

A WIFE'S GUIDE TO HER HUSBAND



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A Marriage Owner's Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Men and women are different. They have different needs, hopes, desires, expectations and thoughts.

Men can be difficult to understand and even harder to deal with. This becomes more apparent when you get married.

But this doesn't mean that you can't learn how to deal appropriately with your husband and have a great marriage together.

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What Your Husband Wants For Father's Day, But Can't Tell You

By Ted Lowe



Other than being a husband, being a dad is the most important earthly relationship of my life.

As most dads do, I adore my three kids. But as most dads do, I second-guess how well I'm doing. From tidbits to full-blown philosophies, advice for dads is everywhere:

- Don't be your child's friend, be their dad.
- Time is flying by, enjoy every moment with your kids.
- Nothing is more important than your child's education; make sure you save enough for college.
- Be firm.

- Spark their imagination.
- Teach them independence.
- Teach them to be team players.

Men Get Anxious, Too

So which of the above or thousands of other pieces of advice are the most important? I can feel the anxiety rising up in me now.

After all, other than being a husband, being a dad is the most important earthly relationship of my life. I would say that most guys feel the same way.

Ladies, in case you didn't know, we guys can be a little insecure, especially when it comes to our performance as dads.

So, while your husband loves grill tools and homemade cards for Father's Day, the greater gift is the assurance you notice the things he is doing right.

A Father's Day Gift

For Father's Day this year, compose a letter by filling in the following blanks in the letter below.

Despite the fact that he probably won't respond to you with tears in his eyes and a "Thank you, sweetheart for shoring up my anxious soul," your words matter to him even more than you know.

You may be thinking, "but there are a lot of things he isn't doing right as a dad." Don't worry about that—chances are he already knows.

Trust me, affirming him for what he is doing right almost always has the pleasant side effect of lessening and improving the things he is doing wrong.

So, go ahead—this Father's Day give your stressed out husband a little verbal love. You'll be glad you did.

Happy Father's Day

Dear _____

I want to thank you for the way you love _____.

I admire the way you always _____.

It makes me laugh, the way you _____.

Thank you for providing by _____.

My favorite memory of you as a dad this year was when
_____.

Thanks for being such a _____, _____,
and _____ dad.

What To Do If You're Married to A Grumpy Guy

By Shaunti Feldhahn



Being grumpy and withdrawn are the top signals of a man who is feeling inadequate and unappreciated at home.

Dear Shaunti: My husband is an involved dad, leader at our church, the type of guy people look to for advice, and he goes over and above his requirements on the job.

But he is often grumpy and withdrawn at home. He gets upset at the littlest things I say. He seems to think I'm hard to please, but I'm not! His constant grumpiness has started to annoy me, and then I do or say things that make him grumpier.

We've GOT to break this cycle, but I feel helpless and don't know how.—**Grumpy Spouse**

Dear Grumpy Spouse: You started off with a great list of things you appreciate about your man. Have you mentioned them to him? I've got a news flash for you: your man is giving all the signs of a guy who is absolutely starving for affirmation.

Being grumpy and withdrawn are the top signals of a man who is feeling inadequate and unappreciated at home. I don't know why he thinks you're hard to please, but I'd guess that he's aching to know even one of those things that you think he does so well.

It might sound so odd to you that feeling unappreciated could lead to grumpiness, but keep in mind—men and women are totally different creatures.

Women Need Love, Men Need Respect

We women love to feel loved, to know our man adores and cherishes us. We feel special and secure when we hear, "I love you." Telling a man "I love you" really doesn't have as much of an impact.

Instead, your man needs to see and hear that you notice what he does well. He may need to hear a lot less of the sort of correction, helpful advice. Telling him what to do implies he isn't doing a very good job as a man or as a husband.

Why does that matter so much? It may sound crazy, but men don't doubt whether we love them. They doubt whether they are any good at what they do for us.

The cry of a man's heart is: "Do I measure up?" More precisely: "Does she think I measure up?"

Tell Him You Appreciate Him

So for a guy, there is nothing more appealing or powerful than seeing that we notice what he's done for us—and that we think it is

awesome. But he won't know it unless we say it!

We might think to ourselves: "how nice it was of him to put more gas in the car," but it may not occur to us to actually say, "Thank you so much for making sure I won't run out of gas." We just assume he knows we appreciate it.

