



APPRECIATION SHARED, CONNECTION STRENGTHENED

JOT Plus is a curated collection of Adai Ad's Just One Things (JOTs) posts. Each edition shines a light on a specific theme related to building a successful marriage. It's not meant to be a complete guide, but rather a handy, focused gathering of insights from the JOTs shared up to the time of production. *Since this is a collection—not a guide—you'll notice some ideas come up again, in different ways. That's totally on purpose, because real growth often happens when we see the same truths from a few different angles.*

I SEE YOU, I APPRECIATE YOU

Appreciation is one of the quiet superpowers of a strong relationship. A kind word, a thoughtful thank you, a moment of genuine praise—it doesn't take much, but it can mean everything. It helps us feel seen. Valued. Connected. Encouraged.

This JOT Plus edition is all about appreciation in its many forms: compliments, praise, thanks, acknowledgments—each with its own flavor, but all sharing the same root— noticing the good and naming it. Whether you're cheering someone on, thanking them for their efforts, or expressing how much they mean to you, appreciation builds trust, softens edges, and strengthens the bond between you.

And it's not just about giving. Receiving appreciation with openness and grace matters too. Sometimes that's the harder part! But being able to let kind words in is just as much a relationship skill as offering them.

You'll find in these pages a selection of ideas, reminders, and practical tools—drawn from our daily JOTs—that can help you make appreciation a more regular, natural part of your relationship. Because it's not about big declarations or perfect timing. It's about small, sincere moments that say: I see you. I value you. I'm grateful for you.



Little thank-yous become big feelings of connection.

Kind words cost nothing and do so much.

Sometimes, we don't need more—we just need to notice more.

When you appreciate someone, you help them see themselves more clearly.

Receiving appreciation gracefully is its own kind of generosity.

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THANK AND COMPLIMENT YOUR PARTNER FOR A STRONGER RELATIONSHIP

EXPRESS YOUR POSITIVE FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR SPOUSE. OFTEN.

Compliments, appreciation, awe, approval, encouragement, pride, acknowledgments. Share those often.

Why you would want to share your positive feelings.

- Your spouse will want to spend time with you (not from a place of neediness). A person naturally seeks the company of those who think well of them. – *The more someone senses appreciation from another, the closer they feel.*
- Your spouse will be more willing to listen to your ideas and perspectives. – *When someone feels comfortable in the relationship, they are looking less to assert themselves, and more to working as a team.*
- Your spouse will make an effort for you. – *When someone feels valued for who they are, they will make an effort not to spoil that image and will try to prove that image by acting accordingly.*
- Verbalizing the compliments and appreciation makes them even more real. – *You have to come up with the right words to say, so you are thinking more about those positive aspects.*
- *When you compliment others, you view yourself as a generous and big-hearted person. – In doing so, you increase your own self-esteem.*
- Your spouse will criticize you less. It's harder to criticize someone who thinks so highly of you. – *When someone feels appreciated, they feel less of a need to put the other down.*



GRATITUDE BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN OTHERS.

In addition to building our own happiness, choosing gratitude can also bring out the best in those around us; they'll be happier and more engaged.

Emotions are contagious. You can spread positivity. Gratitude is one of key ways to share positivity.

People like to be acknowledged for what they do for us, or for just being them. It can uplift their mood.

Additionally, people generally live up to the image that others have of them. Appreciate what they do, and likely, they'll do more of it.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN AN APPRECIATION STATEMENT.

The best compliments specifically express our appreciation of the other person and how our lives are enriched by what the other person has done.

There's a distinction between "You're so smart. Those were some good ideas" and "I really appreciate your insights. I learned some new strategies that I can implement to really make this next step move more smoothly. I am feeling much more confident."

In some subtle way, the first statement has a level of labeling and judging – some sort of assessment of who 'you are'. The second is much richer and authentic, as it is more detailed and shares an appreciation of our experience of the other person. (Caveat: If someone does compliment with a 'you' statement, trust that they truly want to acknowledge you.)

