

SELECTING THE RIGHT MARITAL STROKES

It is important for couples to learn to give positive “strokes” (smiles, hugs, compliments) to their mates, not negative cuts. “Strokes” play a significant role in the enrichment of a marriage.

Suppose a husband smiles and says to his wife, “You look great.” He gives her a hug and adds, “I love you.” A few minutes later he says, “By the way, thanks for picking up my shirts from the cleaners.” His statements, “You look great” and “I love you” as well as his smile and the hug, are unconditional strokes – strokes he is giving his wife just for *being*. She didn’t have to do anything to earn them. His comment “Thanks for picking up my shirts” is a conditional stroke – a stroke he gives his wife for *doing*.

Note also that the husband gave his wife three verbal strokes: “You look great,” “I love you,” and “Thanks for picking up my shirts.” He also gave her two nonverbal strokes: the smile and the hug. The hug was the physical stroke.

Some spouses list physical strokes as the kind they want most. Others like to be told, “I love you,” (a verbal, unconditional stroke). Some mates revel in the conditional strokes of, “Your dinner was delicious” or “You did a fine job trimming that tree.”

Unfortunately, many spouses are not aware of their mate’s favorite strokes. To help you get in touch with the types of strokes that you and your spouse enjoy, check the items that seem to appeal to your mate in Column 1 and you in Column 2. Check **only four** items in each column.

Mate	Myself	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holding hands
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Going for a walk
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An unexpected hug
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finding a love note
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Receiving a surprise gift
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being served a favorite meal
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being told “I love you”
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Helping with the kids
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being approached sexually
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seeing the house straight
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Seeing the lawn look nice
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Receiving compliments on looks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taking a shower together
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A surprise “date”
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting a back rub or massage
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a dinner out
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being praised for achievements
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a quiet conversation

After you and your spouse complete this information, share your lists with one another. It is important for each partner to come to understand how the other feels “loved and cared about” and to lovingly express it!