All too often, he doesn't. And if he doesn't, even the most innocuous comments could be heard as criticism.

We poke our head into the living room, where he's sorting mail after bringing the car back from the gas station, feeling pleased with himself for looking after his wife. Instead of giving him a hug of appreciation we say something like, "Honey, why didn't you fill the tank all the way?" Ouch.

If we do something like that, we are saying the opposite of what he is craving to hear. We've just said the one thing he dreads most: "No, sorry, you don't measure up; in fact, what you did wasn't good enough. You failed."

Grumpiness Is A Sign Of Disrespect

When a guy feels inadequate and disrespected in that way, he is likely to get angry and shut down. If it happens consistently, he's likely to get prickly.

It is so easy to think, those things shouldn't bother him! But the only reason we think that is because they wouldn't bother us. God made guys so different.

Once we women recognize that men have a deep emotional need to hear something completely different—and that certain things are legitimately painful—it can change the whole tone of our marriages.

If you want your man to open up instead of withdrawing, start with this: for a few weeks, stop yourself from saying anything negative to him or about him. Every day notice something that he does well—something you appreciate—and tell him what that is.

Voice Your Approval Regularly

Next time you see him load Johnny into the car for soccer practice, try to stop yourself from checking whether he has all the right equipment and reminding him that he got it wrong last time.

He's a grown man, and he can figure it out—and if he did it wrong last time, it is almost guaranteed that he'll remember it this time.

Instead, give him a hug and say "Thanks for taking him to practice. You're such a great dad to him. He loves you taking him to soccer."

Seriously. Try it. You might find that those seemingly minor comments have the most amazing, fulfilling impact of anything he's heard all week—and that you're seeing grumpy guy a lot less often.

Your Husband's Greatest Fear

By Justin Davis



As men get older, we're taught we shouldn't be afraid. Fear becomes something we hide, get over, and conquer.

There is a universal fear that every husband has. This fear keeps us up at night and wakes us up in the morning. It isn't talked about much because we don't like admitting we're afraid.

Being afraid, we believe, makes us less of a man.

Most of us had childhood fears. There's something endearing about a little boy that is scared of the dark. But as we get older, men are taught we shouldn't be afraid. Fear becomes something we hide, get over, and conquer.

Real Men Aren't Afraid

- Face your fears.
- Have courage.
- Be a man.
- Don't be a sissy.
- Get tough.

Your husband probably has fears and he works really hard to manage them. But there is one fear that is hard to manage, difficult to overcome and almost impossible to defeat without bringing it into the light.

This fear is the driving force behind many behavior patterns and decisions.

Your Husband's Greatest Fear

He is afraid of disappointing you.

Actually, he is afraid of being a disappointment. He equates disappointing you to him being a disappointment and that fear drives him.

Most guys are taught to be achievers, to be goal oriented, to accomplish things. As a guy enters into a marriage relationship, he believes he has accomplished and achieved the goal: he got the woman he loves to marry him. Mission complete.

But it doesn't take more than 24 hours of marriage to realize that a lifetime of his wife's needs and desires weren't fulfilled at the altar — they started there.

So many couples launch into this dysfunctional behavior cycle of milestones and achievements. Where she thinks acquiring things will make her happy and he thinks accomplishing things will make him a successful husband.

This Fear Drives Men

The problem is a larger house doesn't fix her. A nicer car doesn't make him feel long term success. Acquiring more things doesn't make her content. Having kids doesn't calm his fears, it only increases the number of people he's working hard to not disappoint.

Most guys equate their wife being unhappy or discontent with them being a disappointment. In an effort to manage that fear, they make choices that feel healthy but usually cause bigger issues. So many problems in marriage come back to this fear.

Workaholic husbands are driven by a fear of being a disappointment as a provider. Guys find their identity in their ability to provide because we've equated providing with success. Many don't consider the cost of overworking and being absent until it's too late.

There is an irony to the fact that what they think makes them successful actually brings disappointment to their family.

The Struggle to Be a Spiritual Leader

Husbands that struggle to lead their family spiritually fear that they don't have what it takes to be a good leader. Rather than fail being a spiritual leader, they become passive participants in their family.