The elements of a rich compliment – the order doesn't really matter. Not every compliment you give needs all parts:

- This richer compliment includes an "I statement" – sharing how you feel. 💬 "I so appreciate..."
💬 "I enjoyed ..." 💬 "I feel so ...".
- The next important element is what they have done – with specificity, as possible include details.
- Lastly, add how your life was enriched by what they did or how they contributed to your life.

💬 "Thank you for such a nutritious and delicious meal. With all that is going on, I wasn't really eating properly and my body was really beginning to feel it. Just eating a better meal, and knowing that someone cares has given me strength. I am so much less overwhelmed now. Thank you!"



COMPLIMENT OR APPRECIATION?

While "compliment" and "appreciation" are often used interchangeably, appreciation tends to go deeper. A compliment highlights a trait or action; appreciation shares the impact that trait or action had on us.

In Nonviolent Communication (NVC), compliments are viewed as a form of judgment—even when positive. Saying "You're amazing" still labels the person, while appreciation focuses on what they did, how it affected us, and what need it met. It may seem like a subtle shift, even just semantics—but holding this distinction in mind can help us craft richer, more connecting expressions of gratitude.



COMPLIMENT OR PRAISE?

Praise often emphasizes acknowledging accomplishments, efforts, or progress—it's a way of recognizing what someone has done well, often linked to goals or outcomes.

Compliments tend to be more spontaneous and focused on specific qualities or moments, such as a smile, style, or kindness, and often can feel more personal and relational.

While praise can motivate by affirming achievement, compliments create connection by spotlighting the unique and often everyday things that make a person who they are. Both are valuable, but understanding the difference helps us tailor our words to uplift others in richer, more meaningful ways.

THE POWER THANK YOU

As humans, we have an innate need to contribute to meeting other people's needs. When we express gratitude we offer a gift to the other person – the knowledge that they have contributed to our lives. Our expression of gratitude for their efforts helps them feel appreciated. A fuller, more detailed expression of gratitude really helps the giver feel that they have contributed to your life.

After doing something for someone, which words would you prefer to hear? “You’re so smart. Those were some good tips.” Or, “I really thank you for your insights and tips today. I learned some new strategies that I can implement to really make this project move more smoothly. I am feeling much more confident about my role in the project.”

THE PARTS OF THE POWER THANK YOU

1. Thank the person for something specific that the person did for you. Actually say the words “Thank you...” And be specific about what you are grateful for “for running to the store at that crazy hour.” That is the thing you want more of – say it as fully and appreciatively as possible.

2a. Acknowledge the effort it took for the person to help you, by saying something like, “I know you went out of your way to do it; it was late and freezing and you were so tired.”

2b. Acknowledge the attribute of the person that did the action for you. “You were so generous with your time for me.” “It is a real sign of your concern for me.” “It shows how dedicated you are to our family.”

3. Tell the person the difference that their act personally made to you. “It really helped me feel less stressed about the whole situation.”



Your first attempts at a richer and fuller expression of gratitude may feel scripted or awkward. Keep practicing. The benefits are worth it. For the giver. And perhaps even more so for yourself. By articulating how your life was enriched and how you feel as a result of their actions, you will start noticing more good in your life, starting a positive spiral or appreciation and richer relationships.

Another way to frame this comes from **Marshall Rosenberg, founder of Nonviolent Communication (NVC)**, who offers a similar but distinct breakdown of meaningful gratitude (again, the order isn't important):

1. What we observed the other person do
2. What need of ours was met by their action
3. How we felt as a result

And when it feels right, we can also check in to see if our appreciation was received as we intended.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE PERSON THAT THEY ARE.

An expression of acknowledgment goes beyond the person's action. It recognizes the person and their qualities and inner character that enabled them to do what they did. It's a statement of "I see who you are!" It's not about what someone has done, but rather who they were when they did that.

