



## Marriage BUILDER WEEKLY

In recent Marriage Builders, I've introduced two of the most important skills for healthy communication between husbands and wives: *speaking in a caring tone* and *frequent communication*.

Today's important skill is *intimate communication*.

Remember those magic days of new romance when you and your spouse first began dating? The ways you hugged and cuddled, the pet names you used, the sweet nothings you whispered, the way you held hands and gazed into each other's eyes.

Those little acts of affection helped draw your hearts together because they communicated value and closeness. You used them to let each other know how much you cared. They were little signposts pointing to your loyalty.

When marriages begin to struggle, these intimate moments are often the first things to go. If a couple stops showing affection, it might be because they no longer feel affectionate. Physical withdrawal might be a sign of emotional withdrawal.

A couple who have abandoned sweet whispers, romantic gazes, or hand-holding could be a couple on the verge of problems. Why? Because relationships can't survive without intimate touch and affection.

These little acts of intimacy are critical to keeping a marriage from becoming stale and boring. It's our way of saying to a spouse, "I'm still attracted to you. I care deeply for you. I'm still invested in this relationship."

And as insignificant as they may seem on an hour-by-hour or even day-to-day basis, the

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cumulative result of intimate communication is that it tells a spouse "You are the only one for me." Through intimate touch we build our mate's self-esteem and reaffirm our love and commitment.

If you saw Karen and me throughout the day, you might get nauseous. Though we've been married for ades, we still act like a couple of gooly-eyed school kids when we're alone.

I've been known to sneak up from behind her to grab her around the waist. I'll give her a big hug and kiss and say, "I love you." If I see her reading on the couch, I'll snuggle in next to her or whisper in her ear.

She does the same with me: a sly pinch, a stolen kiss, an unprompted shoulder massage. She's been known to wrap her hands around my neck at random times and startle me with a kiss on the ear.

Though these actions often can be sexual—or might led to sexual expression later in the day—they don't have to be sexual. In fact, often it's better to show affection that's disconnected to sexual expectations, just because it takes the pressure off. It's a kiss just for the sake of kissing, not a kiss with "an agenda."

Throughout the day we look for these kinds of ways to show nonsexual affection to each other, because this is the best way we know to communicate our love. It's done wonders for our relationship.

What about your marriage? Are you still showing affection like you did when you were dating? If not, maybe it's time to return to those days of flirting, hugging, kissing, and other intimate communication—just to let your spouse know how much you still love him or her.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.