



## Relationships: The daily temperature check

As with gardens and all living things, relationships need regular attention. Just as a garden would likely wither and die if fervently tended one day and then ignored for subsequent weeks or more, the same is often true of our closest relationships; they need consistent nourishment to survive, and active, regular investments of time and energy to thrive. The results are well worthwhile.

The daily temperature reading was developed by Virginia Satir, author and therapist, in the 1970s. While ideally you will share the experience face to face – especially when it's new and you're getting the hang of it – people also do it by phone, or even text, etc.

### The exercise

Set aside 15-20 minutes each day for a month to share the 5 steps of the daily temperature check. It may feel awkward to begin with, but it will get easier.

Take it in turns to cover each of the following:

#### *Appreciations*

One or more thing that you appreciate about your partner. For example, "I appreciate that you cooked a really lovely dinner tonight, even though it was my turn" or "I appreciate you letting me know that you were going to be late home" or "I love how you get excited about going to the cheese shop, even if I make fun of you sometimes". You can have as many appreciations as you like.

Even at times of stress or change, we can find something to appreciate about the other, and finding things to appreciate about your partner can raise your spirits as well boosting their self-worth and self-esteem, and create an environment where you can work together to address challenges.

#### *Information*

One or more thing to keep your partner up to date with your life, or your thinking, or what's going on for you. This could be something that's been on your mind, things that have been going on at work, or practical information such as that you have an appointment that will

mean you're going to be late getting home. Again, you can have as many pieces of information as you like.

Missed information-giving can create unnecessary tension and unhappiness when plans or expectations go awry. Sharing information about what you're thinking and feeling, on the other hand, helps you bond.

## ***Puzzles***

Your chance to ask questions about anything you're wondering about, from "Did you ever hear any more about that contract you were talking about?" to "I feel as if you've been a bit withdrawn over the last few days, and I wondered if you're angry with me about something?"

Begin with smaller things until you get comfortable with the process, and bear in mind that you won't necessarily get the answers you wanted – or indeed any answer. The listener can choose to respond later if they want to give it some thought, or simply thank you for sharing your puzzle(s). Take time and be patient with each other.

We often make assumptions about what's going on with other people, or have expectations without realising they don't fit with what the other person thinks, so this is a good way of checking out whether what you think or feel or expect, in relation to your partner, is accurate.

## ***Complaints or concerns***

One only! When sharing a complaint or concern, be specific about the behaviour or issue, say how you feel when it happens, and ask for what you would like instead. For example "When you go out with a friend, and don't come home when you said you would, I get scared that something has happened to you, especially if you don't answer your phone. What I would like is that you phone me and tell me that you're going to be late."

As the listener, after you've heard the other's concern you can answer (yes, no, or yes with conditions) and if necessary schedule a time to follow up with a more extensive discussion or thank them for sharing if you can't answer immediately.

It's important in a relationship to be able to listen to the other's concerns with empathy and understanding, but it's also important to learn to be able to bring up a concern without fear or anger, in order to develop an environment where you both feel safe to grow and confide and accept each other's differences.

## ***Wishes, Hopes & Dreams***

As many as you like! This is an opportunity to share hopes, big and small, from "I hope we have a nice evening out tonight" to "My dream is that we can build a house in the

mountains together and keep goats”. Your wishes, hopes and dreams don’t all have to be about joint endeavours; if something is really important to you, it’s probably relevant to your relationship.

Sharing your dreams is a positive experience, and creating a life where your dreams can come true involves sharing them with others, so that you can support each other to realise hopes and ambitions, and increase your chances for your dreams to come true.

Try this exercise once a day for a month and you’ll find good communication becomes more of a habit, that you can continue with on a regular basis.

Other resources:

<http://www.pairs.com/dtr.php>

<https://satirglobal.org/>