

9 Minutes a Day that Can Change your Relationship

Small daily investments. Lasting relational returns.
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Most people assume that strong marriages require grand gestures, long talks, or hours of therapy homework each week. While retreats, books, and counseling can be deeply helpful, research consistently shows that **relationships are shaped far more by small, repeated moments than by occasional big ones.**

According to decades of research by **John Gottman**, couples who thrive don't necessarily do *more*—they simply do *a little, more consistently*.

When researchers followed couples who attended the Art and Science of Love workshop, they asked a critical question:

What separated couples who continued to grow from those who slowly drifted back into old patterns?

The answer wasn't a dramatic change.
It was a **daily intention**.

When broken down, the “six hours a week” that successful couples invest translates to something far more manageable:

About nine minutes a day of purposeful connection.

Nine minutes.
Not all at once.
Not perfectly.
Just intentionally.

Here's how those minutes work.

I. Partings: Start the Day Connected (1–2 minutes)

Before separating for the day, thriving couples make a simple effort to learn **one thing** about their partner's upcoming day.

It might be:

- A meeting they're nervous about
- A conversation they're dreading
- Something they're looking forward to

The goal isn't fixing—it's *knowing*.

Why it matters:

This small check-in communicates, “*Your inner world matters to me.*”

Daily investment: -1-2 minutes



2. Reunions: Come Home to Each Other (3–4 minutes)

When reconnecting later in the day, Gottman encourages couples to share a **six-second kiss**, which he calls a “*kiss with potential*.” It’s long enough to signal presence, affection, and emotional availability.

Follow this with a brief stress-reducing check-in—not problem solving, just listening.

Why it matters:

You’re reminding each other, “*Before we deal with the world, we come back to us.*”

Daily investment: -3–4 minutes

3. Appreciation & Admiration: Name the Good (1–2 minutes)

Strong relationships are built on **fondness and admiration**. Couples who last intentionally notice what their partner does right—and they say it out loud.

Instead of a vague “thanks,” try connecting the action to character:

“I noticed how patient you were with the kids tonight. That kindness is one of the things I love most about you.”

Why it matters:

Appreciation rewires the brain to see strengths instead of scanning for flaws.

Daily investment: -1–2 minutes

4. Affection: End the Day Gently (1–2 minutes)

Physical affection before sleep—holding hands, cuddling briefly, or a meaningful goodnight kiss—acts as a *reset button* for the nervous system.

It’s a way of saying:

“*We’re okay. Even if today was hard.*”

Why it matters:

Affection reduces stress hormones and restores emotional safety.

Daily investment: -1–2 minutes

5. Once a Week: Protect Deeper Time

While the daily nine minutes build emotional trust, Gottman’s research also highlights two **weekly anchors** that protect the relationship long-term:

Date Night

A dedicated time to enjoy each other without distractions. Ask open-ended questions. Dream together. Turn toward one another.

State of the Union Meeting

A one-hour weekly conversation where couples:

- Share appreciations
- Discuss concerns gently



- Repair hurts
- Ask, “*What can I do this week to help you feel loved?*”

This structure is outlined in *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, and it consistently transforms how couples handle conflict.

Why Nine Minutes Works

Nine minutes a day doesn't overwhelm the schedule.
It doesn't require perfection.
It simply creates **predictable moments of safety and connection**.

Over time, those moments accumulate.

Small turns toward each other become strong habits.
Strong habits become emotional trust.
And emotional trust becomes resilience—especially when life is heavy.

The Invitation

You don't need more time.
You need **intentional time**.

Start with nine minutes today.

Not to fix everything.
But to faithfully tend what matters most.

Because relationships don't drift into strength—
they're built, minute by minute.

