

# Affirming Your Spouse; It's the Secret Sauce You've Been Missing

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by Brad Miller

We work with couples of all ages, from 20-something well into their 70s. Some of these partners for life have recently tied the knot and some of them, like a towering and stable tree, have many rings for all the years they have been doing life together. Because of the wide range of couples we work with, we can't help but take note of all of the common things that these couples struggle with. One of these common struggles is when one or both spouses feel unappreciated, taken for granted, or unloved—all because there is one important and essential marriage ingredient that has gone missing—affirmation.

Do you remember where all of this started for you? Do you remember when you first fell in love? When love is new, it feels natural to say things like; "I love your hair," "you make me feel special," "you are so smart," "you are such a hard worker," or "thanks for doing that for me," and more. But as time marches on and we get bogged down with the demands of life and adulthood, it becomes harder and harder to be intentional with the things we are thankful for with our spouses. Some days it can feel like we are just barely getting by, and, unfortunately, during those times we end up taking our spouses for granted.

Often, when we first talk to couples about learning to affirm each other once again, they will look at us with an expression that says, "We have bigger problems than that, and we need bigger solutions!" "Yes, we know you do," we might say, "but if there were a way to turn things around in your marriage sooner and with less edginess and misunderstanding along the way, would you be interested in *THAT?*" Well, of course they would! And this is what learning to affirm your spouse can do for you both once again.

“Affirming your spouse is the missing secret sauce that makes *everything* in marriage a bit smoother and easier to work through.”

Everyone wants to feel loved and appreciated. Everyone wants to feel like they matter to someone. Affirming your spouse and complimenting them is a simple and free way to accomplish just that!

## IT'S SIMPLER THAN YOU THINK

We have developed a simple framework that should help you get things back on track in this area without feeling mechanical or formulaic. We will

share our framework as well as some sample questions to get you started, but once you digest this information, you will be affirming your spouse on your own, just like a pro, and in no time at all!

## DAILY, WEEKLY, CHARACTER

Every day, have these three things on your radar for possible things to affirm your spouse on; 1. Daily, 2. Weekly, 3. Character.

Here's how it works.

Each day you would ask yourself:

Is there something my spouse did today that I can affirm or encourage?

Is there something my spouse did this week (even if this is something my spouse does often/regularly) that should be affirmed or encouraged?

Is there something about my spouse's character that deserves some recognition from me?

Then pick one of these to share with your spouse. You might say, "I was thinking about you today and how much I appreciate \_\_\_\_\_."

Here are some more specific examples:

Did your spouse make dinner, pick up the kids, feed the dog, pick up food, straighten up the house, send you a kind message, or anything else that they do nearly every day without notice from you? Affirm *that* to them.

Did your spouse make sure a bill was paid, laundry was done, yards were cleaned up, maintenance was scheduled, your car was fueled up, the kid's sports were managed, windows were washed, floors were cleaned, broken things were fixed, and more that you often take for granted? Affirm to them how much you notice and appreciate one or more of those things.

Is your spouse consistently kind, loving, forgiving, gracious, well-organized, attentive, honest, patient, a good saver, a cautious spender, a hard worker, and more? Do you tell them about their most amazing qualities? Can you imagine what your life would be like without these amazing qualities that your spouse brings to the table to make your life better in some way?

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

## YOU GET GRATITUDE THROWN IN AS WELL

If you are paying attention, you may be starting to realize that as you learn to appreciate and affirm your spouse, you gain something incredible from this as well — you feel gratitude! There are literally hundreds of studies out there about gratitude and how it changes us for the better, reduces anxiety, eases depression, fights suicidal ideation, and more.

If you want a great place to dive deeper into gratitude, we love the work that Shaunti Feldhan has been doing in this area for years. Read either [The Kindness Challenge](#) or [Highly Happy Marriages](#) to get started. The truth is that you should affirm your spouse regularly because it is the right thing to do, but you will get much more out of this endeavor than you could possibly realize. Don't forget to have fun with all of this!

## WHAT IS THE RISK OF NOT AFFIRMING MY SPOUSE?

Not affirming your spouse for a long enough period of time will result in frustration, bitterness, and resentment from your spouse and toward you.

You do not want this! Once resentment starts to set in, it can be very difficult to get out. Prevention is the cure here.

Lastly, what if you decide to start affirming your spouse, but they don't notice — what if they don't respond like you would expect them to? This can and will happen. If it does happen, it would most likely be that your spouse may overlook your efforts *sometimes*. We all do this when we are distracted with too much on our plates. If that is the case, this may be an opportunity to show some extra grace which we have written about in another article called, [Apologies, Forgiveness, Grace, and Love in Marriage](#). But, even if your spouse almost never responds in the way that you had hoped, you are still doing the right thing.

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