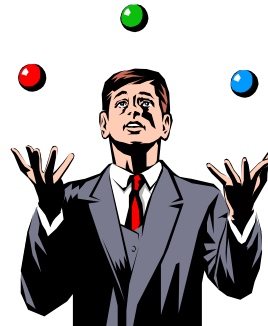


# KEEP THE A.W.E. IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

I tend to be absorbed in my life, my job, my career, my books, my other interests, my stuff, my clients, my, my, my. . . Here's a picture of me, one very committed juggler of all things "Richard."

I realized, years ago, that my wife could easily feel overlooked in the midst of all this. This much I know for sure:  
She does not feel loved when she feels taken for granted.



For me, I need this simple reminder:

Keep the A.W.E. in our relationship.



**APPRECIATION:** *Lets my wife know she is not taken for granted.*

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I have declared my love far too indiscriminately. I love our dog, a cuddly boxer. I love my design practice. I love to ski. I love to remodel. Where does my wife fit? Appreciation specifically notes something. Love does not exist without it. In a marriage, saying, "I love you," to a partner who does not feel appreciated is to be a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." Something doesn't sound right or ring true. Appreciation is like water in a desert. Life (love) can bloom again even when it looks improbable.

So, I daily remind myself to tell my wife something I appreciate about her. To express that, I have to notice what she does. In that context, when I give her flowers, she gets the message that I appreciate her and feels loved. (She does ask if I am feeling guilty about something!) *She feels valued rather than taken for granted.*



**WONDER:** *Lets my wife know what she does matters.*

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When we have a moment to connect, I wonder about my wife's day. Sometimes I call her at work and ask how it went at a meeting—having wondered, the previous evening, about her next day's schedule. After all these years together, she knows that I am still interested in her, still curious about her, still wondering about all the things that make her who she is. Love flourishes in that context.

I once wondered, "Have you ever had any operations that I don't know about?" Her answer moved me to new levels of understanding and tenderness. There is no limit to questions of wonder. Wondering keeps my wife opening up her life to me. *She feels like she matters to me.*



**EMBRACE:** *Lets my wife know her feelings count.*

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"Drive-by" smooches on the fly, a "See ya tonight" tossed over my shoulder as I run out the door—all are part of my modern life. Knowing this, I **embrace** my wife whenever we are about to leave each other. I also give her my **eyes**; that's another 'E' to remember. Who knows? Each day is a gift. If the unthinkable happened, I would want to know we had connected in the last moments we had shared together.

Beyond that, in my wife's eyes, I can read her **emotions**; that's another 'E' to remember. I read mischievousness and the fires of love; I see disappointment or an "I need encouragement" message; excitement and happiness; irritation, anger, and frustration; all the emotions are there.

I embrace her and look into her eyes because I want her to know: "I care about how you feel." Away fade my entitlements. They matter less than the one I hold in my arms. This is more than a hug. We connect. We embrace. *She feels like her feelings count.*

And we keep the **A.W.E.** in our relationship!