Guys that hide a battle with pornography are driven by this fear. It doesn't justify a man's decision to hide, it only explains it.

If a husband's greatest fear is disappointing his wife, what could be more disappointing than struggling with something that he doesn't want to struggle with?

Men that are constantly upgrading are fearful of being a disappointment. A bigger house. A nicer car. A new toy. Guys want to prove they are successful.

So many men make poor long term financial decisions in an effort to not disappoint their wife in the here and now.

How Can You Help?

If this is your husband's biggest fear how can you help him overcome it? I have a few suggestions.

- Create a culture of grace and safety in your marriage. Most couples don't share deep stuff with each other because they think they will be judged or shut down.
- Approach your husband with a spirit of love and understanding and not accusation. No one wants to be shamed and ridiculed into opening up their heart. Seek to understand him and it will make all the difference.
- Tell him you're proud of him. Do a quick inventory of your words and the tone of your voice over the past week or two. How many words have communicated pride? How many have communicated to him that he isn't doing enough, being enough, listening enough, earning enough, loving enough, providing enough?

If your husband's greatest fear is failing you, disappointing you, and letting you down how much have your words fed that fear rather than help him overcome it?

Tell Him You're Proud of Him

When you tell your husband you are proud of him and you appreciate him, it changes him.

Your words carry power in your husband's heart. Most of the time in marriage we don't wound each other because we want to hurt our spouse. We wound each other because we don't understand them.

My prayer is that you understand more of your husband's heart, it will help you both love each other more fully.

How To Deal With a Sensitive Husband

By Shaunti Feldhahn



It will help you a lot to understand how men think, which, admittedly, can seem really weird at times.

Dear Shaunti: My husband is great at many things, but sometimes he struggles with getting a new task accomplished. He's great at carpentry, but it might take him a few days to built a new of bookcase for the kids' bedroom.

When I offer an opinion, he goes ballistic. Why is he so sensitive? I'm just trying to help and he acts like I'm trying to stick a pin in his eye.

Am I supposed to just shut up and quit offering my input when I think there's a better way to do something? What happened to being equal partners? —Walking On Eggshells

Dear Eggshells: Part of being equal partners means getting in tune with how each other think. Right now, you're way off key. It will help you a lot to understand how men think, which, admittedly, can seem really weird at times.

Sensitivity Signifies Insecurity

When I started researching men, one of the things that surprised me is how important it is for a man to feel that his wife trusts, appreciates, and respects him. It's also surprisingly easy it is for him to feel that she doesn't.

Super sensitive is just code for secretly insecure. A guy has a lot of hidden self-doubt. He desperately wants to be a great husband who can meet your needs, be your hero and make you proud.

But he worries that he's not up to the task. Or, even worse, that you will see that he's not up to the task.

In so many cases, when a man is trying to get something done, the issue is not really about the problem he's trying to solve. It's about whether you think he's adequate to solve it.

Not Asking For Directions

Let's say the two of you are late for an important dinner. He's driving. You're lost. The GPS was wrong. And he doesn't want to stop to ask for directions.

For him, trying to find his way is not just an adventure; it is a test. A test of whether he is capable to figure it out on his own. He wants to be the hero who is going to get his lady to that dinner on time.

He wants to be a success in your eyes. So when you tell him he needs to stop and ask some other guy for directions, you've just told him he's a failure. That he's inadequate.

Now here is where we women think men are way too sensitive. We're not calling our man a failure. We're just being efficient, right?

But we also might think, "OK, so he feels inadequate. But at least we got there on time. What's the big deal?" Actually, it is a big deal.

Men Fear Inadequacy

For most women, feeling inadequate is unpleasant. For most men it is excruciating. It hurts more than anything else ever can, especially when he feels like he's inadequate for you.

My husband, Jeff, explained it to me this way. "It's easy for a woman to say, 'He's being too sensitive.' Maybe she's right, but that's because a guy has a deep doubt that he knows what he's doing."

Therefore, a deep need to know that the person who knows him best is going to choose to believe in him, regardless. Aren't there things women are insecure and ultra-sensitive about, too?

Would a woman like it if her husband teased her about gaining 10 pounds? Everyone is ultra-sensitive about something that touches on a deep insecurity.

What Matters Most?

