

Mr. Gocke discusses the importance of Appreciation and Gratitude to couple long-term relationships. He uses his stories, practical application exercises, and journaling to help couples understand how important their mates are to them.

At the Very Heart and Soul

A Common-Sense Guide to Appreciation and Gratitude for Couple Relationships

by Timothy Neff Gocke

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TIMOTHY NEFF GOCKE



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This book provides content related to appreciation and gratitude in relationships and other topics related to those just mentioned. As such, use of this book implies your acceptance of this disclaimer.

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Chapter 1

Spoiled Rotten by Having Too Much of a Good Thing

“Never let having too much of a good thing spoil your appreciation for those who love you the most!”

T Neff G

Let’s take a look at the “spoiled rotten” issue and why it plays a role in the type of behavior that lacks appreciation in partner relationships. Although many of us in this country have a good life, there are some that stretch the boundaries of being spoiled. There is such a thing as having too much. This has a tendency to lead to unappreciative behavior towards the mate who is lavishing the other with material things. Having too much of a good thing can lead to high expectations from those on the receiving end. In other words, it isn’t a gift anymore, but something expected. It stands to reason that the more we have the less we appreciate it.

As an example, look at children and the toys bestowed on them by their parents. Those children who have a packed room stuffed with toys barely know what they have let alone playing with any one of them. The child that just has a few toys will play with them over and over again. When another new toy just happens to come their way, that child with very little will certainly appreciate it.

Another example are the shoes and clothes adults own. When it comes to shoes, we can all agree that many of us have an over-abundance of them. However, most of us have the tendency to wear just a select few. We have a tendency to wear our favorites and those shoes that provide the most comfort. It’s not only this though, it is finding those pairs we do like but are hidden among the hundreds of shoes stacked in our closets. We have all these shoes stacked so high and in so many rows they look like high-rises in downtown Manhattan! As it turns out, if we do find those shoes we really want to wear, they just happen to be

located on the fifth floor in one of our high-rises, and removing them could cause a collapse of Trump Tower. When all those shoes do fall, it will actually look like a giant traffic jam at Times Square where both partners are forced to weave and dance their way in and out of their closet as they're getting ready for work.

Too many clothes lead to the same issue with an overload of items both stuffed and stacked in our closets where we don't even realize what we have anymore. Again, our tendency is to wear our favorites and those clothes that provide the most comfort. The real issue here is why do we find it necessary to spend so much money on all those things that we don't really need? Tee shirts with certain logos on it are always a temptation. I must have at least thirty to forty shirts with the West Virginia University logo on them. Since I played basketball at West Virginia University as well as graduated from there, all those shirts have meaning to me but still I only wear a select few.

I really believe it is an impulsive desire to have something new where our wants go far beyond our needs. It is having too much of what we do need but when overloaded with too much, the value and appreciation are far less important to us.

Material things in abundance does not make a partner happier or make for better relationships. If you really choose to spoil your partner, a far better way to show your appreciation is by giving them much more of your time. This relates to those activities your mate prefers to do. I have always thought that it wasn't the gifts we bestow on our partner, but rather the special time we give them. It is much easier to shop for a gift, but far more meaningful to your partner, to give them some of your special time. Spoiling your partner can be a good thing if done the right way. The ones who love you most can never get enough of your time.

Don't mistake this with the things you like to do and then inviting your partner to come along with you. Doing activities together that is dominated by one mate's choices is not showing appreciation but is rather narcissism in disguise. Always getting your way truly is being spoiled rotten. Sharing activities that each of you like is the best way to go in reciprocating appreciation for each other.

Travel and vacation spots are also other areas where one partner can dominate in making choices as to where a couple goes. If one of the partners typically dominates in decisions over activities, travel, and vacation spots, resentment from the other partner can often surface over time. The best example is the golf outing or trip where one partner is considered a tag along, occasionally offering their uber services when needed. Nothing feels worse than going somewhere with your partner when you're counting down the time for this whole thing to end. Of course, the other one is thoroughly enjoying the outing and is suggesting a return visit.

