



# FIVE INGREDIENTS FOR THE **PERFECT DATE NIGHT**

HOW TO USE THE POWER OF DATE NIGHT TO TRULY  
CONNECT WITH YOUR SPOUSE.



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# PREFACE

## A LETTER FROM THE AUTHORS

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We first met in a high school ceramics class (although it did take a year after we graduated for fate to bring us back together). The first few of years of dating were amazing! Every moment we spent together was an opportunity to learn something new about each other. It seemed like no matter what we did, each date was perfect and our relationship kept getting stronger!

Then, about six years into our relationship, things began to slow down and date night seemed to disappear. At that time, we were both finishing up our degrees (Tyler with a bachelor's degree in entrepreneurship and Michelle with a master's degree in marriage and family therapy) and paying for school, student loans, and all our living expenses. The "adulthood" phase hit hard as we had all these financial responsibilities that we never had before. In addition to all of this, we also were planning our wedding...of course.

It's not that we didn't love each other. In fact, going through this struggle made our relationship even stronger. But we did see a decline in the amount of one-on-one time together, mostly because we had so many other responsibilities. The first thing we put on the backburner was date night.

After a few months of stress and feeling disconnected, we knew we had to make a change. We wanted to create a strong foundation for our marriage and we realized that consistent quality time together was crucial.

On a “starving college student” budget, we didn’t have the extra funds to have fancy date nights, but we decided to dedicate \$20 a month to couple time. We knew that if we wanted to take it seriously, we would have to invest time, effort, and even a dedicated “date night” budget.

Our criteria for date night wasn’t super complicated. All we knew was that we wanted to do something fun and different while helping to create a more intimate connection. One month we went to the zoo, one month we did a DIY project together at home, and sometimes we just got creative with themed movie and take-out nights. Whatever we did, we primarily focused on increasing the quality time with each other.

You know what? It worked! Even just scheduling that one date night each month helped us to reconnect. And what was even better, it eventually became a part of our routine. That one interaction a month became two or three. Even mundane tasks like laundry or dishes became an opportunity to spend some time together. So in 2014, after seeing how much this dedicated time worked for us, we decided to launch Crated with Love right out of our apartment. We knew that if date night could help us create a stronger relationship, it could help other couples in a similar situation.

In our first year, we shipped over 5,000 dates to couples all over the world. A fun little note, we had so many boxes in our apartment the first Christmas after we launched that we had no room for a tree, so we built one out of boxes!

Today, we ship to thousands of couples a month across the country (we are proud to say we have at least one Crater in every state)! Even so, we are still Crated with Love’s number one subscribers! Not only do we create each theme (with help from an amazing team), but we also do each date together every single month.

Our goal at Crated with Love is pretty simple. We want to get couples talking and interacting and we want that interaction to be fun and easy. Each date that we create is specifically designed to include games and activities that not only help you laugh together but are also all built on techniques and strategies to help you form a stronger relationship.

This book breaks down some of the things we've seen that are most crucial for creating the perfect date night. Now, we will be the first to admit that we are not a perfect couple, but the topics we talk about in this book have helped us continuously grow as a couple.

One of the best ways to reconnect in a relationship is to have an awesome date night! But, not all date nights are equal. There are times when we settle or resort to activities that don't emotionally stimulate our relationships. The five ingredients we talk about in this book will help you focus on the things that are most important to reconnecting with each other. So let's get to it!

Happy Dating!

Love,

Tyler and Michelle

Founders, Crated with Love

PS If you haven't done so already, we highly encourage you to print out the Five Ingredients Workbook. While you go through this book, fill it out with your partner. Talking is great, but sometimes getting thoughts and ideas on paper can help you the most.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE WHOLE WORLD IS AGAINST YOU

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Yes, that is a pretty bold statement, but in a scary (and mildly hyperbolic) way, it's true. A lot of things in this world can put strain on the success of your relationship. Think of all the things outside of your relationship like work, kids, bills, school, and friends. In some way or another, each one of those outside forces is an impacting factor in you having the best possible relationship with your partner.

Now, let us make something clear: none of these things are bad or unnecessary. In fact, a lot of the things on that list are what make life wonderful. The goal of this chapter is to help you understand how each of those things can affect your relationship. So, let's take a moment to look at some examples.