What's a woman to do? As one woman asked at a conference where I was speaking: "So, what do you say when your husband is driving around in circles? I'm proud of you?"

Everyone in the room had a good laugh over that one, me included. But here's how I answered:

"When a man is trying to accomplish anything (whether that's building bookcases or trying to get somewhere on time), it makes all the difference if you ask yourself one question: What matters most in this situation?"

Is it (a) that this thing gets accomplished, and does so in the way I think best? Or is it (b) meeting my man's deepest emotional need, avoiding hurt to him, and preserving the relationship?

In most cases, when you look at it that way there's no contest. You may not say I'm so proud of you when he's driving in circles, but perhaps you force yourself to remain silent.

Perhaps you force yourself to trust that he is not an idiot and that because he is excruciatingly aware of the time ticking away. And if he's anxious not to fail you, he will come up with a solution.

If you find yourself in that rare situation where getting the thing accomplished your way is most important, is it worth the hurt to the relationship?

Explain Yourself

Just remember: what matters most is not what you say, but how you say it. The men I interviewed said it felt very different if you explained your worry instead of ordering him to pull over.

"Honey, I'm beginning to get nervous that we might be late. Normally, I'd be OK if we drove a bit longer, but since this is a huge meeting would you mind if we stopped and I asked for directions?"

Although your man is indeed sensitive inside, realize it is because he deeply wants to be your hero. So find ways to show him that you think he is the strong and competent man he wants to be!

If you do, you'll see that sensitivity arising a lot less often.

30 Questions To Ask Your Husband

By Meygan Caston



Plan a date night or find some time for you guys to be uninterrupted to focus on each other.

Ladies, be curious about your husband. Ditch the obligatory "How was your day?" Replace it with unique, thought provoking, open-ended questions.

Demonstrating genuine interest in your husband and opening dialogue shows that you care and enhances one of the joys of marriage — the sharing of lives.

Plan a date night or find some time for you guys to be uninterrupted to focus on each other.

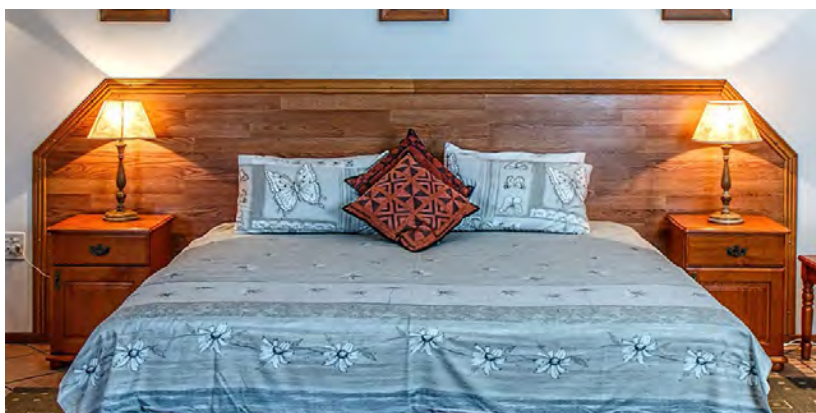
1. If you could have one super power, what would it be?
2. What is your favorite part of our marriage?
3. What is one of your career goals that you want to tackle in the next 10 years?
4. What is your favorite restaurant and why?
5. If you could drive one car for the rest of your life, what would it be?
6. What is one of your dreams that I can help you achieve?
7. What makes you feel overwhelmed at work?
8. Which would be the hardest to give up: coffee or carbs?
9. What is your best memory of our dating years?
10. What could I do to make you feel more respected?
11. What are 5 practical ways that I can show my love for you?
12. If you gave money to charity, which would you pick and why?
13. How do you like to be kissed?
14. What's a new hobby you'd like to try?
15. What is one bad habit you need to break, but don't want to?
16. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
17. What did your parents teach you that you appreciate now?
18. Describe to me your ideal day?
19. What is your favorite movie of all time?
20. What would you like more of in our marriage?
21. How can I show you that I am listening to you?
22. Who is someone that inspires you to be a greater man?
23. What can I do to make you feel more confident in our future?
24. What can I do for you this week to make your life easier?
25. How often would you like to go out on a date night?
26. What is your favorite thing about your personality?
27. What mutual goal would you like to see us accomplish?
28. What is something you would like us to do to invest in our marriage this year?
29. What's one thing I can say more often to show I respect you?
30. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?