One way of showing your spoiled golfing buddy how it feels to be a tag along is an exciting day of shopping at an art gallery or even a flea market or two. The spoiled buddy could then come back with a plan for several nice days of fly fishing or hunting for the two of you. Double down together by doing something that neither of you like to do such as: skydiving, mountain climbing together while fighting off mountain lions, or bungee jumping. A few of you just might like doing these activities together!

I hope my readers appreciated my gender-neutral approach to all my examples. I wanted to make sure I didn't do any stereotyping while describing those scenarios. These examples are certainly a stretch but they do get my point across. By far, the best approach for both partners are to give special time to each other by finding places to go or activities to do that both of you like. As stated earlier, there is something to be said concerning interests shared and compatibility of couples. Those couples that share the same interests have a much easier time in sharing appreciation with each other.

It is also important that each partner have separate interests that each can enjoy on their own. Having separate interests in couple relationships is quite normal. Each partner should encourage each other to have and enjoy separate hobbies and activities.

Now, for the big question! Who in the relationship is the most spoiled when it comes to always getting their way? While you wrangle over this, I would love to be: a fly on the wall when this issue is debated, or

maybe a dog, or the best of all, a pet parrot where I could remind both of you over and over again about what you just said. This, most likely, will turn out to be a good example of what happens when bickering kicks in between mates. I discuss the bickering issue in Chapter 6.

Practical Application for Chapter 1-Please read information below before answering questions.

The best way to debate the travel and activity issue is to write down separately all those activities you've done or places you've traveled together in the past five years and who initiated it? (important) Now write down separately those activities and places when you were by yourself. (not including business trips unless the spouse was allowed to go too) That, in itself, is very telling. Add up the score knowing that some activities were enjoyed by both of you. The proof is in the pudding as they say-and the winner....? What activities or places to visit can be chosen so both of you can enjoy these things together? (flexibility in choosing activities or places to go should be done by allowing each one to alternate in choosing or suggesting) It is important to have an action plan in writing as a reminder to follow through. Following through with an action plan in writing and then implementing it is the hardest step.

This exercise was done to make you aware of the many activities or places to go that both of you could enjoy together. Do each of you try to share who initiates activities or places to go? I also discussed that having separate interests for activities or hobbies is normal and encouraged that for each partner. Showing support for your partner's separate interests is a way to show how much you love them.

- (1) Together write down activities and places you went to where you were both involved in the past ten years and who initiated it?

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- (2) Now list separately activities and vacations where you went alone the past five years?

First Mate

Best Mate

- (3) Write down an action plan together on activities and places to go both of you would enjoy doing together. Who usually initiates doing these activities or places to go? Both partners should have equal opportunity for suggesting activities, trips and vacation spots.

- (4) Do both of you support your partner's hobbies and how do you show your support?

First Mate

Best Mate

Chapter 2

Have We Lost Our Manners with Those We Love the Most?

“Appreciation has tremendous power. A beautiful thing is not beautiful until someone appreciates it.”

Debasish Mridha

You know that old saying, “treat others as you would like to be treated.” Of course, you have heard this since you were a little kid to treat Johnny or Sally as you would like to be treated. It isn’t hogwash except that it is hard to do particularly if you are the only one following this rule. It does have merit but it’s not followed like it should be.

With that said, this brings me to the topic of manners. Most of us follow the basics such as: please, thank you, excuse me, and I’m sorry. That was drilled into all of us since we were little children. The problem now is the lack of sincerity that often follows as we get older. When throwing in everyday stress that we are all under living in a society like ours, it makes it difficult just to follow the basics. I really believe the fast-paced society we live in and the advent of social media has made us numb to the feelings of others.

When I look at some of the statements made on Facebook and Twitter, it always pits one against the other. A mean statement leads to the exchange of even meaner statements. This goes on as many people spend their days making remarks about people they don’t even know or discuss topics they know nothing about. I have found people will say things by e-mail or text that they would never say in person. I believe it emboldens a person to be more aggressive in nature.

