

teacher conference yesterday” or “Thanks for making my sister feel welcome here” or even “You look so hot in that outfit, I’m having all kinds of bad thoughts.”

Sometimes couples resist searching for and expressing gratitude for their spouse’s positive behavior because, they tell me, doing so feels “phony” to them. But developing a positive habit doesn’t “sugarcoat” a relationship. Instead it resets it to a *more realistic* perspective. Just knowing this can make all the difference for couples who are feeling pessimistic about their partner and marriage. Research by Elizabeth Robinson and Gail Price brings home this happy truth. They had objective, trained observers count how many positive acts they witnessed between a couple during the course of an evening. They then asked the spouses themselves to tally their positive interactions. When the researchers compared the scores the couple gave themselves with those of the objective observers, they discovered that couples who described themselves as unhappily married only noticed *half* of the positive interactions that actually occurred. Because they were so used to tuning in to their partner’s mistakes, they each missed a full 50 percent of their partner’s positive actions.

FONDNESS AND ADMIRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

To assess the current state of your fondness and admiration system, answer the following.

Read each statement and circle T for “true” or F for “false.”

1. I can easily list the three things I most admire about my partner. **TF**
2. When we are apart, I often think fondly of my partner. **TF**
3. I will often find some way to tell my partner “I love you.” **TF**
4. I often touch or kiss my partner affectionately. **TF**
5. My partner really respects me. **TF**
6. I feel loved and cared for in this relationship. **TF**

7. I feel accepted and liked by my partner. **TF**
8. My partner finds me sexy and attractive. **TF**
9. My partner turns me on sexually. **TF**
10. There is fire and passion in this relationship. **TF**
11. Romance is definitely still a part of our relationship. **TF**
12. I am really proud of my partner. **TF**
13. My partner really enjoys my achievements and accomplishments.
TF
14. I can easily tell you why I married my partner. **TF**
15. If I had it all to do over again, I would marry the same person. **TF**
16. We rarely go to sleep without some show of love or affection. **TF**
17. When I come into a room, my partner is glad to see me. **TF**
18. My partner appreciates the things I do in this marriage. **TF**
19. My spouse generally likes my personality. **TF**
20. Our sex life is generally satisfying. **TF**

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each “true” answer.

10 or higher: This is an area of strength for your relationship. Because you value each other highly, you have a shield that can protect you from becoming overwhelmed by any negativity that also exists between you. Although it might seem obvious to you that people who are in love have a high regard for each other, it’s common for spouses to lose sight of some of their fondness and admiration over time. Remember that this fondness and admiration is a gift worth protecting. Completing the exercises in this chapter from time to time will help you to reaffirm your positive feelings for each other.

Below 10: Your marriage could stand some improvement in this area. Don’t be discouraged by a low score. There are many couples in whom the fondness and admiration system has not died but is buried under layers of negativity, hurt feelings, and betrayal. By reviving the positive feelings that still lie deep below, you can vastly improve your marriage.

If your fondness and admiration are being chipped away, the route to bringing them back always begins with realizing how valuable they are. Remember that they are crucial to the long-term happiness of a relationship because they prevent contempt—one