For those of you wives who took the time and asked these questions, how did it go? Were you surprised by their answers?

Did you feel more connected to your husband? Was there a specific question/response that stood out to you?

How Often Do Men Need To Have Sex?

By Shaunti Feldhahn



Women think of sex as being a physical need for a man: but it isn't. One of a man's deepest emotional needs is to feel his wife desires him.

Dear Shaunti: You're the researcher, so please tell me the real answer: How often do guys need to have sex? I just don't think about sex much; I guess it isn't a need for me.

But my husband says he thinks about it all the time. And he gets crabby that I'm often too tired. Even though I can go weeks or months and not miss sex, since he can't, I try to do the right thing.

Even when I tell him OK, that just makes him mad. He says he wants me to want it like he does. I feel like I can't win. If I knew how often a man needs sex, I could plan on it. —Not Feeling Frisky

Dear Not Feeling Frisky: How would you feel if you told your husband, "I need to hear you say I love you." And he heaved a big sigh and said, "OK, I'll try to say it. How often do you need to hear it? Is once a week OK? Whatever it is, tell me, and I'll plan on that."

My guess is, you'd be really hurt. You'd be thinking, "He supposedly loves me, but he has to force himself to dredge up the willpower to show me love?" Maybe he doesn't love me like he says he does.

You wouldn't be hurt because he didn't say "I love you" enough times. You'd be hurt because of what it implied.

Maybe it means he doesn't care about you. Maybe, you might think, it means you really aren't even all that lovable.

Sex Is Not Just a Physical Need

Sex works the exact same way for most men. In the research, there seems to be no one standard amount of sex that men need to have. It's what sex signals to them that is important.

Your sexual actions signal: I desire you; You are desirable; I want to be with you in that way; You make me feel amazing; I want to show you how much I care about you.

We women think of sex as being primarily a physical need for a man: but it isn't. One of a man's deepest emotional needs is to feel that his wife desires him.

If he sees that his wife desires him, it gives him a sense of well-being in all the other areas of his life.

But if she shows "OK, fine, let's get this over with," then it is clear to him that she doesn't desire him. He's no good at trying to make her feel amazing. He must be completely undesirable. She doesn't really care about him the way she says she does.

Men and Women Have Different Desires

In my research with men and women, it was very clear that most women simply have a different type of desire than men.

We need to be approached differently. Most women simply don't think about sex as often as men do.

But let's look at that "I love you" parallel for a moment. The research was just as clear that men love their wives, but simply don't think about saying words of love as often as a woman might want, either.

Yet, we rightly expect men to be purposeful about developing new habits of showing love. We rightly expect them to learn how to do that, and do it enthusiastically (rather than under compulsion), because it is so emotionally important to us as women.

The same thing can be said of sex. Yes, there are sometimes physical or emotional things that get in the way. If that is true of you, please seek out professional help to address those issues.

For many women, we just don't realize how important it is to be purposeful about developing new habits of showing our husbands love in this way; of learning how to do it, and doing it enthusiastically because it is so emotionally important to our men.

The Benefits of Scheduled Sex

Some women who just don't think about sex and risk being too tired for it, have learned that one great solution is to schedule sex dates.

One woman I interviewed said that no matter what else was going on in their lives, she and her husband always made time for intimacy on Sunday nights.

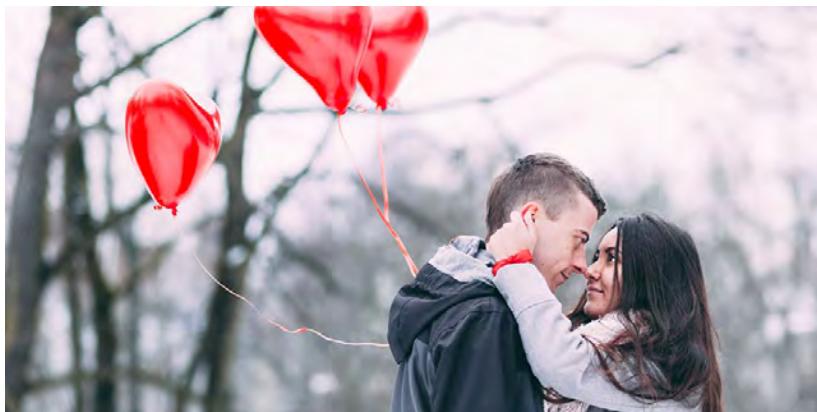
Although it didn't fit the Hollywood ideal of tumbling into bed spontaneously, she discovered that in the real world, this was something that got her thinking about it. She came to truly love that time together. And so did her husband!

