



Love Gives Acceptance

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Think back to your dating years or the early stages of your relationship. What was one of the first differences that you noticed between you and your partner? Did you discover that one of you was more punctual, more concerned about keeping things neat and orderly, more talkative, or more introverted than the other person? Make this a fun conversation, where you celebrate the early discoveries of your relationship.

Remember when we noticed that we were different in...?

Love Wins Out

Talk on a little deeper level but still with celebration as the goal. Discuss these thoughts with your partner:

As you discovered all the differences between you and your partner, isn't it amazing that some of those differences become unimportant or insignificant?

Did you think that your partner would change over time?

Did you secretly hope/think that you could change them?
(Couples who have been together for several years often laugh about how unrealistic it was to think that they could change anyone!)

Now, celebrate how each of you have, in some way, been prompted to **accept** your partner and love them anyway!

Celebrate how amazing it can be when love gives **acceptance**.

Your celebrations might start out, with words like these:

We both know that I am different from you, and yet you choose to love me. I am so grateful that you love me anyway because...





GET REAL, HAVE FUN AND OUT-GIVE ONE ANOTHER

Love Gives Acceptance

When love gives **acceptance**, it means taking initiative to gladly and unconditionally keep caring for a person who is unique, imperfect, and different-from-me. It means being romantically, realistically in love!

Reflect on this progression of thoughts (*by yourself*) and then talk about them together.

Do you remember:

- Being a little blinded by your love? You might have thought your partner was perfect—everything you had always wanted.
- Doing a little relational bargaining? Since my partner isn't perfect, if he/she will change, then I will...
- Trying a little coercion? Since my partner isn't perfect, I'll try to change him/her by...
- Getting a little desperate? I get it now. My partner isn't perfect and he/she may never change.

Talk about how you may have passed through one or more of the four stages above. Where are you (*personally*) in the process? Are you romantically AND realistically loving your partner?

Begin Your Discussion This Way:

As I think back over our relationship, I know I have changed in how I see our differences. I am celebrating that we _____ because...

For example:

I am celebrating that we have a more realistic love because that is a sign of our genuine, authentic relationship.

Celebrate Receiving Acceptance

Recall and share about a memory from your childhood. Think about a person who showed you **acceptance**. Was there a teacher, coach, friend, or family members who knew your imperfections and yet cared about you anyway?

*I remember feeling very **accepted** by _____ especially when...*

*(I remember feeling very **accepted** by my grandfather, especially when he would take me fishing with him. These times were really special because he would even take me on these fishing trips during my rebellious teenage years when my family and friends seemed to turn against me.)*





Giving the Gift of Acceptance

- Don't waste another day trying to change another person!
- Focus instead on how you can grow to love your partner well. Could you grow to become more patient, supportive, encouraging, understanding, affectionate, etc.?
- Make this your goal: Try to **out-give** one another!

Take the next few moments and reflect on how you might finish the sentence below and then share it with your partner.

I want to grow in my love for you. I especially want to become more ...

For example:

*I want to grow in my love for you. I especially want to become more **appreciative** of what you do and how you love me.*

After your partner has shared how they want to grow, be sure to say, "Thanks." Don't criticize or offer any expectations, just express your gratitude for your partner's willingness to accept you and learn to love you well. Your words could be something as simple as:

Thank you, _____. It means a lot to hear you say that. I feel loved knowing that you want to grow and love me well.

Silently read the **Vow of Romantic Realism** below.

When you both are ready, hold hands, and renew your vow to one another. Conclude your date night experience with a special demonstration of how love gives **acceptance**:

*_____ (Say your partner's name) I take you to be my spouse... with full knowledge that you will sometimes disappoint me and hurt me. In spite of your imperfections and differences, I commit myself to loving you. I **accept** and receive you with gratefulness. I love you.*

