

*Step One:*

### **APPRECIATION**

We need to be told what's good about us, and nobody is better equipped to tell us than the person who is closest to us. We hear much about what's wrong with us, both from the world at large and from ourselves (we're usually our own worst critics). When you see something in your partner that you appreciate, express it -- either with words or with a gesture, but express it. Many of us also have to learn to *accept* our partner's appreciation....not brushing off compliments, but accepting what the other person says and saying "Thank you."

*Step Two:*

### **NEW INFORMATION**

When we fail to provide routine information about what's going on with us, there's too much room left for making assumptions. Intimacy thrives only when partners know what is happening in each other's lives--the trivial as well as the important. It may be related to *work* ("I finally got that new contract"), *family* ("Aunt June has just had to go to the hospital"), *mutual concerns and interests* ("I'm worried about that mole on your neck" or "Here's an article I think you'd enjoy reading") or *friends* ("I had lunch with . . ."). Think about whatever it takes to keep contact alive and let your partner in on your moods, states, experiences--your life. Many problems and misunderstandings arise because we make *assumptions* about what's going on with our partner when there is lack of actual information.

*Step Three:*

### **PUZZLES**

If there are things you don't understand (why your spouse seemed so down last night, the latest news about the changes at work, etc.) and your partner can explain, ask. Don't assume that your spouse knows that you are interested. Not asking might well be seen as indifference. Some believe, "if you wanted to know, you would ask me." Others think, "If you wanted me to know, you would tell me." Thus many puzzles go unresolved and questions unanswered--a ripe situation for assumptions and mind-reading (guessing) to develop. If there are things you don't understand that your spouse could help to clarify, ask for clarification.

This is also an opportunity to explore and voice any puzzling questions you may have about yourself. ("I'm really far behind on that project at work and I don't understand why I can't sit down and get it done. I seem to have a real block." "I'm really not sure why I got so angry last night while we were trying to balance the checkbook." "Somebody snapped my head off at work over

something minor and it really upset me. I don't know why it bothered me so much, since it was a small thing and something obviously was bothering me.") Bringing up such personal quandaries doesn't mean you will suddenly find answers, but discussing them can give your partner more insight about your conflicts and thoughts. Your spouse also might have insights about your thoughts.

*Step Four:*

### **COMPLAINTS AND REQUESTS FOR CHANGE**

These need not be blaming or judgmental. Simply say, "This thing happened that bothered me, and I would feel better if you did this other thing instead." When you state your complaint, *be specific* about the *behavior* you are asking for instead. All too often, we subject people to long lists of "don't do this" and "don't do that" without ever telling them what we *do* want. Yelling, "Why don't you ever come home on time?" won't get the same response as, "If you're going to be late, please call. That way I can make my own plans and I won't worry about you." If emotional or touchy issues come up that need long discussion, you might want to set aside a more appropriate time to deal with them in depth.

The Daily Temperature Reading is intended to provide information. It is *not* intended to serve as a serious conflict-resolving tool--its purpose is to help prevent misunderstanding through communication.

*Step Five:*

### **WISHES, HOPES AND DREAMS**

Our hopes and dreams are integral, vital parts of who and what we are. If we don't share them with our spouse, we are depriving him or her of an important part of ourselves. In a world where much of our time is spent reacting to various immediate pressures, we rarely have time to think beyond the moment. This part of the Daily Temperature Reading gives us a chance to reflect on what we want--from ourselves, from our spouses and from life. The more we can bring our expectations and hopes into our own and our partner's awareness, the more likely it is that we will find a way to realize them. They can extend from the mundane to the grandiose: "I hope you can get this weekend shift off so we can spend more time together." "I wish I had time to concentrate on my painting." "I hope we can ...."