Although the average appears to be a few times a week, there is no one right amount of sex that men need.

Instead, the one constant is his emotional need to feel that you desire him. Find ways to show that, and you'll probably see more love coming from him to you, too!

6 Ways a Woman Can Make Valentine's Day Last All Year Long

By Jennifer Murff



Valentine's Day is about remembering why you love that special someone and what you can do to love them more.

I've celebrated many Valentine's Days with my husband. It has been a crazy ride—four kids, 10 moves, four career changes. We have had lots of school, lots of travel, lots of hugs, and a lot of laughs in that time.

But I would not want to do this crazy life with anyone else. Life without him would surely be empty, and boring.

Along my journey with my Valentine, I've realized I may have taken some things for granted. I've made some mistakes, and let my pride get in the way sometimes of a experiencing all that a thriving, fun-filled marriage can offer.

I want to share some lessons I have leaned along the way so that you do not make the same mistakes.

1. Never Turn Down A Hug From Him

I have learned to never turn down the opportunity for a hug. I remember one day when I was frying bacon and Justin came up behind me to put his arms around my waist. Sweet, right?

Unfortunately, I decided to shrug him off and scoot him out of my kitchen. In my mind, I was acting in an abundance of caution. What if my bacon burned? Seriously, when I'm elbow deep in hot grease is hardly the time for romance, right?

Sadly, my girls were watching the scene unfold and they interpreted this caution as what it really was: a moment that mom dismissed and turned away dad.

My husband interpreted it as a moment where he was rejected. I felt horrible afterwards. And it was all over bacon. So, next time I'm frying bacon and my man wants a hug, I'll remember that burnt bacon is better than a broken heart.

2. Kiss Him Everyday

Kiss your special someone every day. You know what is crazy; Justin even wants to kiss me first thing in the morning. I'll never understand this.

I have the worst morning breath. But he honestly does not care. I am more of the "let me have my coffee, shower, and brush my teeth first" kind of girl.

Over time, I've decided that I need to just lay one on him, bad breath and all, when he first wakes up. It makes him feel loved, and it's not a bad way to start the day either.

3. Chores Will Always Be There

I'm busy. I'm a mom, wife, student, business owner, and more.

There's a pile of clean clothes on the couch as tall as me, just waiting to be folded. At the end of the day, I can either feel accomplished because I have a clean house or I can feel accomplished because my man feels loved. I think I will go for the latter!

Become interested in your husband. I'm learning to become more interested in his interests. The longing of a person's heart is to know another and to be known.

In our case, I've learned to be interested in politics, guns, history, and art. I have learned to sit through British comedy and German news. It is not because I understand it, but because I want to understand my man.

I want to not just listen but hear and engage with him. He has so much to offer and I want to learn and grow by engaging in great conversations, and gain insight from a different perspective.

4. Touch Him, A Lot

Like many men, Justin's love language is touch. As a mom of four kids, I am constantly bombarded with touch all the time. However, this does not negate the needs of my husband.

So, I promised to give him more sweet touches—a foot rub or back rub, holding his hand, something every day just to let him know that I am incredibly in love with him.

5. Embrace Him Fully

Have you heard the saying that “the things that you thought were cute while dating, will eventually get annoying?” Well, that’s absolutely true.

Try as you might, you cannot change your spouse. I decided years ago to let my husband be who he is. That includes his loud, fun, and often goofy moments.

If there’s anything that people know about my husband, it is that he is funny. I have to continue to fully embrace all of him—the good, the bad, and the silly.

You see, even after more than a decade together, he still needs to know that I adore him, and that I’m looking for ways to love him more.

Valentine’s Day is not only about the hot sex (though it is awesome), but also remembering why you love that special someone and what you can do to love them more.

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