

Romantic Gestures - Keep Doing Them

This week's Sweet Surprise comes from TLC World's favourite Marriage Counsellors, Steve & Cindy Wright



Love is in the air. Valentine's Day is right around the corner so romantic gestures - both big and small, are being planned all around the world. And we love it! We love it even though every year we receive criticism (by a few) because we even mention Valentine's Day. But we don't care. We're told that we're just perpetuating commercialism by giving into this manufactured "holiday."

And to that we say, yes... we admit it. First off, what's wrong with helping to support local businesses while we're celebrating love? But most importantly, we love most any reason to celebrate love - especially marital love. Love for God, and love for each other - we embrace it all!

Romantic Gestures

The important thing though, is that you romance each other beyond your wedding day. Too many spouses forget to do that. You can get too caught up into just making life work for you. Eventually, romantic gestures slide to the background, and you slide into becoming married roommates. You will then no longer be married lovers if you don't keep growing your love. So, don't just make romantic gestures towards each other on your anniversary or special holidays (like Valentine's Day). It's important to sprinkle in daily romantic gestures throughout the year for the rest of your lives together. That helps you to grow your love stronger, in wonderful ways.

Spouses don't have to continually go to elaborate measures to show love. (Although sometimes it can be meaningful to go all out for each other.) But little romantic gestures, given daily, go a long way in growing your love. It sure has helped us. We're continually finding little ways to bring a smile to each other's face. Throughout the day we often tell each other, "I love you."

Someone once gave the following advice that we have taken seriously over the years: "Never pass up the chance to say, 'I love you', because tomorrow is not promised." Here's a tip that marriage expert Fawn Weaver gave:

"Treat today as if it were your last. I had tea with a wonderful friend. She talked about her husband and I talked about mine. The difference is, at the age of 45, her otherwise healthy husband boarded a plane for New York and never made it off the plane alive. Max Lucado has a quote I love, 'Forgive and give as if it were your last opportunity. Love like there is no tomorrow and if tomorrow comes, love again.'" (Fawn Weaver)

Beyond That:

Frequent hugging, holding hands at home and in public, kissing (sometimes passionate, and sometimes short, sweet kisses), plus flirting with each other are all a part of our romantic gestures.

I often walk up behind Steve when he's working on the computer or elsewhere, and kiss him on the back of the neck. Sometimes it's just a peck, and I walk off. I can feel him smiling as I do. Other times I intentionally kiss the back of his neck (or on the mouth) in a way that gives him goose bumps. He likes that. And so do I. It's fun after all these years of marriage to still be able to give your spouse goose bumps. Plus, sometimes I'll buy him something special at the grocery store just for him.

On the other hand, a few days ago I came home and noticed that Steve had done something for me that he knew would please me. I didn't even have to ask him to do it. He just did it because he knew it would bless me. It did. And I made sure he knew it did. Showing gratitude is important. Marriage doesn't change our need to feel appreciated. Steve often fills my water cup with ice water. And he makes sure I have a fresh one on my bedside table before bed so if I'm thirsty in the night, it's right there. There are multitudes of little things for each other. We do them to bless and show love to our marriage partner. They're not a once or twice-a-year thing.

STEVE: A Hint on Romantic Gestures

Like most men I was very romantic with Cindy when we were dating. I'd buy her flowers, and take her out to eat (instead of eating dorm food). Often, I would buy her things for "no reason." I did this because I loved her. But after we got married these gestures dropped off significantly. Oh, once in a while I'd have burst of creativity and thoughtfulness. But for the most part I'd just become lazy. Can you relate? Eventually the Lord let me know that it's important to continually show Cindy of my undying love for her. Now it's my mission to show her that I cherish her - because I do. But I need to go beyond my inner feelings, to actually showing her how I feel.

Men:

One of the biggest ways you can become more romantic is to find ways to "bless" your wife. Little things can really add up. For instance, every time Cindy comes home from grocery shopping I rush out and carry everything inside. Then I start putting it away. At times I have her put her feet up in my lap and I massage her feet. She sometimes scratches my back or legs.

I've also learned to like a lot of the romantic movies Cindy likes to watch. It took a while but I like them now. I sit watching them with her and hold her hand. This genuinely bonds us together all the more. And now she sits with me to watch (a lot of) the action movies I enjoy. Most nights I help with the preparation of the evening meal. Afterward I help with the clean up so she's not burdened (like she was in the past) to do everything.

You get the idea as far as things you can do to bless each other. It's really not hard. It just takes intentionality, and getting up outside of our "comfort zone" at times.

