

The Daily Double: Building a collaborative foundation that supports your couples therapy and the couples relationship.

By Peter Pearson, Ph.D.

My comments to you are in italics. What I suggest you say to couples is in regular font.

You can describe this exercise to your couples. Tell them:

"It is easier to create better solutions to problems and it is easier to apply communication tools if you operate from a base of goodwill. One of the very best ways of creating a foundation of goodwill is seeing each other put forth a good effort to make a better relationship.

Here is a great exercise to show each other you are willing to work at creating better connections.

It is called the Daily Double.

Now this will seem simple. But please do not confuse simple with easy. In fact, couples who start eagerly will find this a difficult experiment to go all the way to the finish line.

However, those couples who do this 'simple' exercise find the results remarkable and it greatly facilitates our work in the office.

During this challenge, you'll commit to something that takes only a few minutes a day.

If you can do it for 30 consecutive days, the rewards for your relationship will be enormous.

Twice a day – for 30 consecutive days starting tomorrow, say or do something that communicates to your partner that you love, value, respect and/or appreciate them.

Twice a day. That's why it's called the **Daily Double**.

It can be as simple as:

- Sending a loving or playful text message
- Picking up your clutter before going to bed
- Cooking a special meal
- Giving your partner time to go do something that is rejuvenating
- Washing their car or putting gas in it
- Giving a foot or back massage
- Doing the dishes one night if that is not your regular job
- Giving them a compliment in front of other people (this can be very powerful)
- Being punctual one time if that is not your habit
- Telling them how attractive they look

These are just ideas to get you started. Of course there are many more.

Why does this improve your relationship?

Expressing appreciation and positive thoughts twice a day for 30 days requires you to sharpen your relationship focus. Your brain must think about what you appreciate and value and then think about how to communicate it.

Then you must remember to do it.

Please don't skip a day as the effects are cumulative.

It is extremely rare for couples who put in this effort and don't see a positive impact on their relationship. The more you practice being appreciative and taking positive action, the more you crowd out frustrations and resentment.

And please do not discount the importance of this exercise by saying, 'the only reason I am getting this appreciation is because my partner was instructed to do it.'

Mostly that is a rationalization to keep yourself emotionally defended. Because you both are here to learn new and better ways to communicate, I hope a part of you does not denigrate your partner's willingness to participate in the experiment.

Besides, breaking any old pattern feels awkward at first. So, when your partner expresses appreciation, thank them for it or for their efforts at making a better connection.

I hope you will continue even if your partner doesn't do their part. Please do not use that excuse for not doing your end of the agreement. Too many couples use that excuse and then revert to old ways of hurting each other.

It is important to include the last statements because I heard too many couples looking for excuses to stay defended or not do it.

Actually, we could even start now, Charlie what is one thing you appreciate about Sue? Something about the way she is or what she does that a part of you can appreciate? And Sue, what is one thing that a part of you can appreciate about Charlie?

"Is this something that you're are willing to experiment with after leaving here?"

If they both agree then inquire if there is another part of them that they believe is reluctant to go along with the agreement. If yes, inquire about the resistance, then ask the part that is willing to do it to respond to the resister.

Finally ask the resister if they are willing to go along with the experiment to see what happens, and add that they can always go back to the old ways of doing things when the experiment is over.

Good luck
And stay steady
Pete