

Call your partner by an affectionate nickname. Try one you haven't used before or resurrect a blast from the past nickname you've almost forgotten about.

Try mental time travel. Mention a good memory of something you did together in the recent past. For example, "I really enjoyed when we sang in the car together last week." Savoring positive emotions is an effective strategy for increasing happiness, especially when you savor your milder, everyday type emotions.

Make a positive comment about one of your partner's friends. It doesn't need to be over the top. For example, you could say "Your friend X is really good at calling you when you haven't seen each other in a while." Why is this tip effective? It says: I'm tuned in to your life. I understand what you get out of being friends with that person. I don't think all the judgments/ choices you make in your life are completely nuts.

Make a loving comment in support of your partner about something that's stressing him/ her out. This helps cultivate compassion.

Tell your partner a short joke. Act like you're having fun telling it. Savor the telling of the joke and their reaction. Telling and understanding jokes is fun, absorbing, and a little bit challenging for your brain, so it also takes your mind off stress. It's a win-win. You can always google a joke if you can't think of any.

Show appreciation for a job your partner does. Say thank you to your partner for a job s/ he does that benefits you both, but that you rarely spontaneously thank him/ her for.

Give your partner a thirty-second shoulder rub. The reasoning behind this tip is the same as why newborns are placed on their mom's bare chest straight after birth. Physical touch, especially if it's skin to skin, activates the bonding hormone oxytocin.

Express admiration for some aspect of your partner's character that s/ he has self-doubt about.

Tell your partner about the last time you were pleased you took his/ her advice. This is the principle of allowing mutual influence (more on this later in the chapter).

Give your partner a six-second hug, this releases oxytocin and serotonin (natural, feel-good, bonding chemicals). Concentrate on enjoying the sensations of the hug.

When you reunite with your partner at the end of the day, make the first thing you say be about something that went right for you during the day. For example, "My meeting with X went really well. Better than I hoped." Research has shown that sharing positive news and experiences benefits both the sharer and the recipient, and strengthens the relationship between the two people.

Have a moment of loving eye contact and smiling at each other.

Mention something you like about how your partner expresses love for you. (*Note:* This shouldn't be a request or a complaint in disguise. Cite a behavior that your partner already does freely.) For example: I love it when you tell me what a good singer I am. I love it when you call me [insert affectionate nickname]. I love it when you grab me and kiss me.

Sing a few bars of a song to your partner while making eye contact. Choose a song that has a romantic connotation, such as “How Sweet It Is (to Be Loved by You).”

Mention looking forward to something you will be doing together in the near future. For example, “I’m looking forward to hanging out on the couch together on Friday night.” This is a variation on the mental time travel concept mentioned in micro-*ction #2*. That version involved reminiscing about a positive event from the past. This version is about looking forward to an upcoming activity.

Make a positive comment about a personality trait or habit that your partner shares with their parent(s). For example, “I love how X you are. I can see you got that from your mom.” Or “I love how X you are. I can see you learned that from growing up in your family.” If referencing their parent doesn’t fit with your partner’s family situation, you could substitute any person who has been a mentor in your partner’s life.

Mention a way your partner has positively influenced you. It could be as simple as an interest or hobby that your partner introduced you to. Or it could be some way your thoughts have shifted due to your partner. (Again, more on this strategy coming up.)

Tell your partner something you’re embarrassed about but logically know you shouldn’t be.
Rationale: Sharing soft emotions and vulnerability allows your partner an opportunity to get emotionally close to you.

Increase your nonverbal expression of positive emotion. For example, give your partner an extra big smile in reaction to something sweet or cute they do. Displaying positive emotion with your body is likely to intensify your experience of that emotion, so this strategy benefits the giver and receiver.

Acknowledge a good point your partner has made when you have been discussing one of your recurring areas of tension or disagreement. Do this for a point you don’t typically acknowledge. For example, “You’re right I forget things less when I write them down. It’s a good idea.”

Express support for something that is going right for your partner at the moment. For example, “I’m so pleased your blog is doing well. I’m really happy you’re having success. You deserve it with how hard you’ve worked.” This is an especially important mini tip if *you’re* socially anxious. Supporting people when things go right is known as providing *capitalization support*, and this tends to be a weakness for people who are anxiety prone.