

2. APPLY THE 60-SECOND TEST TOWARD YOUR SPOUSE THAT REVEALS THE POWER YOU HAVE TO INFLUENCE THE RELATIONSHIP.

Do You Know How to Fill Your Spouse's Emotional Air Tank?

Making Deposits Works!

God designed your spouse to respond to your expressions of love and respect. It works. Weekly I receive emails like these:

A wife writes, "I am sad that I have been married 22 years, and just now began to understand the respect message. I wrote my husband two letters about why I respected him. I am amazed at how it has softened him in his response to me. I have prayed for years that my husband would love me and speak my love language. But when I begin to speak his language, then he responds with what I have wanted."

A husband emails, "I live in Hungary and have received your book from my brother. . . We are both undergoing difficulties in our marriages. I started to read it immediately and it has already helped a lot. My wife has realized my unconditional love approach and has become far more respectful to me. What is more, I discovered the old, "romantic," loving feelings in me towards her that have been buried during the last years because of our Crazy Cycles."

Do the Respect Test

Say to your husband, "I was thinking of you today and a couple things about you that I respect, and want you to know I respect you." Then exit the room. I predict he'll follow you or call you back to find out what. At that moment say something from your heart like, "I respect your goodwill toward me and the family. You are a good-willed man. Thank you." In most instances you'll observe the positive energy enter his spirit. This illustrates the influence you have in the marriage. If he asks, "Why are you saying this?" just remark that it struck you as very true and you wanted him to know what you felt.

A gal writes, "I did the Respect Test tonight when I got home. I complimented him on how well he took care of everything while I was gone . . . and how it was so kind of him to let me go to the conference and the way it made me feel so much RESPECT for him. A few minutes later he suggested that we all go SHOPPING together!! Then, he told me how important our marriage is to him!! A couple weeks ago we weren't even speaking!"

A wife writes, "We have a good marriage, but I've always known that something was missing—I think it was respect towards him. I just didn't know he needed it. I've spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to love him more because in my heart I knew I wasn't meeting his needs."

Do the Love Test

Say to your wife, "I was thinking of you today and a couple things about you that I love, and want you to know I love you." Then exit the room. I predict she'll follow you or call you back to find out what. At that moment say something from your heart like, "I love your goodwill toward me and the family. You are a good-willed woman. Thank you." In most instances you'll observe the positive energy enter her spirit. This illustrates the influence you have in the marriage. If she asks, "Why are you saying this?" just remark that it struck you as very true and you wanted her to know what you felt.

A husband emails, "Your message seemed counter to everything I saw in the culture and to my own self-interest. . . . But when I applied love to my wife—SHAZAM—my wife responded to it and my marriage got better."

Let me insert, this is not a theory or formula to test as much as it is a commitment to meet your spouse's need, which they will have for the rest of their lives. By way of analogy, a husband should never say, "I will try out your theory, Emerson, about loving a wife. I will test this out but if it doesn't work to my satisfaction, I'm not continuing." No, whatever your spouse's response may be, loving and respecting unconditionally is always the path to take.

The Energizing Cycle

What are some specific things you might consider doing? I refer to it as the Energizing Cycle: his love motivates her respect and her respect motivates his love. When we meet our spouse's need—filling their emotional tank—they tend to desire to reciprocate.

Fill Her Love Tank with Love Deposits

Decode her negativity as a cry for love, not as a put down of you. Do not take up offense but stay calm. Try to respond to her need for love rather than point out to her she is negative and disrespectful. This will energize her. Though you're offended by her disrespect, ask if you were unloving earlier and apologize. Watch her soften and probably apologize for her disrespect.

Don't defend yourself when this appears to her as self-justification and blame-placing. Try to listen first to her complaint. Try to empathize first.

When she has deflated over your unloving reaction, go to her and say, "I am sorry. Will you forgive me?" Few things release the negativity in the spirit of a woman like an apology. Truly, she feels enlivened.

Energize her by succeeding where you failed; she doesn't expect you to be perfect but to rebound on the heels of your mistakes. This blesses her.

Fill His Respect Tank with Respect Deposits

Though he makes blunders, let him know you believe in his goodwill. This will energize him.

Don't display contempt for his maleness when he feels the motive behind his actions are rooted in his desire to do the honorable and right thing. For instance, does he go quiet to prevent a conflict from escalating? Is he trying to be unloving or to do what is honorable among men?

Ask before talking to him, "Will my words sound like disrespect to him?" and even ask him if you sounded disrespectful. Watch him soften and express appreciation for trying to understand him without judging him as egotistical.

Say, "That felt unloving," not "You're unloving"; address the issue instead of attacking him. He'll stay engaged in the conversation especially when you add, "I need your strength when I feel vulnerable." Why assassinate his character when you need his good character qualities?

Though "respect" toward a husband is foreign to most women, trust and obey God's Word in Ephesians 5:33 and 1 Peter 3:1-2. Avoid cynicism and mockery of this idea in front of your husband. Don't let your fears persuade you that you will become a doormat and lose all power. Believe just the opposite as you look beyond your husband to the Lord.

Today's Question: Though you have not intended to make more withdrawals from the heart of your spouse than deposits into your spouse's heart, do you think you have caused them to deflate more than feel energized by you?

Today's Action: As a husband, in the next twenty-four hours I will do one thing that feels loving to my wife and watch to see if her spirit livens up. As a wife I will do one thing that feels respectful to my husband and watch to see if his spirit softens toward me.

Thank you!

With Love and Respect,
Emerson Eggerichs Ph.D.
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