Valentine's Day and Beyond

Here are a few Valentine's Day ideas. But you can actually modify these romantic gestures and tips for other celebrations of your love:

"Make Valentine's Day rock with this friendly advice: Keep it simple. If you want it done right, then ask each other what would help make the time fun. Take it easy with your expectations. Be flexible with each other. And if something doesn't go your way tonight... take a deep breath and remind yourself about all the great qualities of your special someone." (*Michael Smalley*)

This concept has been a "biggie" for us. We learned through some of our elaborate failures that we enjoy "simple" more than elaborate. In recent years we have loved keeping our Valentine's Day celebrations simple. Neither one of us craves big, elaborate gifts or expensive dinners. We just find something simple that we both enjoy that we don't eat very often. And then we make it together and eat it by candlelight at home. That's enjoyable to us. (This year it's hot chicken wings, a great salad and something chocolate.)

But not everyone enjoys that kind of a simple "celebration." If that's the case, then plan more elaborate celebrations. The point is to do something that brings smiles to both of your faces.

Surprise and Non-surprise Romantic Gestures

I (*Cindy*) have said this before, but it bears repeating. Sometimes it's important to surprise your spouse in ways that will wow him or her. But I have to caution you here. Some spouses prefer big surprises. Others can only take small ones. I know of a wife that planned a big surprise party for her husband and it did not go well. He doesn't like big surprises and it ended up a disaster. Figure this out about your spouse and plan your surprise in a way that he or she WILL enjoy.

And if one of you likes big celebrations and the other doesn't... switch back and forth. Make some of your celebrations elaborate. And then at other times keep them simple. But whatever you do, talk about your expectations ahead of time. That will simplify your celebrations all the more.

In talking with a lot of couples I totally agree with something that relationship expert, Alison Armstrong says:

"For too many people, Valentine's Day can be a setup for men to fail and women to be disappointed. Something you can do to turn this potential disaster into a contribution to you and your relationships is to provide quality information regarding what you would like to receive! Many women mistakenly believe that a man should already know what they want. They think it doesn't really count if you have to tell them. But most men will not know how to succeed at Valentine's Day. The majority will fail for lack of useful information."

Expectation Failures

Some men do a great job in pulling off romantic surprises that delight their wives. But many men just aren't good at it.

In previous years my expectations were unrealistic concerning holiday celebrations and Steve's gift giving. I thought that Steve should come up with some magical gift that would WOW me. Isn't that what we're told the love of our life would just naturally do? Actually, that was what Steve wanted to do. But in reality, he most often didn't have a clue as to what I wanted. I'm not sure that I knew what I wanted either. But I was sure he should know it. Most of the time he didn't. And then we'd both be disappointed.

But a few "older and wiser" friends helped to steer me in a healthier direction. They told me to stop expecting and actually tell Steve what would delight my heart. What a novel idea! That's what Steve wanted to do for me. He wanted to give me something I really wanted. But he wasn't good at guessing. So I've learned sweet ways of telling him, and that has taken the pressure off of him BIG TIME! And he does the same for me, as far as telling me what he wants. Now we're both happy. And every time we see our gifts, we actually think of each other.

A Few More Valentine's Day Romantic Gestures

Here's a suggestion from Whitney Hopley:

"Take the time to consider some of the many ways your spouse acts in love toward you every day. Use Valentine's Day to express your appreciation. Do this both by letting your spouse know that you notice what he or she does for you, and by making a concerted effort to bless your spouse through small yet meaningful acts of affection ... Every day find a way."

We love that. Along that same line, here's what Becky and Dick Berg do:

"My husband and I each have a journal, and we write to each other occasionally. It might be just a quick little love note, or a note that says, "I was thinking of you." We leave it on the pillow so the other one knows we've written in it."

Valentine's Day can be just the beginning of doing those types of things for each other. Or perhaps you can do this at another time. If you want more Valentine's Tips, our friends at *The Romantic Vineyard* have several:

On Valentine's Day and beyond, keep in mind:

"Long-lasting love doesn't happen by accident. We don't find ourselves holding hands after 25 years with the one that we love by pure chance. Love is deliberate; it's intentional, it's purposeful, and in the end it's worth every minute (and every effort) that we invest." (*Darlene Schacht*)

And if your spouse is difficult to live with and you don't think he or she "deserves" to be treated by you in loving ways, remember:

“You can give undeserved love to your spouse because God gives undeserved love to you. He gives it repeatedly, and enduringly. Ask God to fill you with the kind of love only He can provide. Then give it to your spouse in a way that reflects your gratefulness to God for loving you. That’s the beauty of Christ’s redeeming love.” *(Stephen and Alex Kendrick)*

This is our prayer for you:

“May the Lord direct your hearts to God’s love and Christ’s endurance.”

(2 Thessalonians 3:5)

Cindy and Steve Wright

© Cindy and Steve Wright (2019)

Permission to republish this material must be sought from email@marriagemissions.com

For more Sweet Surprises visit <https://tlcwhk.com/barbaras-sweet-surprises/>