

Love in Action

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What does it mean to tell someone “I love you”? How many times have people said that to you in your lifetime? The words are great to hear. They make us feel all warm and mushy inside. Of course, there are different kinds of love. Our minister may say “I love you” but it means something different than when our child says, “I love you”. And of course it means something entirely different when our lover says, “I love you.”

How do we know what those words mean and are the words enough? I know women like to hear the words, too many years of living with the silent types who can't say the words can grate on a person after a while. But its possible to hear the words over and over from people who don't show it, and the words become meaningless.

A child who is regularly beaten by his parents hears the words “I love you” and begins to think that love means being hit. A child whose parents left her at her grandparents for weeks on end hear the words “I love you” and learns that the words mean abandonment. The words are only meaningful through the action that accompanies them.

Love then is an action. The actions teach us what the words mean. I was married to a man who was wonderful on Valentines day, on Mother's Day, on Christmas, and sometimes on my birthday, but the rest of the year failed to take the actions to show me that I was loved. Do I believe he loved me? Yes, I think he did to the extent that he was capable. But I needed him to show me.

Small things help us know that our partner is thinking of us, sometimes they are microscopic. Sometimes they may go completely unnoticed by our partner. When we

love someone we do things for them, not just to please them, but also to love them, fully and completely.

My husband hates it when I leave crumbs on the counter after I fix my breakfast, so I try to make a conscious effort to wipe off the counter before I leave for work. I hate it when he leaves his socks on the bedroom floor, so he consciously makes the effort to toss them in the laundry when he undresses. These are the microscopic ways we show each other, through our actions, that we love each other.

When our partner first walks through the door at the end of the day, if we greet them with a hug and a kiss and ask them about their day, they feel welcomed. If our partner does something beyond our expectations we feel loved. Yesterday I asked my husband to check on the peas that were warming in the microwave, he did, but noticed that the inside of the microwave was dirty. He took out the peas, pulled out the turntable, washed it off and wiped out the inside of the microwave. I just gave him a big hug. I felt loved and cared for and wanted him to know how appreciated he was. Both his actions and my reactions were a way of turning our love into an action.

Discovering what makes our partner feel loved is a lifetime job. What they need from day to day, from year to year, changes. By paying attention to what is going on with them, and asking them what makes them feel loved we can take intentional actions to help them feel our love. The reward is not only a happy mate, but they will see how our actions make them feel, and will want us to feel the same way in return.

Our job then is to let our partner know what makes us feel loved, and let them know we appreciate the things they do that help us feel their love. When we

communicate fully what we need and that we appreciate it; then we are also taking loving action. How can our partner know what we need unless we tell them? It is often hard for men to ask what we need and they think they are supposed to just know, but unless they are mind readers, they can't possibly know.

Tonight, tell your partner some of the things they do that make you feel loved. Then ask your partner to tell you three or four things that you can do for them that will help them to feel loved and cared for by you. Let them know that you will try to do these things for them, but not to expect it or ask you about it, just to notice when you do. Then tell your partner what they can do to show their love to you.

Over time, if you continue to communicate what feels loving to you and your partner does the same, your intimacy level will increase. Your sense of being cared for and loved will provide a kind of healing base that can allow you to accomplish more than you ever dreamed possible. Love as an action can do that for you.