

Think back to the last time you felt unappreciated. How did you feel towards the person who didn't appreciate your efforts? Were you more or less likely to continue doing the behavior that wasn't appreciated?

Think back to the last time you felt appreciated. Ask yourself the same set of questions as above. Obviously, you are happier and much more likely to repeat a behavior when you feel appreciated.

Learning how to express sincere appreciation is a critical skill in forming and sustaining a healthy marriage. ***The first step in developing this skill is to become aware of the many things your spouse does for you.***

It's impossible to express your sincere appreciation for something you are unaware of. One area that is easy to overlook is "invisible work". Invisible work is anything your spouse does that you only notice when it is not done.

A good example is the laundry. If you always have clean clothes, then it is easy to take for granted the efforts of your spouse who is doing the laundry. You may not notice which day the laundry gets done, but you do notice when you don't have clean clothes. You might even say something unkind about it.



It's easy to take for granted everything your spouse does for you. You may even think, "I've told him or her before how much I appreciated \_\_\_\_." or "He or she doesn't need to be told thank you every time, and if I did the words would start to lose their value".

The vast majority of us are not in danger of expressing too much sincere appreciation. In fact, we are guilty of expressing too little.

Once you recognize what your spouse does for you, ***the next step is to express your sincere appreciation for his or her help.*** This can be as simple as saying "Thank you" or "I really appreciated that". Another option is to let your spouse know *how* it made you feel and *why* you appreciated the behavior.

***If you are feeling under appreciated, then ask for appreciation.*** This lets your spouse know you would like to feel more appreciated. Keep giving specific reminders of things you want to be thanked for until your spouse develops the habit of expressing appreciation.

Feeling appreciated is a basic human need. When you fulfill that need for your spouse, the joy and happiness in your marriage will increase and the pain and misery will decrease.

## Action Plan

Write down four things you normally forget to thank your spouse for.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Make a list of three different ways you can express sincere appreciation for what your spouse has done.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Repeat these activities several times a week until you have developed the habit of frequently expressing sincere appreciation.

Visit [healthymarriage.org](http://healthymarriage.org) to read the other topics in this pamphlet series.



Did you know on average, children, women, men and communities do better on every positive social outcome such as physical and emotional health, education, safety, financial, etc., when a couple has a healthy marriage?

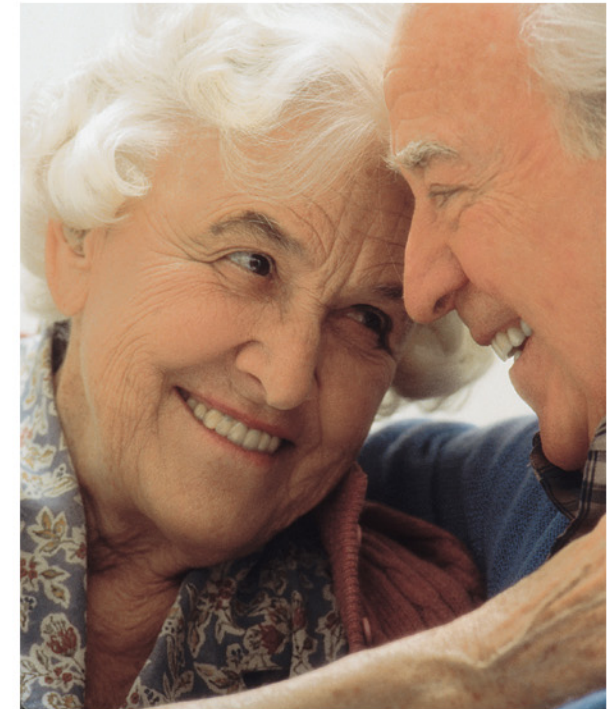
All couples want a healthy and happy marriage. Many couples have been able to figure out through years of trial and error what it takes to form and sustain a healthy marriage. By studying these couples, researchers have identified the relationship skills and knowledge used to keep marriages healthy.

This pamphlet is part of the research-based Healthy Marriage Pamphlet Series which is designed to teach the relationship skills and knowledge to help couples form and sustain healthy marriages.

We need your help distributing these pamphlets. Feel free to photocopy this pamphlet, or visit [www.healthymarriage.org](http://www.healthymarriage.org) to download and print the other topics in this series.

# Marriage

Increase the Joy  
Decrease the Misery



# Appreciation

A Key to Unlocking the Door to  
a Healthy and Happy Marriage