Acknowledgment is not a thank you. There's a big difference: "Thanks for taking care of that task." vs. "Your dedication to our family is so inspiring!" **An acknowledgment says that we see who they are, and as applicable how we have benefited from them, not only from their actions.**

Some examples of acknowledgment statements: Notice that these statements are not expressions of gratitude; rather they address a wonderful part of the person's character.

- ... "Your creativity really added a special final touch to this project."
- ... "It's tough now, but your perseverance and determination are what are pulling everyone through this."
- ... "Did I ever tell you that your creativity inspires me?"
- ... "I feel so calm when I am around you."
- ... "Knowing I can count on you makes all the difference in the world."
- ... "There's no doubt to me that you want us to be successful in this new community."
- ... "Your support made it possible for me to take on this new project."
- ... "You are so dedicated to the children you work with."
- ... "Your passion for the work you do comes out in how you ..."
- ... "You care so much about our kids ..."
- ... "Knowing I can count on you makes all the difference in the world."
- ... "Your support made this project possible for me."
- ... "You have such a clear way of thinking; you really helped me see ..."
- ... "Your energy is magnetic; I always feel reenergized after spending time with you...."
- ... "You inspire me to be my best..."



ACKNOWLEDGING

An acknowledgment is a positive comment that focuses on who the person is. It acknowledges the unique individual they are underneath all the talents, skills and facade.

Some qualities to look for are: concern, patience, dedication, commitment, perseverance, caring, thoughtfulness, creativity, initiative, enthusiasm, clear communication, or wisdom.

You can also acknowledge the process and effort: working through the ups and downs, persevering despite the obstacles.

The most touching affirmations are those that are specific and sincere. They describe the quality or strength in detail with examples.

- Keep your acknowledgment succinct and clear; shorter statements have greater impact.
- And from the heart; your tone and context will reflect your sentiments.

SOME MORE IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT ACKNOWLEDGING:

- **The acknowledgement should stand on its own.** Don't sandwich in a 'but' or a weakness. It will negate the acknowledgment and make it feel like manipulation. "You are so creative and you make these incredible creations. But the mess you leave afterward is awful. We're really lucky to have your creations." And don't state a request right after. "You're so creative. Can you please make one of your creations for us tomorrow?"
- **Acknowledge often, even daily.** Sincere praise should not be withheld due to fear of diminishing returns, of appearing inappropriate or out of embarrassment. Some people mistakenly believe that acknowledgments are more impactful when given sparingly, but research shows that frequent, genuine recognition is often more effective. Those mistaken notions and obstacles can and should be overcome in order for you and your recipients to reap the tremendous rewards.
- **Determine how and when and where the acknowledgment should be given.** Will it be best if done in private or in front of others? Spontaneous or later? The context is very important in how the recipient will actually accept your words. Some people are uncomfortable with public displays of acknowledgment.
- **Reflect about how the other is taking in the acknowledgments.** For many people, it is uncomfortable to hear something so personal. And they might deflect it. If someone has difficulty receiving, stay with them and let them know it is sincere. Pause and be present and say something like, "I really mean it".
- **Make sure it is authentic and sincere,** and not a form of manipulation, or as a motivator masquerading in the words of an acknowledgment. People pick up on insincerity and it will likely have negative ramifications.



If you can't easily find something to acknowledge, look harder. At the very least, acknowledge their good intentions. "I know you really care about the family." This might help her remember that this is true about her, and might get her back on track. Many people need this acknowledgment most when they are struggling.



And don't forget to acknowledge yourself – for your intentions, for your process, for your contributions to the success of your life and family! You, as a human, will benefit from acknowledgment too.

THEY WON'T KNOW UNLESS YOU TELL THEM

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”

– William Arthur Ward

Sometimes, we really are grateful for what someone has done for us – but still we don't express it to them.

Not necessarily because we didn't want to.

Maybe we couldn't find the best way or words, or got sidetracked, or we were waiting for the right opportunity. Or we were waiting to buy the right gift of appreciation.

Sometimes we are so overwhelmed with what is going on that we forget to thank all those who have supported us.

Sometimes we feel awkward and vulnerable being in the receiving role and we are somewhat embarrassed about needing their help.

