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life advice

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## A True Valentine's Day Gift

Rediscover the prince in your man this Valentine's Day.

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It's important to look for the good things in your husband, and not just around Valentine's.

You've been going along in your relationship for a few years now, it's a little on the hum-drum side, but hey no major fights, no major hassles, and yes, you're way past the honeymoon stage, but what can you expect? You're both busy with work and the kids, church or community activities, what with one thing and another, who has time for a lot of romance? You're a good team and you love each other, and that should be enough for anybody.

Or so you think... until he announces that it's not enough and he's seriously thinking about leaving the marriage. Whoa! You are now on red alert—out comes the full court press: walks on the beach, candlelight dinners, lingerie, soulful discussions, holding hands by the fire, date night movies, the works. The

relationship is rekindled, you breathe a sigh of relief and without even realizing it, you slip back into your old patterns of a quick peck on the lips instead of that lingering kiss, the occasional kid-friendly movie instead of candlelight dinners and sleeping in your sweats, which leads mostly to well, sleeping. Until the next red alert, when once again, you'll summon up the goods to get that love flame burning bright—and on and on you go.

What a shame! Why is it that it takes a crisis for us to really pay loving attention to our mates? Why is it only when the love is threatened that we wake up to how much we appreciate our relationships and jump in to do what it takes to nurture them?

Today, give your honey the best Valentine's Day gift of all—rediscover the prince within your man. Take some time to focus on what you appreciate about your other-half. Open your eyes and ears wide to who he is, what is special and wonderful about him.

Notice how he is quick to laugh and doesn't get hung up on little things. Or how easily he can put things in order, from balancing the family checkbook to locating your car keys. Or how he goes out into the world day after day, without complaining, to do his share for the family. Thank him for all of it! Express your appreciation, your gratitude for these many gifts to you, with words, with touch, with affection. Let him know loudly and clearly how he matters to you, how important he is in your life.

That means smiling when he walks in the door, asking how his day went and actually listening to what he has to say. It means deliberately setting aside time to do things together that you both enjoy. It means being interested in what is of interest to your mate. It means listening when you don't agree with him, respecting his right to his opinion when you're not on the same page. It means never making your man wrong or stupid just because he has a different way of going about things. And, oh yes—it means a regular dose of walks on the beach, candlelight dinners, lingerie,

flowers, soulful discussions, holding hands by the fire, date-night movies, the works.

As you deliberately set about rediscovering and nurturing the prince within your man, he will respond in kind. He will become more loving, inevitably honoring the wonderful within you as you honor the wonderful in him.

Yes, there is some effort to be made. And at first it may not be particularly exciting to do what it takes to keep the prince in your man alive. After all, you will no longer have that love threatened but instead rescued to thrilling new highs. But you will have a sustained, fulfilling passion of heart, mind and soul, with lots of spontaneous highs when you least expect them. You will know the true fullness of love as you genuinely, wholeheartedly, unreservedly appreciate and enjoy your prince.

*Noelle C. Nelson, Ph.D. is a psychologist, consultant, speaker and author. Her new book is "Your Man Is Wonderful" (Free Press, January 2009). For more than a decade she has helped people live happier, healthier lives through appreciation—at work, at home and in relationships. E-mail: [nnelson@dr.noellenelson.com](mailto:nnelson@dr.noellenelson.com), website: [www.noellenelson.com](http://www.noellenelson.com).*