



# LOVE notes

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## Way to Go Honey! Be a Cheerleader for Your Spouse

The way you respond to your partner's good news is an important predictor of the health and strength of your marriage. Researchers Shelly Gable, Gian Gonzaga, and Amy Strachman of the University of California, Los Angeles found that when close relationship partners consistently responded in positive, enthusiastic ways to the good things that happened to their partners, their relationships benefited. The person describing the positive event, called a discloser, reported feeling closer to, and more intimate with their spouse who was doing the listening. In addition, the discloser reported more overall satisfaction with their relationship.

### How Do You Respond?

In their research, Gable, Gonzaga and Strachman identified four response patterns typically found in relationships:

- Active—constructive (enthusiastic support)
- Passive—constructive (quiet, understated support)
- Active—destructive (demeaning the event)
- Passive—destructive (ignoring the event)

Here's an example of these response styles:

Laura comes home from her job and proudly tells her husband Joe that she has been promoted to a position that will give her more money and more responsibility.

- An active—constructive response from Joe might be, *"Wow, Laura, that's great news. Your skills and hard work are really paying off. Tell me everything your boss said."*

- A passive—constructive response might be a warm smile from Joe and a brief comment like, *"That's nice, hon."*
- An active—destructive response would be something like: *"Are you really sure you want to work that hard? What about the kids? Your raise will just go to pay for more child care."*
- A passive—destructive response ignores what Laura said altogether: *"Hey, what's for dinner? I had a pretty rough day and I'm hungry."*

### Is One Response Better Than Another?

The UCLA researchers found that only active-constructive responses are associated with well-being and higher relationship quality. Here's why. Sharing personal positive events provides great opportunities in a relationship for understanding, validation, and caring. According to Gable and her colleagues, "When an individual discloses a positive event to his or her partner, and the partner responds in an active-constructive manner, both partners experience positive emotions, and the relationship itself becomes stronger." The commitment, marital satisfaction, increased intimacy and love, generated by active-constructive responses to a partner's good news, become important relationship resources, to be drawn upon as needed in times of stress and challenge.

### Powerful Relationship Vitamins

When individuals rate their partners as active and constructive responders, they:

- feel more intimacy and trust.
- are more satisfied with their relationships on a daily basis.
- report fewer daily conflicts.
- engage in more fun and relaxing activities on a daily basis.

### Being There for your Spouse

Feeling that your partner is there for you when things go right in your life creates emotional safety and familiarity, and both are vital to strong, healthy relationships.

More Information: Gable, S., Gonzaga, G., & Strachman, A. (2006). *Will you be there for me when things go right? Social Support for Positive Events*. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91, 904-917.

## try this...

The next time your partner comes home with good news:

- **Pay attention to how you respond. Turn off the distractions, like T.V., computer, radio etc., make eye contact and listen. It only takes a few minutes.**
- **Pick one or two enthusiastic comments and use them. Try: Way to go! That's great. I knew you could do it. You're amazing! Wow! Tell me more.**
- **If this level of enthusiasm feels uncomfortable, practice. With time, it will seem much more natural. The benefits to your marriage are well worth the practice.**

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