Other people cannot read our minds. They will never know what their actions or words meant to us if we don't express it.

You don't have to send a gift; your words matter much more. Write a card, make a phone call, leave a text or voicenote.

But don't not share your gratitude for what they have done.

Try to make it authentic and personal. Include what they have done for you and how it enhanced and enriched your life.

“Thanks for being someone I can always rely on. Recently, when I needed you, you”

“For all you do—and for the kind, thoughtful way you do it—thank you.”

“You have done so much for me. Thank you!”

“My life is so much better because of your friendship.”

“I know I don't talk about how grateful I am to have you in my life, but it doesn't mean I don't feel that way. Thank you for being my friend.”

“You are my rock (my light) through all that is going on right now.”

“Thanks for being there for me when I really needed you. I appreciate you so much.”

“Your positivity and kindness have made an unbearable time a little bit better.”

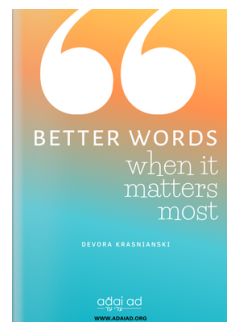
“You never fail to make me smile. Thanks so much for your help and support!”

“Your thoughtfulness is a gift I will always treasure.”

“Thank you for being there for me yet again. I am so grateful that you are in my life.”

Books from Adai Ad

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CRAFTING A GOOD COMPLIMENT

A GOOD COMPLIMENT IS...

Genuine and generous

“You have a fine eye for details. It’s the little things all together that really make this project stand out.”

Unique, not cliché

Not just “You’re the greatest!” but something like,

“Your outlook on life is so refreshing.”

Specific, with details

“Getting down to the kid’s eye level really helped calm him down. You truly have a knack with children.”

Complete and heartfelt

Sharing how their qualities impact you:

“I knew I could count on you. You always know just what to say to lift me out of a funk.”

MORE ABOUT COMPLIMENTS

Follow with a question (as appropriate)

“Your outlook is so refreshing. Where / how did you come to these mindsets?”

“What is your secret to?”

Relay second hand compliments (as appropriate)

“The neighbor told me that you were such a help with ...”

WHAT TO COMMENT ON

Achievements and ideas

“That is such a great way of looking at it.”

“I really admire how you solved that problem.”

Qualities and character traits over acquired talents alone

“Your determination and hard work really made a difference.”

“You have such a thoughtful way of listening.”

Efforts and progress, not just outcomes

“I noticed how much effort you put into this — it really shows.”

“Even when it was tough, you kept going. That’s inspiring.”

Small acts of kindness and everyday contributions

“Thank you for being so patient with everyone today.”

“I appreciate how you always make time to check in.”

Authentic emotions and impact on you

“Your encouragement gave me the confidence to keep going.”

“When you share your ideas, it helps me see things differently.”

LOOK OUT FOR POSITIVES IN YOUR SPOUSE.

NOTICE. NOTICE. NOTICE THE GOOD POINTS.

Find reasons to offer compliments, praise and gratitude. Consistently fan the sparks of positive feelings about your spouse.

Constantly look out for things that your spouse is getting right or doing well. Try to notice the small things that each of you contributes to your life together. That they went out of their way to buy the [ice cream, kale] that you like. That they warmed up the car for you. That they cracked a joke that distracted you from a stress. That they are so dedicated to the family. Their optimism, patience, creativity, ingenuity....

Everyone has so many wonderful aspects about them (yeah, some annoying things too, but that doesn't negate the positive). Keep a running journal or master list of what your spouse does for you and others. Think of some of their characteristics that you so appreciate in them.

You might do the "Three Things I Like About You" exercise (from John Gottman). From a list of characteristics, choose three that describe your spouse. For each item you choose, think about an incident when they displayed this characteristic. Then share this with them; describe why this characteristic in them pleases you so much.

Don't only think about these good traits.
Compliment your spouse. Everyday.

