

# DAILY TEMPERATURE CHECK FOR COUPLES

## Overview

Often, as couples, we get in a rut or conversations devolve into arguments. One or both people end up feeling unappreciated, disrespected or misunderstood. Generally the pace of bad communications is too fast, and things get out of control quickly. Sometimes the relationship is frozen or has frozen areas.

The Daily Temperature Check is an exercise for couples to do that opens up communication while tamping down the danger of escalation. It promotes listening and mutual appreciation. It is, in short, preventive maintenance for a relationship.

Do the Daily Temperature Check at least three times a week for three weeks, in order to evaluate it properly. Better still: do it daily for three weeks.

## Procedure

You have some options: (1) you could just do step one, appreciations. This is good when squeezed for time or when just starting the Daily Temperature check. You can then graduate to (2) steps one through three, which give you ways of sharing information and asking for information from each other. From time to time, you could do all five steps. In other words, appreciations is the only required step.

1. **Appreciations.** Each of you is to take turns appreciating something about the other. Start with four appreciations each, and work your way up to ten or more. You could make it into a game to see how many appreciations you can come up within a limited amount of time. *Response:* The only permitted responses are “Thank you” or “You’re welcome.” This signals that you heard the appreciation, and it is training for yourself to accept appreciation in case you have a habit of blocking it.
  - Try for a varied diet. There are four kinds of appreciation: (1) for service (“thanks for making dinner”), (2) for appearance (“that sweater looks great on you”), (3) for personal qualities (“you’re so smart, patient, understanding, hard-working, kind, thoughtful ...”) or (4) unconditional (“I love you” or “you’re fun to be around.”) Start with one appreciation of each type.
2. **Information.** Take turns sharing practical or emotional information until you both have run out of things to share. Possibilities include practical stuff like, “I

need the car tomorrow because I have a dentist appointment,” or personal, like “I had a really hard time at work today; Joe was on my case.” *Response:* The only permitted response again is “Thank you.”

3. **Questions.** This is basically the opposite of Information; instead of pushing information, here you are pulling it. “How was your day?” “Did you pay the electric bill?” “How were you feeling when your sister called?” *Response:* The only permitted response is to answer the question. Then the questioner simply says, “thank you.”
4. **Complaints / Requests for Change.** Often our partners repeatedly do something that we don’t like. Here is how to ask for a change, using the WIN formula:
  - **When** you ...
  - **The Impact** is ...
  - **Next time** would you be willing to ... ?

Avoid “zingers” – passive-aggressive attacks on the other person. *Response:* The only permitted responses are: yes, no, or yes with the following conditions. If you can’t negotiate an agreement relatively quickly, postpone the negotiation to the next Daily Temperature Check. By that time, one or both of you may see a mutually satisfactory resolution.

5. **Hopes and dreams.** This is the time for each of you to share something that you hope for in the future. It could be in the realm of your relationship, your family, your career, or some avocation. Everyone needs to raise their gaze from time to time to connect with a sense of forward vision. *Response:* The only permitted response is again “Thank you.”

Adapted from the work of Virginia Satir and John and Natalie Tyler