

Relationship help: Does your relationship suffer from AFFECTION deficit disorder?

By Richard Nicastro, Ph.D.

Whenever couples seek me out for relationship help or marriage advice, one of the first things I do is assess whether or not their relationship is suffering from a lack of affection...in other words, an *affection* deficit disorder. A lack of affection is a serious relationship problem for many couples.

The Power of Affection in building a stronger Relationship

Affection (or more accurately, showing affection) is an important part of any loving relationship—it is the verbal and physical expression of the love, warmth and caring you and your partner feel for each other. To maintain a healthy relationship, couples should find ways to increase the affection quotient of their relationship.

Ongoing displays of affection feed your marriage or relationship and keep it strong.

Unfortunately, too many couples fall prey to *affection-complacency*. They simply stop making an effort to communicate their positive, loving feelings and at some point their marriage or relationship experiences an *affection deficit*.

While all relationships go through peaks and valleys, relationships that suffer from affection deficits become lifeless over time—it's as if the bridge that joins you and your partner has been torn down and you exist on separate islands miles apart, isolated from the love you used to share.

Let's look at some warning signs of an affection deficit.

Relationship Help: Warning signs of an affection deficit

1. There is no spark of playfulness between you

By its very nature, the energy of playfulness includes affection. When playfulness is abandoned, your marriage or relationship can begin to look and feel like a formal business luncheon. This also occurs when couples begin to take each other too seriously and can no longer laugh at the absurdities of life together.

2. There are little or no displays of mutual gratitude

Acts of gratitude make your spouse/partner feel cared for and appreciated. The positive impact mutual, *spoken* gratitude has on your marriage or relationship cannot be overstated. Every act of gratitude is an expression of love and caring that strengthens your relationship.

3. Communication mostly centers on the mundane

Sure you have to figure out who's picking up Johnny from preschool, if there is enough money to cover this month's expenses and what's for dinner, but when interactions *only* center on the practicalities and stresses of life, your relationship is probably experiencing an affection drain.

4. There is little or no touch between you

Touch is a powerful form of non-verbal communication that feeds emotional intimacy and demonstrates affection. Research shows that infants and children who lack physical stimulation

fail to thrive—and the need for touch doesn't stop once you've entered adulthood. Don't overlook the affection-boost touch can infuse into your relationship.

5. You talk negatively about your partner to others

The way you speak about your spouse/partner (or fail to talk about him/her) to others can impact your relationship. When you make a conscious effort to represent your partner (and your relationship) in a positive light, you heighten feelings of affection (even when these feelings may be lacking); and conversely, when you feed negativity by complaining about your partner to your friends and family, you further an affection deficit.

In other words, what you choose to focus on becomes a greater influence in your life and relationship. Because it puts you in a beneficial mindset and helps remind you of your partner's admirable attributes, invoking positive, affectionate feelings while discussing your partner will positively impact your marriage or relationship.

While the above list isn't exhaustive, as you can see, there are clear warning signs that your marriage or relationship is tipping toward an affection deficit. However, an affection deficit can be stopped and reversed. The first step is to become conscious of these signs and then make the commitment to reverse the patterns of affection-complacency.

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Author Bio

Over the past fifteen years Richard Nicastro, Ph.D. has helped couples build stronger, more fulfilling marriages and relationships. Dr. Nicastro has lectured at several universities and now conducts workshops for couples on a wide range of issues. His relationship advice has appeared on television, radio and in national magazines. A member of the International Coach Federation, Dr. Nicastro is passionate about coaching and believes that healthy relationships can add meaning and fulfillment to our lives. His goal is to guide individuals and couples as they implement the skills that will allow their relationships to flourish.

You can reach Dr. Nicastro via his website <http://www.strengthenyourrelationship.com>