

How do you spell LOVE?

With Valentine's Day season upon us, you might wonder how to spell "LOVE." In our newest book, *The First Five Years*, we explain how to create a memorable romantic encounter for your spouse or the person you are dating. Keep this acrostic for "LOVE" in mind as you make plans to *wow* the one you love:

Listen

Observe

Vary

Extract

Listen

Your spouse will drop hints about the things he or she loves, and you can use these hints to create more romance and sizzle in your relationship. For example, if you listen to Bill and me in a casual lunch conversation, you would likely find out that Bill loves things like football, fishing, cooking, joke telling, and the Bible. If you listen to Pam, you'd discover she loves travel, biking, swimming, tennis, laughing, helping women—and the spa!

It doesn't take much imagination, then, to know that if I (Pam) give Bill a day of ocean fishing, or if he gave me a day at the spa, we would be more interested in each other at the end of that day. But it doesn't have to cost a lot. Walking is on both of our lists, so an evening stroll is likely to also put us in the mood. Bill and I keep a running list of "loves" we discover about one another while listening.

Observe

On the TV show *Monk*, the audience is awed each week by the detective's keen skills of observation. You can become a detective and easily observe what will bless and ignite your spouse. Observe:

- What raises stress in your partner? — Then make a plan to lower it.
- What lifts the spirit? — Then make a plan to repeat it.
- What calms the atmosphere? — Then recreate it.
- What things are collectible? — Then add to it.
- When does he or she sigh or purr? — Then repeat it.
- What makes him/her ask for more? — Then expand it.
- What draws him/her to you? — Then protect it

Vary

For married couples, when it comes to intimacy, don't get in a rut! Vary the place, vary your position, vary the lighting, and vary your invitation—asking your mate to join you in some red-hot monogamy. The easiest way to vary the experience is to keep the five senses in mind. Add new sounds or music; add new smells, textures, or tastes. For singles dating, vary your dating locations, and types of dates. Even dinner and a movie can become a rut, if it is your weekly ritual. Add in some active dates and some dates with friends and family, as well as solo romantic moments, to add dimension to your love.

Extract

To extract love, take an old idea and give it a new spin. Personalize it, shake it up, or add to it. For example, because we are relationship communicators, we are usually

pretty busy around Valentine's Day. Often, we have to be at the NRB (National Religious Broadcasters) conference. No offense to those in Christian radio, but the NRB isn't the most romantic place to be on Valentine's Day! We have decided, however, to make it romantic on the years we need to be there. One year, Bill scanned the covers of all the books we have written and made a series of greeting cards with personal love messages that used the titles as a part of a pun. Every hour all day, he gave me a card with a new message and tiny gift. By evening—which we spent with media on a ship in some bay—I was looking for *any* private space of *any* kind because I so wanted him! I restrained myself (some), but when we got back to the hotel, he was very glad that he spent a little time on the computer the day before.

L.O.V.E. *Listen, Observe, Vary* and *Extract* to create a love to look forward to, no matter if you are dating, a newlywed, or a couple who has been married for years.

*Pam and Bill Farrel are relationship specialists, international speakers, and best-selling authors of **Men are like Waffles, Women are like Spaghetti, Red-Hot Monogamy and The First Five Years: Make the Love Investment** (www.farrelcommunications.com).*