EMPHASIZE YOUR SPOUSE'S GOOD POINTS.

If you fill your head with positive thoughts, there won't be any room left for negative ones.

Every day, think of at least three good points about your spouse.

Everyone has good in them. We just have to notice. Even negative behaviors can sometimes stem from positive traits or have a positive side to them. (For example, someone who isn't so focused can usually consider a broader range of information and think more outside the box.)

Don't only think of the areas where you are stronger and your spouse is weaker. Instead, think of the areas where you are weaker and your spouse is stronger and complements you. Where you balance each other out.

Intentionally looking for the good in your spouse is a powerful way to shift perspective and deepen your connection. It means making a conscious effort to notice strengths, kindnesses, and positive intentions—even on days when challenges or frustrations might dominate your focus.

This practice of reframing helps to soften criticism and reduce negativity by highlighting what's working well rather than what's going wrong. Over time, it trains your mind to see your partner in a fuller, more appreciative light, which not only uplifts your relationship but also nurtures gratitude and patience within yourself.

RECEIVING COMPLIMENTS GRACEFULLY

COMPLIMENTS ARE LITTLE POCKETS OF POSITIVITY.

Everyone can use love and encouragement throughout the day. Yet, many people find it surprisingly hard to accept those words of praise.

Compliments are gifts.

They reflect a moment when someone noticed something good—an action, a quality, a presence—and decided to express appreciation. That person might even make themselves a little vulnerable by sharing kind words out loud. In doing so, they offer a glimpse into how they see us—something warm, generous, and affirming. What a gift.

And yet, this gift is often rejected. Flustered or unsure, the receiver might minimize, deny, or brush it off: “Oh, it’s not that big a deal.” “I could have done better.”

Without realizing it, the response can come across as tossing the gift back—unopened.

That awkward moment raises a question: What is the compliment-giver supposed to do now? Insist again and again until it’s accepted? Walk it back and pretend they were wrong? A well-intentioned



moment becomes laced with discomfort. Instead of connection, it creates distance.

Sometimes this reflex to deflect praise comes from deeply ingrained messages about humility. In certain environments, downplaying compliments is modeled as a virtue—avoiding pride, keeping oneself small.

But if a compliment is met with a shrug or a rebuttal, it can send an unintended message to the giver: that their judgment is flawed, or that their kind intention isn’t welcome.

That changes the dynamic. What was meant as kindness becomes complicated. What was meant to build connection now causes dissonance. Why does this happen so often?

Partly, it stems from the mistaken belief that accepting a compliment is the same as boasting. But there’s a clear difference. Boasting sounds like, “I know—I’m amazing.”

Accepting sounds like, “Thank you.”

One centers the ego; the other acknowledges the moment.

For some, compliments simply feel uncomfortable. They highlight a gap between how others see us and how we see ourselves. That gap can be unsettling. If the praise feels undeserved, it might be easier to reject it than to wrestle with the possibility that we’re not seeing ourselves clearly.

But over time, that pattern can limit growth. When kind words are routinely dismissed, people may stop offering them.

Encouragement and affirmation become less frequent. The inner narrative of “not good enough” gets reinforced. And in some cases, the work or energy people bring starts to match that belief.

It becomes a quiet feedback loop—one that pulls someone further from the very confidence they might be seeking.



Getting more comfortable with compliments can start with self-recognition.

A quiet moment of noticing a small win. A pause to say, “That went well.” It’s healthy to be aware of strengths. Not in a way that inflates, but in a way that affirms.

And even if a compliment doesn’t fully land, it can still be accepted. Simply saying “Thank you” honors the other person’s experience and keeps the door open. Over time, those external affirmations can begin to shift the internal lens.

Compliments are often more about the giver than the receiver.

They’re a form of connection—someone reaching out to share how they’ve been moved, inspired, uplifted. Whether or not the compliment feels 100% accurate in the moment, it’s still a form of generosity. When we reject that kindness, we cut off the giver’s opportunity to give.