Let's say your partner just got a promotion at work. At first, you both celebrate with excitement as you start to think about the added income and the higher quality of life. But then a few days go by and you realize this new job involves more responsibilities and longer hours. So much so, that by the time they get home, your partner is so mentally and physically exhausted that all they want to do is relax, sometimes neglecting you.

Or, what about your newborn baby girl? She truly is a miracle and every second with her is a new blessing. But you both weren't expecting the increase in expenses, the lack of sleep, the pressure of taking care of an infant, and the lack of time to get everything done.

We can go on and on, and you could probably do so as well. That is why date night is so important. You need that time to reconnect with your significant other. Easier said than done, right? Throughout this book, we are going to help you create the perfect date night using ingredients we've implemented in our own lives, as well as within each Crated with Love box we ship.

The goal is not to be perfect, it is to help manage those outside forces while giving your relationship a consistent opportunity to grow.

The whole world may be against you, but you have the secret weapon: each other. Working towards a stronger relationship and a better dating life starts with support from both of you. So, let's get ready to take on the world!

**Your Challenge:** If you've printed out the workbook that comes with this ebook, take a second to write down a list of things that are negatively affecting your relationship in Section 1. They don't all have to be "bad". They can be things you love or enjoy. You just want to make sure you can identify those stressors that may be adding tension to your relationship.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE RELATIONSHIP TIMELINE

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Before we get into how to build the perfect date night, we want to talk quickly about the relationship timeline. Now, this will change from couple to couple so you'll need to create your own, but the goal is to identify key pivot points in your relationships. These are events or circumstances that change or alter the trajectory of your relationship. Let's take a look at some examples.

### **Courtship (First 1-5 Years)**

This is the dating period of your relationship. Within these first few years is where we see the highest amount of "discovery". Every day that you see or speak to each other is a brand new adventure into finding out who that person really is. You're experiencing new feelings and physiologically, you are getting a rush of dopamine every time you are around each other (Wu, 2017). If you were to look at a timeline that represents your excitement levels (in terms of your relationship), this period would typically show some of the peaks.

In terms of date night, we typically see the most effective and most rewarding experiences within the first few years. Almost all of the ingredients we mention later in this book are represented and you truly start to connect.

Some words to describe this period are **new, exciting, adventurous, or fun.**



## **The Move In (Changes from Couple to Couple)**

As your relationship gets serious, you are probably going to choose to move in with each other at some point. When this occurs on your timeline is unique to you, but for many relationships, this can be the first true stress test. When we're dating, we tend to show off the best sides of ourselves. However, as soon as we start to live together, our true colors start to show. Someone may be too clean or too messy or they just don't brush their teeth in the correct way. It's human nature. We don't like change, and as soon you cohabitate with another person, change is inevitable.

There is still a lot of discovery happening during this period, some good and some not so good. Sharing a home with someone you love is amazing, but it may take getting used to some of their quirks. Regardless, there are still many opportunities for you and your partner to grow as you learn more about each other.

However, date night can be affected during this stage as well. Once you begin to live with your significant other, date night can feel less exciting. With two incomes and shared expenses, it's not that finances are prohibiting you from dating, there usually is just an emotional transition after courtship. Think about it, if you are seeing someone every day, meeting up at the movies or having a romantic night out seems like less of an event. Because of this, some of the ingredients we talk about later begin to fade. It's also about this time where you start to form your date night habits. You may find your "go-to" restaurants or develop what a "typical" date night will look like. You may just resort to the couch/movie combo (which may to stick for years to come).

Some words to describe this period are **frustrating, weird, changing, or new.**

## **The Engagement (Changes from Couple to Couple)**

Like many of these events, getting engaged can bring some mixed feelings. The first day you get engaged is amazing. You just want to go and shout it from the top of a mountain. However, once you've gotten through the initial excitement, you may start to feel the pressure. Planning a wedding can be one of the most stressful experiences in our relationships. You keep ping-ponging back and forth between the thrill of eventually being married to the chaos of planning it. Who are you going to invite? Where will the wedding be? How are you going to pay for it? Did we mention that real life doesn't stop? You still have work, school, and all other obligations. And, whether we like to admit it or not, the word "forever" does take some getting used to, no matter how in love you are. The fact is, there are so many changes being made within your relationship and it may be one of the first instances where you are consciously planning your future together.

During this time, date night is not a high priority. There are so many other things to do and you may need to save any money you can for the wedding and/or honeymoon. Sometimes, the best date night option during this stage is sitting, clearing your mind, and doing nothing, finally giving yourselves a moment to breathe.

