

Gottman's Appreciation Jar

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An appreciation jar is a simple but meaningful way for couples to strengthen their connection over time. It is a jar, box, vase, or other container where partners place short written notes of gratitude, admiration, encouragement, and affection for one another. Over days and weeks, these small notes become a visible reminder of what is good, steady, and life-giving in the relationship. For many couples, it can also become a way to practice thankfulness, speak blessings over one another, and be more intentional about noticing the gifts in the relationship.

Why use an Appreciation Jar?

- Helps build a stronger culture of gratitude in the relationship
- Shifts attention away from constant frustration and toward what is going well
- Encourages intentional expressions of fondness, admiration, and encouragement
- Creates a collection of meaningful memories to revisit later
- Supports emotional closeness and helps partners feel seen, valued, and cared for
- Can reduce patterns of negativity, criticism, and disconnection
- Offers a simple habit that can have a lasting impact on relationship health
- Creates space to speak words that bring life, hope, and reassurance to one another
- For couples of faith, it can also serve as a quiet practice of thanksgiving to God for the strengths, growth, and grace present in the relationship

How to get started

1. Choose a jar, basket, box, or container that fits your style.
2. Personalize it in a way that feels meaningful to your relationship.
3. Talk together about the jar's purpose and commit to using it regularly.
4. Keep note cards, small slips of paper, or sticky notes nearby.
5. Set aside regular times each week to write appreciation notes.
6. Place the jar somewhere visible so it becomes part of your daily life.
7. Consider making it part of a weekly check-in, date night, or quiet moment together.
8. If faith is meaningful in your relationship, you may also choose to begin by praying for eyes to see the good in one another and hearts that remain soft and grateful.

What kinds of notes can go in the jar?

Your notes do not have to be long or overly formal. What matters most is sincerity. Focus on character, effort, kindness, growth, sacrifice, faithfulness, and meaningful moments. Some couples may write from a spiritual perspective, while others may simply focus on gratitude and appreciation. Either approach can be meaningful.

You might write about:

Character, you admire

- Ways your partner supported you
- Parenting moments you noticed
- Effort, sacrifice, or consistency
- Shared memories that still matter to you
- Growth you have seen in your partner
- Moments when you felt loved, comforted, or encouraged
- Qualities you believe are a gift to your relationship



Examples of appreciation notes

- I noticed how patient you were with the kids this week, and I appreciated that.
- Thank you for listening to me when I was overwhelmed. It helped me feel supported.
- I admire how hard you work for our family.
- Your sense of humor brought lightness to my day.
- I felt loved when you took time to check in on me.
- I appreciate the way you stay committed to us, even in stressful seasons.
- Thank you for the small things you do that often go unnoticed. They matter to me.
- I see your kindness, and it brings peace into our home.
- I am grateful for the way you keep showing up, even when life feels heavy.
- I thank God for the strength and gentleness I see in you.
- Your faith, perseverance, and care continue to bless this relationship.

Ways to make it more meaningful

- Use different colors of paper for different types of appreciation
- Include notes about character, affection, teamwork, parenting, faith, or shared memories
- Read a few notes together during date night or over coffee
- Add photos, ticket stubs, or small keepsakes connected to special memories
- Save older notes in an envelope or folder to look back on later
- Write notes during hard seasons, not only easy ones
- Create themed notes such as “What I admire,” “What I appreciate,” or “How I felt loved this week.”
- For couples who value faith, include brief prayers, Scripture references, or reflections on where you have seen grace at work in your relationship

Tips for making it a lasting habit

- Aim to add a few notes each week
- Keep supplies easy to reach so the process feels simple
- Take turns writing notes for one another
- Revisit the jar during hard seasons as a reminder of the good that is still present
- Use the jar to strengthen fondness and admiration, not just to fix problems
- Start small and stay consistent
- Focus on sincerity over perfection
- Let appreciation become a rhythm, not just a rescue plan
- Remember that steady encouragement often helps build safety, warmth, and resilience in a relationship

Final encouragement

Healthy relationships are often strengthened through small, repeated acts of care. An appreciation jar helps couples slow down, notice one another, and speak life into the relationship. Over time, these simple written words can become a powerful testimony of gratitude, connection, and enduring love. For some couples, this may also become a gentle spiritual practice, a way of recognizing grace, expressing thankfulness, and nurturing the kind of love that is patient, intentional, and life-giving. Whether used from a faith perspective or simply as a relational tool, the heart of the exercise remains the same: to notice the good, to say it out loud, and to help love grow stronger.

