



Love Gives Respect

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STARTING RIGHT

Their Strengths

Start this experience by affirming your partner's strengths. When you consistently notice and value your partner's strengths, you're not only showing **respect**, you're strengthening the bond between you.

Share with each other:

- *I've noticed that you're great at...*
(For example: being a mom, finances, fixing things, cooking, gardening, math, small talk, hospitality, having fun, etc.)
- *When I think about your strengths, I am amazed that you...*
(For example: are so comfortable speaking in front of groups, have no trouble negotiating deals, etc.)



IT'S ABOUT VALUE

Expressing Respect

Giving **respect** means to value your partner in countless ways. You've just affirmed one another's strengths, but it's also important to value ideas, opinions, decisions, time, insights, gifts, talents, wisdom, and experience.



To get the most out of this experience...

Stay positive!

This is not the time to tell the other what he or she has done wrong. Be future focused. Focus on what you want your relationship to be like in the future. Don't concentrate on past failures. (It's okay to remember past successes.)

Talk about your relationship. Do not talk about your job, children, in-laws, etc., unless it's part of the conversation.

Give a gift of love.

Some discussion items will excite you more than others. On the less exciting ones, give a gift of love.

Participate enthusiastically!

Don't force it. If you get on a negative track, stop that discussion. Move on to another topic that you both feel good about.

If you get stuck, ask for help.

If an issue surfaces that you can't handle together, talk to a marriage coach at a local church or counseling center.

Use good communication skills.

Be prepared for some surprises and new insights about each other. They can open new opportunities for growth and intimacy in your relationship. The following are several specific tips for a great date experience:

1. Be honest, yet never unkind.
2. Remember to start your sentences with "I" and let them reflect back on you.
3. Resist attacking the other or defending yourself.
4. Be specific and positive.

Let's Talk About It

Think back to your earliest days as a couple and then finish this sentence about your partner:

From our earliest days together, I have valued/respected you for...

(For example: From our earliest days together, I have valued/respected you for how you handle our finances and make wise decisions.)

Let's Practice It

Take turns meeting one another's need for **respect!**

Consider the additional dimensions of **respect** that are listed below. Choose at least two different aspects of valuing your partner and verbalize your thoughts:

- *I value/respect your ideas and opinions about...*
- *I value/respect your insights and wisdom about...*
- *I value/respect your strength and experience in...*
- *I value/respect your gifts and talents in...*

Celebrating Their Great Decisions

Reflect on your partner's great decisions—beginning with choosing you! This can strengthen your trust, deepen your love, and empower continuing **respect**.

Other than choosing you—reflect on some of the great decisions your partner has made throughout the course of their life, then verbalize your **respect** and admiration.

You made a great decision when you...

Examples:

- Handled your dad's health challenges
- Decided to change jobs
- Encouraged us to consider relocation
- Worked on our retirement plans
- Responded to unwarranted criticism
- Dealt with our son's challenges at school
- Encouraged us to socialize more





THE PERFECT ENDING

Respect as a Lifestyle

Giving **respect** is powerfully communicated when we value our partner's input, involvement, counsel and wisdom in decision making!

Even the decisions we think "only affect ourselves" tend to affect our partner as well. Interdependence, rather than independence, is a sign of a great relationship.

Here's an important guide for interdependent, **respectful** decision-making: Before I make a commitment or decision that impacts you, your life and our life together—we'll talk about it first!

Let's Talk About it a Bit More

Celebrating reassurance: Think for a moment about an area where you've made more "independent" decisions, rather than include your partner. Take this moment to give your partner **respectful** and loving reassurance:

I'm committed to doing a better job of involving you in decisions about...

(For example: weekend projects, my days off, plans with friends, expenditures, finances, hobbies, sports outings, etc.)

Be sure to thank your partner for this reassurance and gift of respect!

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network

called
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