Some words to describe this period are **stressful, happy, memorable, or crazy**.

## **The Honeymoon (First 1 to 3 Years of Marriage)**

They call it the Honeymoon Phase for a reason. In the first couple years of marriage, you may see a renewal of passion, discovery, and connection between you and your partner. The stress of planning the wedding is over and you finally get to settle down in your new lives together.

If you were to look at a graph of your happiness throughout your relationship, you'd probably see peaks in this period as you start the new phase of your journey. Everything you do together is a first: the first movie as a married couple, the first vacation as a married couple, and the first holiday as a married couple. This new age of discovery can reignite your relationship as you learn what it means to be married.

You may also see a rejuvenation of date night. With all of these positive emotions, you may find yourselves more adventurous or spontaneous as you try to find new things to do together.

Some words to describe this period are **passionate, exciting, rejuvenating, or inspiring.**

### **The First Kid (3 Years or so After Marriage)**

On average, a married couple waits about 3 years before having their first child (Tracy, 2015). Similar to the engagement period, this event comes with a lot of different emotions. Having a child is one of the most special and rewarding experiences we can have, but it's also one of the most challenging.

With a newborn, parents can lose up to two hours of sleep per night, which can have long-term effects on your body, both physically and mentally (Ding, 2018). Financially, parents can spend \$12,000 on their child in the first year (Harris, 2018), creating unexpected expenses. This mixture of stress, physiological deprivations, and financial uncertainties can greatly affect your relationship.

And date night? Almost nonexistent. There is no time, no money, and frankly, not enough energy to do anything. This creates little opportunity to connect with each other on an intimate level.

Some words to describe this period are **exhausting, miraculous, stressful, or challenging.**

### **The Crucial Six (First Six Years of Marriage)**

Here's a scary statistic: of all the marriages that end in divorce, the average length of marriage is 8 years (but average length until separation is 6.6 years) (Kreider & Ellis, 2011). If that wasn't enough, Dr. John Gottman states in an article by Terry Gaspard that the average couple waits 6 years before seeking help for any problems or issues (Gaspard, 2015). Think about that for a second. The average couple doesn't seek help until year 6, but the average separation occurs in 6.6 years. Doesn't seem like enough time to fix the issues, does it?

Within the first six years of marriage, you typically experience the largest pivots or the most extreme events that affect your relationship. First you get married (average age of 26), then you have your first child (average age of 29), and then you buy your first house (average age of 32) (Gudell, 2015). In addition (depending on your generation), the average person switches jobs between two and four times during these first six years (Long, 2016). What does this have to do with date night? As you'll read in the next chapter, date night is a crucial source of what we call QCT (Quality Couple Time). The more stressors there are in your relationship, the harder it is to consistently create these moments of QCT. That lack of quality time can result in weaker relationships and may be a cause for the high amount of separation after six years.

That's why making sure you carve out consistent QCT within these first few years is so important. If you are reading this and are past the six-year mark, that's fantastic! Let's keep it going!

Some words to describe this period are **altering, trying, demanding, or troublesome.**

### **The Autopilot Years (7 to About 25 Years Married)**

The next period consists of year 7 to about 25 of your marriage. All typical major life events have passed, and you start to enter into a more consistent lifestyle. If you have children, they are getting older and less demanding than they may have been as infants and toddlers.

As you progress through this stage of your lives together, things may seem routine or monotonous, hence the name we gave it. Date night in these autopilot years usually consists of the same thing or the same activities. It's also during this time where we enter into the "I know everything about my partner" phase. Because of this mindset, discovery hits an all-time low because we believe that there is nothing else to learn about our partners. Creativity and passion can be lacking in these years because you may not have been practicing these skills.

Some words to describe this period are **monotonous, routine, or mundane.**

### **The Empty Nest (25+ Years Married)**

If you have kids, the last phase is the empty nest when the children are transitioning to being on their own and you are transitioning back to just the two of you.

In this period, we see a slight jump in discovery as you try and relearn what it's like to live alone again. You may see an increase in disposable income which means you may be more prone to vacations or trying new things. It's in this stage where you start to let go of other financial obligations as you may be finishing paying off your home and other debts such as tuition for kids, and all the major spending items have been taken care of.

With less attention being given to the children, and less responsibilities overall, now is the perfect time to reignite date night!