It can come back and bite you when you see that same person at the local grocery store who you just bashed on Facebook several days ago. You happened to write a very aggressive opinion to this individual about Donald Trump in a text message to them. You find yourself

hiding from aisle to aisle to avoid them while trying to think of what you are going to say to them when you finally meet. It is interesting that you had no problem in giving your opinion on social media two days ago. Now you decide to wait it out in aisle six with a good view of the check-out lines. After spending ten minutes in the peanut section faking about what you're going to buy there, you finally see that person in the far check-out lane getting ready to leave.

You then make a dash to the closest check-out lane as she heads outside with her cart. Then suddenly this person races back to the counter where she checked out. The check-out lady then hands her milk they had forgotten to put in her cart. As she leaves, she looks over and sees you but there is no acknowledgement. Absent is that smile and wave she usually gives you when you see each other out in public. As she heads out, your stomach is churning with a slight flushing to the face. There is a lesson here: Don't write anything in a text or e-mail that you wouldn't feel comfortable discussing in person. Cutting back on those temptations when texting or e-mailing can spare many of us from having those embarrassing moments I just described.

Limiting the use of the internet can also give us more time to spend with family who bring meaning to our lives. I think of home as a place to hide and revive ourselves from the outside world. If we can't find our home to be a kind and loving environment, where else are we going to find protection from that cruel world of ours? Many people are relying on spirituality and a relationship with a higher power as a way to deal with the trials and tribulations of life.

If we go back to the family as our refuge in life, why is it that those who we have the closest relations with are sometimes the very same ones we can be rudest to? Listen to your partner on the phone or when answering the door, who could be a friend or even a stranger, and you'll actually find out how mannerly they can be. Watch particularly how the tone of voice changes so quickly to one of the sweetest persons on earth. Once they hang up or close the door, look out. They go back to that same old bag of tricks, which is to say, they become downright hostile again. How do they change back and forth like that so quickly? Your partner is

a Jekyll and Hyde and you're getting the Hyde side of things. Listen mate, it can be turned on and off in a flash, just like that!

I touched upon the issue of tone of voice which is so important for the development of a close relationship with your partner. The tone sets the stage for an inviting conversation or one where you want to run quickly to seek shelter in a faraway room. It's best to have a door with two bolts for locking to insure privacy from inside intruders. There is nothing better than being able to retreat to a private getaway when the atmosphere deteriorates.

I think tone of voice is the single most important nonverbal cue for setting up a positive or negative response from the other party. Watch your dog slink away when that certain tone begins. It is a preemptive strike before rude behavior begins. If your dog knows, how do you think your partner feels when that certain combative tone starts. Oh no, here we go again!

Once combative behavior starts and the other partner decides to take the gloves off, it becomes a situation that often spins out of control. In many cases, the best way to handle a situation like this is to negotiate a time-out whenever either partner sees the situation deteriorating quickly. Like I said, the tone in the conversation will cue you in before an eruption even occurs.

We do time-outs with kids! Why can't that same behavior be used with two adults when an argument starts and quickly ignites into a war of words. I have never seen a situation resolved in the heat of battle. It makes perfect sense to use a time-out as a tool for cooling off. Hey, they do that in sports all the time. Teams are allotted a certain number of time-outs per game to use for regrouping purposes to get their team back on track.

That same time-out tool can be used to get back on track for couples when they see a situation deteriorating rapidly. Quite often when going back to that same issue after a cooling-off period, both parties are wondering why they were fighting in the first place. Usually it was a way to let off steam from stresses of the day. However, your partner

shouldn't be the one that takes the brunt of an argument particularly when they had nothing to do with it.

Having a plan of action that both of you agree on before an argument ensues is the best way both partners can eliminate the damage inflicted from disagreements. Agree to break away from the situation before it becomes heated and return to the situation for a resolution when the timing is right.