A compliment, like any gift, doesn’t have to be dissected. It just needs to be received.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU RECEIVE A COMPLIMENT.

All we have to say is “Thank you.” Simple. Short. To the point. We can add other words like “It is so kind of you to say that.”

Believe that they mean it and you deserve the praise they are giving you. If you are having a hard time receiving the compliment, in your mind, accept that it is hard for you (for now) and gracefully say “Thank you”. It gets easier.

Some people have had negative experiences with compliments; in their past, compliments were veiled manipulations or teasings. They may fear that this time too, there is some nefarious intention. It is worthwhile to believe that most people are sincere when they say nice things about you. Either way, it’s best to accept it as a genuine compliment. If it happens to be sincere, it’s good for you. If not, then your gracious acceptance will still ruin their attempts to mock you.

Don’t overthink it. At the very least, just say “Thank you”. No explaining. No qualification. No rundown of all the reasons they’re wrong or places their compliment might be misplaced.

Express what their words mean to you. Do you feel validated? Reassured? Encouraged? “Thank you. I am so happy to hear that people appreciate my efforts.”

Match your body language to your words. Make eye contact and smile as you respond.

Don’t milk the compliment. Don’t give responses that attempt to elicit reassurance or come off as fishing for more compliments, like “What makes you think that?” or “Gosh, are you sure?” or “You really think that?”

No need to reciprocate. People who genuinely enjoy complimenting don’t always expect a return gesture—especially not as a tit-for-tat. Responding to “Dinner was delicious” with “Well, you did the dishes” can actually dilute the moment. A simple “Thank you, I’m glad you enjoyed it” allows the appreciation to land.



Another way that people inadvertently shoot down praise is to one-up the compliment, “Thank you, but you did even more than I did.” Instead, accept the acknowledgment. If you’re going to praise the other person, don’t skip over whatever they told you; make sure that you’ve properly acknowledged and thanked them first. “Thank you for your boost of confidence. We did great work together. Your ideas were so helpful and a big part of this.”

Don’t diminish your role. Some people deflect the compliment by diminishing their role and contributions, “This was all my team/ kids, not me.” Even if you did get assistance from others, first accept the compliment that was given to you and you can also recognize the efforts of others, “Thank you. I did this with the support of my team.”

Compliments and kind words play a critical role in relationships. As much as it is important to give compliments generously, it is also very important to receive them graciously.

- 💬 “Thank you, it makes my day to hear that.”
- 💬 “I really put a lot of thought/effort into this, thank you for noticing.”
- 💬 “Thank you, I really appreciate you taking the time to express that.”
- 💬 “Thank you, I am happy to hear you feel that way!”
- 💬 “Thank you, I appreciate your kind words.”
- 💬 “Thank you, I appreciate the acknowledgment.”
- 💬 “Thank you, it means a lot coming from you.”
- 💬 “Thank you, you always give the best compliments.”
- 💬 “Thank you. It was quite difficult to pull off, I’m glad you noticed.”
- 💬 “Thanks, it’s so satisfying to know that my work is making a difference.”

What not to say: “Thank you, but ...” “Oh, it’s nothing.” “You think? I don’t know about that...” “Thanks, yours is even better!” This discounts their compliment and their acknowledgment of you.



COMPLIMENTS ARE LIKE MIRRORS.

Compliments reflect how others see your strengths and contributions. When someone offers you praise, it’s not only a gift to feel good in the moment — it’s also valuable feedback about the positive impact you have on others.

Their words reveal qualities in you that might sometimes go unnoticed or unacknowledged by yourself. Receiving compliments openly helps you recognize your own value through the eyes of those who appreciate you.



RECEIVING A COMPLIMENT WELL CAN REWIRE YOUR INNER DIALOGUE.

Each time you let a compliment land —without dismissing it or immediately arguing with it—you create a tiny pause in the habit of self-criticism. Even if it feels awkward at first, those pauses add up. Over time, you may start to internalize the kindness you’ve been offered. What began as someone else’s words can begin to shift how you speak to yourself.