
THE DAILY TEMPERATURE READING

Confiding--the ability to reveal yourself fully, honestly and directly to another human being is the life-blood of intimacy.

It's frightening to be in a close relationship in which silences, hidden agendas, contradictions and inconsistencies are a steady diet. No matter how much in love two people are or how well-suited to each other, no relationship can flourish under that kind of strain. Clear, regular communication is needed to live and/or work together with satisfaction.

In relationships that go well, couples tend to maintain an easy, flowing communication about the big and little things that are going on in their lives. Based on this observation, Virginia Satir developed a technique for keeping each other up-to-date which she calls the Daily Temperature Reading. This simple structure has become a major source of relationship pleasure for many couples. It also works well in other settings and in other relationships.

THE DAILY TEMPERATURE READING EXERCISE

Two things are true about the Daily Temperature Reading: one, that it can be a very important technique for staying close, and, two, that all too often, when one gets busy, one tends to let it slide.

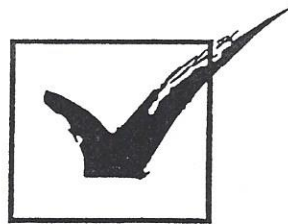
> APPRECIATION

> NEW INFORMATION

> PUZZLES

> COMPLAINTS WITH REQUESTS FOR CHANGE

> WISHES, HOPES, AND DREAMS



Don't let it slide!



PASSAGE TO INTIMACY



Take a Temperature Reading on each other once a day. This is an important way to maintain or develop open, flowing communication in your relationship. You will evolve your own style for doing it, but here's the basic format you will want to work from:

- 1) Appreciation
- 2) New Information
- 3) Puzzles
- 4) Complaints with Requests for Change
- 5) Wishes, Hopes and Dreams

- 1) Appreciation. We need to be told what's good about us, and nobody is better equipped to tell us than the person who is closest to us. We hear so much about what's wrong with us, both from the world at large and from ourselves (we're usually our own worst critics). When you see something in your partner that you appreciate, express it -- either with words or with a gesture, but express it. Many of us also have to learn to accept our partner's appreciation. Often we have a conditioned response of brushing off compliments ("Oh, this old thing?" or "It was nothing"). We need to accept what they say and to thank them for saying it.
- 2) New Information. When we fail to provide routine information about what's going on with us, there's too much room left for making assumptions. Intimacy thrives only when both partners know what is happening in each other's lives -- the trivial as well as the important. It may be related to work ("I finally got that new contract"), family ("Aunt Maude's getting married again"), mutual concerns and interests ("I'm worried about that mole on your neck" or "Here's an article I think you'd enjoy reading"), or friends ("I had lunch with...") -- whatever it takes to keep contact alive and let your partner in on your moods, states, experiences -- your life. Many problems and misunderstandings arise because we make assumptions about what's going on with our partner, since no one is providing actual information.
- 3) Puzzles. If there are things you don't understand (why your partner seemed so down last night, the latest news about the office reorganization, why Mary and Pete broke up) and your partner can explain, ask. Don't assume that your partner knows that you are interested. Not asking might well be seen as indifference. Some believe, "If you wanted to know, you would ask me." Others think, "If you wanted me to know, you would tell me." Thus do many puzzles go unresolved and questions unanswered -- a ripe situation for assumptions and mind-reading to develop. If there are things you don't understand that your partner could help to clarify, ask for clarification.



This is also an opportunity to explore and voice any puzzles you may have about yourself. ("I'm really far behind on that project at work and I don't understand why I can't sit down and get it done. I seem to have a real block." "I'm really not sure why I got so angry last night while we were trying to balance the checkbook." "Somebody snapped my head off at work over something minor and it really upset me. I don't know why it bothered me so much, since it was a small thing and something obviously was bothering me.") Bringing up such personal quandaries doesn't mean you will suddenly find answers, but discussing them can give your partner more insight about your internal conflicts and thoughts. Your partner also might have insights about your thoughts.

- 4) Complaints with Requests for Change. These need not be blaming or judgmental. Simply say, "This thing happened that bothered me, and I would feel better if you did this other thing instead." When you state your complaint, be specific about the behavior that bothers you and state the behavior you are asking for instead. All too often, we subject people to long lists of "don't do this" and "don't do that" without ever telling them what we do want. Yelling, "Why don't you ever come home on time?" won't get the same response as, "If you're going to be late, please call. That way I can make my own plans and I won't worry about you." If emotional or touchy issues come up that need long discussion, you might want to set aside a more appropriate time to deal with them in depth.

The Temperature Reading is intended as a structure to provide information. It is not intended to serve as a serious conflict-resolving tool--its purpose is to help prevent misunderstandings. Later chapters provide a variety of methods to prevent touchy issues from erupting into full-scale battles in which you drag every grudge you've ever had into play.

- 5) Wishes, Hopes and Dreams. Our hopes and dreams are integral, vital parts of who and what we are. If we don't share them with our partner, we are depriving them of an important part of ourselves. In a world where much of our time is spent reacting to various immediate pressures, we rarely have time to think beyond the moment. This part of the Temperature Reading gives us a chance to reflect on what we want -- from ourselves, from our partners and from life. The more we can bring our expectations and hopes into our own and our partner's awareness, the more likely it is that we will find a way to realize them. They can extend from the mundane to the grandiose: "I hope you can get this weekend shift off so we can spend more time together." "I hope we can have a baby." "I wish that someday we could have a house in the country." "I dream of having the time to leave for a month and go hiking in Alaska." "I wish I had time to concentrate on my painting."