Although there is an alternative to the time-out technique called agreeing to disagree, it might be seen as an easy way out when issues arise. However, sometimes there are issues both parties won't agree on no matter what is done to come to an agreement. If this is the case, the agreeing to disagree alternative is a good way to put an issue to bed as long as both mates agree while making sure there is no resentment from either side.

Agreeing to disagree is also a good way to cut short an argument without any damage. This style offers a truce by knowing where both partners stand on an issue. This is certainly not my favorite way of handling a disagreement, but it can be used when you know neither one will ever change their view on that issue. I would encourage using this only when it's appropriate for handling disagreements and both partners are in agreement for using this alternative.

It is also possible to use both techniques in conjunction with each other when a disagreement occurs, but it could be sending a mixed message to one or both parties that you won't be addressing this again at a later time. In this case, both parties could agree to disagree on a temporary basis until the heat of battle is defused. There would have to be an agreement that this particular issue would be discussed later so no resentment builds up for either partner.

What cue is used to indicate when a time-out is needed should be decided in your plan of action. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6 as a way to reinforce the importance of the time-out technique for tempering the war of words. As discussed in Chapter 6, I have found the best non-verbal cue to use is signaling the T-sign with both hands. Just

by using your own style for signaling a time-out could bring humor into the situation. Anything that limits the war of words is a blessing!

Remember, neither one of you is running away from the disagreement but rather avoiding damaging and hurtful words which can often lead to resentment. Resentments like these are often a breeding ground for creating a hostile environment where it becomes difficult to resolve any issue. When simple issues can't be resolved, it is the hostility from past skirmishes that keeps partners from using a problem-solving approach.

Both of you need to have a joint plan of action for breaking away from each other when hostile situations like these occur. It's a good way to eliminate the continual cycle of bickering and the resentment that comes with it.

Practical Application for Chapter 2-Please read information below before answering questions.

Write down a plan of action together for dealing with possible eruptions and disagreements in your relationship. Why is it important to do this exercise together? How can you lessen the resentment caused from past disagreements? It's wise to always be reminded about the dangers of arguing on a daily basis. Often times, what is said during a heated argument is never forgotten which adds fuel to growing resentments. Important-Posting your time-out plan of action where both of you can readily see it would be a daily reminder to follow through on your agreement. Using the agreeing to disagree approach can be used as long as both parties know whether this is a permanent or temporary decision on an issue.

This exercise was done to show the danger of damaging and hurtful words during the heat of battle and the resentment that often follows a disagreement. I also discussed the importance of time-outs as a tool for a cooling-off period before a heated battle begins or just after it starts by quickly introducing the time-out technique. What cue is used to indicate that a time-out is needed should be worked out in your joint plan of action. Again, I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 6. Covering this topic again is my way of showing just how important time-outs are when disagreements arise.

(1) Devise your own action plan together for a time-out when disagreements arise. An action plan should include when to use your time-out, how it will be implemented, why it should be implemented and an appropriate time to return to discussing your disagreement. Where is also important in finding a quiet, comfortable place without interruption (both partners ditch their cell phones). Chapter 6 discusses the cue to indicate a time-out. (I suggested the t-sign with two hands).

(2) Does tone of voice indicate that arguing may be on the way? What does your dog do when that certain tone of voice changes? (if you own one) What are you thinking when you hear those certain tone changes taking place in your partner?

First Mate

Best Mate

(3) Discuss together how both of you feel about agreeing to disagree as a way to end a dispute?

Chapter 3

How Taking Your Partner for Granted Can Ruin Couple Relationships

“You never fully appreciate what you had
until you don’t have it anymore.”

Glenn Beck

Taking a partner for granted is an age-old issue which never seems to go away. This seems to happen to couples when they reach the familiarity stage in their relationships. The familiarity stage brings with it not only the temptation to take a partner for granted but also is a breeding ground for creating dissension. You know the old saying. “Familiarity breeds contempt.” The cold-shoulder and/or bickering between partners that I discuss in Chapter 6 usually comes on slowly as we drift deeper into the familiarity stage. It comes about during the relationship when the newness has worn off and our daily routines become mundane. This ordinary feeling is a result of having been with each other for a certain period of time where the relationship has drifted well into the familiarity stage.

