

## #2: Nurturing Fondness and Admiration

Fondness and admiration are two of the most important elements in an enduring and rewarding marriage. Fondness and admiration serve as antidotes to expressions of contempt and to under-appreciating one another. A fundamentally positive opinion of your spouse and your marriage is a powerful buffer when you hit rough patches. Couples in healthy marriages have ample reserves of good feelings and respect for each other, and are less likely to act disgusted or contemptuous when disagreements arise.

It's not enough that your spouse knows that you are proud of him or her. You need to show it too. A lot of attention is given to how a couple might navigate difficult times, but how couples cope with good times is also important. Did your wife's presentation go well? Did your husband beat someone younger in tennis? Did one of you get a raise or complete a home improvement? How is good news recognized? With a smile and nod? Or do you pop the champagne? Order take-out? Express how pleased you are? How we respond to one another's achievements, small and large, helps to nourish fondness and admiration. Capitalize on the positive, upbeat events in your lives. Making a big deal out of the good things that happen increases intimacy and mutual appreciation.

University of Washington researchers determined that couples in stable marriages have at least five times more positive interactions than negative ones. Negative interactions sting smarter and linger longer. Contempt is one of the biggest enemies of marriage, and eye rolling is one of the most often used expressions of contempt. Eye rolling is thought by many therapists to be more destructive to a marriage than raised voices. Contempt leads to further conflict instead of reconciliation. Are you the eye roller in your relationship?

Of course, it is never a good idea to keep a tally of the negative vs. positive interactions in your marriage, but you ought to be able to readily remember the last time you paid your spouse a compliment, or gave your spouse an affectionate hug or kiss for no reason. Nurturing the fondness and admiration in your marriage reduces stress, promotes trust and amplifies the positive aspects of your life together. It is a way a couple can bless one another.

The following questions will require a little more thought before responding than did last week's questions. Allow each other a little time before expecting a response.

1. Name one characteristic you find endearing or loveable about your spouse.
2. Name something your spouse is particularly good at doing.
3. Name one of your spouse's physical attributes that you find attractive and attracting.
4. When was a time when you were particularly proud of your spouse.
5. Name at least five details you remember about your first date.
6. Make a list of five to ten small things your spouse could do for you that would make you feel cared for and appreciated. The tasks should be small, inexpensive,

specific and require little time. (i.e.: Kiss me when we greet. Massage my feet. Bring me coffee. Ask me about my day. Call me during the day. Give me fifteen minutes of free time when I get home.) Try to do two things from your spouse's list each day.

7. What is a hobby, skill, sport, interest you want to learn more about, and what can your spouse do to support you?