *for hours* when you and your true love were courting.

Now, tell your spouse about it! Openly express your appreciation, in words, "What a great job you do around the house—I'm so grateful." "Thanks for putting the kids to bed, Honey—you're such a good Mom/Dad." "Your idea about how we can cut back on household expenses is really good—thanks, Dear." And with touch, an unexpected kiss here, a quick hug there.

The more you express your honest appreciation to your mate, the more he or she will begin to see the value in you. Oddly enough, the answer to "Appreciate me!" is really "How I appreciate you."

Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D. is a respected psychologist, consultant, speaker and author. Her new book is "Your Man is Wonderful: How to Appreciate Your Partner, Romance Your Differences, and Love the One You've Got". For more than a decade, she has helped people live happier, healthier lives through appreciation—at work, at home and in relationships. E-mail: nnelson@dr.noellenelson.com, website: www.yourmaniswonderful.com.