In a sense, that ordinary feeling allows us to be ourselves and relax around each other. With that, sometimes a drifting can take place even to the point where we start ignoring each other. The drifting away from each other is quite common when we reach the deeper familiarity stages in our relationship. If a couple drifts away from each other long enough, a roommate mentality can take over where intimacy is no longer part of the relationship. The romance or honeymoon has been missing for a long time and our routine lives take over. A couple needs to be very careful not to drift too far away from each other. Taking the one you love for granted over an extended period of time can often have serious consequences.

You know the old song, “You’re Gonna Miss Me When I’m Gone.” It was done by Brooks and Dunn in 1995 and became a US Country Songs (Billboard) number one hit. The last lyrics of the song go like this:

You’re good at going through the motions

All I hear are alibis

Now I get this empty feeling

When I look into your eyes

I don’t see a love light shining

I don’t know what’s going on

You better kiss me

Cause you’re gonna miss me when I’m gone

You better kiss me

Cause you’re gonna miss me when I’m gone

This song says it all. Often times we realize just how much we love our partner but then it’s too late. Give me that last kiss ‘cause you’re gonna miss me when I’m gone. Does that song strike a chord for anyone? It’s sad that we don’t appreciate that person until they have left our lives. It seems to be a human trait to understand what we’ve done only after that person is out of the picture. It usually takes a while for regrets to take hold. Then that familiar question comes, “what have I done?” That’s happened to many of us during our lives. For some though, there is a sense of relief to one or both partners when this break-up occurs.

Practical Application for Chapter 3-Please read information below before answering questions.

Write down separately all the things you will miss about your partner if they were suddenly gone from your life. Discuss and share those things you will miss about your partner if they were to leave. Why could this exercise save a lot of heartache for both of you down the road. As they say, “better safe than sorry!”

This exercise was done to remind you of what it could be like if your partner was to leave your relationship. Always appreciate the one you’re with and let them know how much you love them each and every day.

- (1) Write down separately what you would miss about your partner if they were gone from your life?

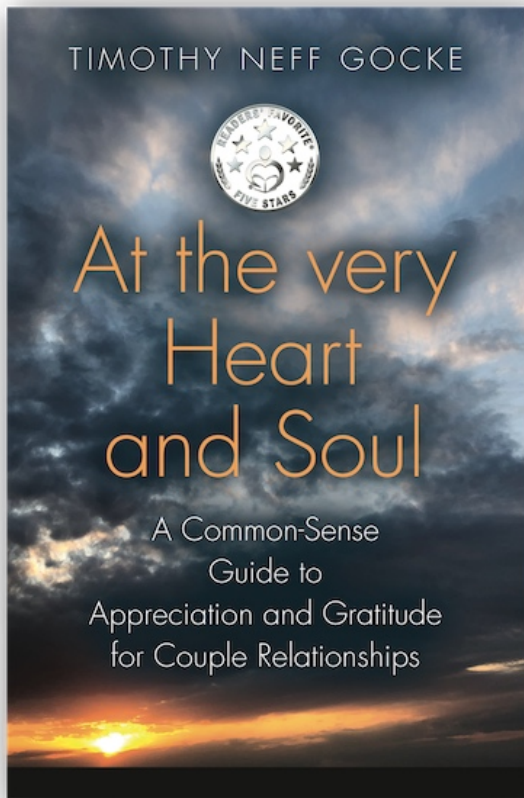
First Mate

Best Mate

- (2) Take turns to share what each of you have written to Question 1. Do this in a relaxed environment free from interruptions. Hide your cell phones!

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- (3) Did the last verse of the song by Brooks and Dunn strike a chord for either of you? In what way? Discuss together.



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