Family Living Focus by Adams Co. **Extension Agent** Nina Redding



Send the Message of Love

The other night when I got home from a late evening meeting Russell greeted me at the door and announced he had done several loads of laundry. What a message of love! Are you sending messages of love occasionally to your partner?

Partners in a growing relationship enjoy doing things for each other. She may send him notes. He may do the laundry. But they do things for each other that send the message of love.

One of the difficulties in marriage is that sometimes one partner is trying to send a message of love, but the other one isn't getting it. For instance, if a husband likes to buy little gifts for his wife but she worries about the budget, she may not appreciate the gifts. Or, if he does not help around the house, she may not feel that he loves her no matter what he says. It doesn't do any good to be an-

gry when your partner doesn't seem to get the message from the things you do for him or her. Rather than be mad, see if you can figure out what language of love works for your partner. Think about the things you've done that your spouse appreciates most. Taking time to listen? Helping out? Writing or telling your love? Baking his/her favorite cookies? Giving a foot massage at the end of the day? In order to be more effective in showing love for your partner, you might ask him or her to describe the things that give the message of love. Pick one or two that you can work on. Send a message of love every day in a way that works for your partner.

Partners in a growing relationship use conflict to improve the relationship. When people first date or get married they often overlook or ignore the things that bother them in each other. After a while they may be more bothered by

those things. They may think only about the things that bother them. They may become angry and wonder why the spouse does such awful things. But sometimes, the spouse has not changed. The other has just focused on the annoying actions. There will always be differences anytime two people share their lives as much as a husband and wife. But those differences can help us to grow toward a stronger and more balanced relationship if we use the differences wisely. There are several rules to remember if you want to keep your differences from ruining your marriage.

Let some things go. Some things aren't worth fighting about. and some times are bad times for fighting. Sometimes we let little things bother us until they are all we think about. It may be best to overlook little differences. Sometimes we are bothered because we're tired or sick. Or we may feel angry. But if we are tired or in an angry mood, we might do better to save the discussion until after a good night's sleep. When we start pouring out our anger, we may just get more angry and damage the relationship.

Talk to find answers rather than to blame or hurt your spouse. Discussions are for finding answers. not for blaming, punishing, or hurting our partner. It is not very useful to figure out who started the problem. Each partner can blame the other. It is damaging to try to hurt or punish your partner. The reason to discuss problems is to

find better ways to make the marriage work. Ask your partner questions like "Would it help if I (describe something you can do to improve the relationship)?"

Recognize the differences between preferences and principles. Preferences include our favorite color, our favorite sandwich, the temperature we prefer for the bedroom. Principles involve standards. We don't believe in hurting other people. We believe in being responsible. Sometimes in marriage we confuse principles and preferences. We think our partner is cruel because of disagreements over television programs, use of money, use of free time. Your partner's way is not necessarily better or worse than your way. Try to find the values you have in common to help you make decisions that satisfy you both.

Take time to understand your partner. It's common for people to judge the goodness or smartness of what other people do. But a lot of conflict can be avoided by taking time to understand rather than judge. It's hard to do. Most people never get good at it. But the partner who takes time to understand can be a more loving effective partner.

For example, if your partner is bothered about something, it's not helpful to say, "That's stupid" or "You'll get over it" or "Why can't you grow up?" When a person is hurting, it's more helpful to say "That sounds very frustrating" or "Did you feel disappointed?"

Have you thought of a message of love you can send to your partner in the next few days? Take a few minutes to let your partner know that they still are the most important person in your life. Have fun this summer with your growing relationship!

Lebanon County Needs Contestants For Dairy Promotions

The Lebanon County Dairy Promotion Committee is seeking contestants for the annual pageant to be held during June Dairy Month. Positions to be filled include dairy princesses between 16 and 24 years; dairy maids

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For more information on requirements, call Annette Buck at 717 867-5278 or Roberta Bashore at 717 865-4645.



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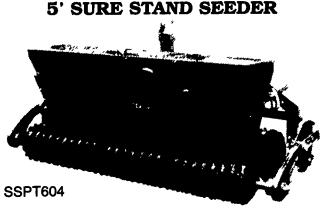
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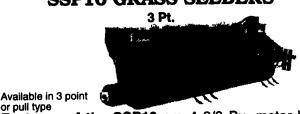
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