A Personal Touch

Paulette and Chad were standing across the room from each other at their neighbor's annual "Beat the Winter Blues" party. It was a Friday night after a long work week and Paulette was flagging: all she could think about was getting into her flannel pajamas with a cup of hot tea and her new novel. After a couple hours of being a good sport, Paulette was ready to go. She raised her head, looked over at Chad, deep in conversation with a golf buddy, and waited to catch his eye: she gave him a brief sad puppy-dog face and then continued with her conversation. Within five minutes, Chad was at her side with her coat.

Are Paulette and Chad oddities in the world of coupledom? No. They are expert communicators. According to the respondents to a recent survey done by the Emily Post Institute, the most successful relationships are all grounded in a continuous effort to communicate, and they use a unique, personal language that includes both verbal and nonverbal communication

You too can master the language of love if you make the following "must do's" part of your relationship:

Say "I love you."

Our survey respondents told us in overwhelming numbers that saying "I love you" frequently was a key element in their relationships. And there are ways to convey this sentiment without speaking: pointing to each other across a crowded room, a quick squeeze of the hand, a wink, an arched eyebrow.

Listen—Really Listen

Successful couples have mastered the technique of listening—really listening—at the dinner table, on a walk, in the grocery store, at a restaurant. As you polish your listening skills, keep the following in mind: make eye contact, don't interrupt, avoid fidgeting and pay attention (you can't get away with just looking like you're listening).

Tone of Voice

What you say is important: how you say it can be equally important. An undercurrent of anger, an air of distraction, or an edge of sarcasm will influence how your partner hears what you're saying. If you are truly feeling any of these emotions, you should talk about it. However, if these emotions are a carry over from a bad day, a missed appointment, an altercation with your boss, put them on the back burner.

Written Communication

Notes are a great way to add spice to your significant other's day. Try this: the morning after your hot date, sit down and write just a few lines to your partner about how much you love and appreciate him or her, and how much you enjoyed the night before. Leave the note somewhere where it will be stumbled upon that day. Or snail mail it.