

GREAT DATES #10

The Love List

The Love List is a book by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott. It talks about 8 things we can do to make a big difference in our marriages. For the next little while, I am going to go through these eight things. The Parrotts are co-directors of the Center for Relationship Development at Seattle Pacific University. They actually teach a groundbreaking program dedicated to teaching people the basics of a good relationship. I have often lamented that relationship and parenting skills are not taught in schools, yet marriage and parenting can be two of the very most important things we ever do. And every human being relates to others and parents little ones even if they never officially hold the title of “married” or “parent.” So this couple has had my attention for some time as a model of how to teach relationships.

Their basic premise in this book is that all couples develop habits. Mostly these habits evolve over time unintentionally. These habits can be ones that nurture the relationship or ones that create distance and friction. This couple does extensive research into relationships and they have identified behaviors they say “are bound to increase marital satisfaction.” That is quite a claim, and I suggest that we test these behaviors out as a group over the next few months and see if what they say is true.

The goal of the book, then, is to look at developing a set of 8 habits that keep us connected as couples. Don’t worry, not all of them are done daily. Two are daily, two are weekly, two are monthly, and two are annually. Did you know that just having a list of things you want to do written down dramatically increases your chances of reaching your goals? They have proven that it is much more effective than people who know what they want to do but never write it down. Us list people love this sort of validation. I do know this works, as I will write down annual or decade long goals, tuck them in a file only to find them years later and realize I have achieved most of them even without ever looking at the list again.

On the other hand, these behaviors are not to be ritualistic compulsions or an end in themselves. They are more like a compass that keeps us headed in the right direction. They must be done willingly and with your heart. I like that the content of how you do each behavior can be fresh and unique each time. How you touch daily can vary forever. What you laugh about could go on and on.

Finally, a great marriage is a work of art that is always being created. It is not built quickly. “Little, deliberate behaviors, done with great heart, lavish love on a marriage.”

The first of the two daily habits is to **TAKE TIME TO TOUCH (if only for a minute)**. Paul Brand says, “Skin cells offer a direct path into the deep reservoir of emotion we call the human heart.” Each of us has a unique touch factor, however, and that needs to be talked about. Some of us are touchy-feely-snuggly and others of us prefer physical space around us. Whatever your two touch factors are, it is important that touch does happen daily. Did you know that a morning good-bye kiss correlates highly with reduced accidents on the way to work, reduced illness, and higher salaries? The two most critical minutes of the day for a couple is how you greet each other at the end of the work day. Take two minutes to make eye contact, to smile, to pat or hug or stroke or smack lips, and say “I am so glad to see you! Welcome home!” Lastly did you know that 8-10 meaningful touches each day help us maintain emotional and physical health? I can see a wave of hugging each other sweeping through the church!

ASSIGNMENT

1. List some of the habits that you have evolved as a couple that are meaningful to you.
2. What are some habits that were meaningful and have gone by the wayside? Is there a way to retrieve them?
3. Share with each other the type of physical affection you grew up with and whether or not you liked it.
4. What kind of touch do you like the most?
5. When do you like to be touched?
6. When do you not want to be touched?
7. Brainstorm some ways to incorporate touch that you have never tried before. Keep the list and rate them as you try them.

YOUR PERSONAL TOUCH FACTOR (true or false)

I know exactly when my partner most appreciates a tender touch.

We enjoy a genuine and lasting embrace every day.

I'd say we touch each other more than most couples do.

I can remember exactly when and where we enjoyed a hug yesterday.

We almost always steal at least a quick kiss when reconnecting.

When we gently touch and caress each other, it isn't just a signal for sex.

If asked to describe exactly how my partner likes to be touched, I'd have no problem describing it.

We give each other massages every couple of weeks or so.

I have used touch on occasion to defuse a tense moment between us.

I can recall a specific time when a touch between us conveyed more than words ever could.

We hold hands as often as we can.

We sit close to each other in church or movies.