Some words to describe this period are **reigniting**, **freeing**, or **confusing**.

### **Overview**

To wrap this chapter up, there are a few important notes we want to make. First is that these phases are just examples based on archetypal relationships. Your timeline and your experiences within each of these phases may be completely different from other couples. Also, It may seem like we are only focusing on the negative parts of each period, but our goal is to help prepare you and help you understand why date night can feel impossible at times. The main purpose of this chapter is to help you identify those significant stages of your relationship and the impact they can have on date night in order to give you the tools to succeed.

No matter what stage you are in, date night is important. It may look or feel different, but making sure you dedicate time to each other will help strengthen your relationship.

Finally, if you're reading this book and have already passed one of these stages and wish you could go back, don't! Your journey is unique, and it helped sculpt you into the people and couple that you are. There are always opportunities to improve. That's the great thing about love. No matter where you are in your relationship adventure, there is always something new to learn and ways to grow closer together.

**Your Challenge:** In your workbook, fill out your own timeline in Section 2. With each event, write down a few words that describe that period, good or bad. If you are doing this with your partner, talk about these events and how they've helped shape your relationship.

# CHAPTER THREE

## DATE NIGHT VS. QCT

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One thing that is very important to understand is the difference between date night and actual quality couple time (QCT). Quality couple time, as you could probably guess, is time spent together in which a real connection is made either physically, mentally, emotionally, or a combination of the three. It is during these times that we feel closer and understand our partner on a deeper level. These connections compound to help build a stronger relationship.

Now, the goal is to create that QCT with every date night. But, as we saw in the timeline, sometimes the circumstances in our lives can make it difficult. This is where misconceptions are created. Has your partner ever told you that they want to feel closer to you even though you just had a “date night?” This is usually because that need for QCT wasn’t being met. Just because we go out on a date, doesn’t mean it’s successful in creating that desired intimacy. We often use date night as an escape from the real world, which doesn’t always help create quality time, together

For example, let’s take the date night activity of going to the movies and compare it to two points on the relationship timeline.

While dating, you both decide to see a movie after cracking up at the trailer. It is the first movie you are seeing together. While you watch the movie, you feed each other popcorn, cuddle up closer to one another, and whisper funny jokes, impersonating the characters on the screen. You leave feeling closer together after creating quality couple time.



In contrast, let's say you have a child that just turned one. Your parents come down for the weekend and offer to babysit so you can go the movies. This is your first date night in over a year. You're mentally exhausted and just so excited to be out of the house. You both are indifferent about the movie you choose. You spend the entire movie fighting your exhaustion and maybe say a few words between scenes. You leave the theater wishing you had more time to spend away from the stress at home.

You can see the difference, right? They are the same activity, but one was successful and the other was not in terms of creating QCT. Does this mean that it's impossible to create quality time when you find yourselves in one of those difficult periods of your timeline? Of course not! You just need a different set of tools. Creating that quality time is determined by your circumstances and your dedication.

Want to know a secret? Almost any activity you do together can create QCT including doing the laundry, cleaning the house, raking up the leaves in the front yard, you name it! Remember the definition. Quality couple time is created when you find yourself growing closer on a more intimate level. In the next chapter, we are finally going to talk about the ingredient to the perfect date night (aka, how to create that QCT).

**Your Challenge:** In Section 3 of your workbook, write down the last three events you would classify as "date night". Do you think you created some QCT? Why or why not? Be honest with yourselves. The only way to improve date night is to learn from past experiences. Once you find a date night where you don't think you had much QCT, write down a few ways you think you could have crafted the date so that you initiated some quality time together.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## INGREDIENTS FOR A PERFECT DATE NIGHT

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Are you ready to build the perfect date night? Over the remaining chapters, we are going to break down each individual piece to prove why each ingredient is important and how it can affect your date night if they aren't present. But for now, let's look at the recipe:

### **Time + Detail + Joy + Discovery = Connection**

There it is. The perfect date night represented in a simple mathematical formula. But, like most things worth working towards, it is a lot easier to give you that formula than for you to effectively bring it into reality.

To start, let's work backwards. The end goal for any date night should be to connect on a deeper level with your partner. If you just want to get out of the house, get away from the stress, or try and find some peace and quiet, the meaning behind your actions will be for personal gain and may not help you grow closer together. The whole meaning of date night should be to grow your relationship. Now that we have identified the goal and end result, it is time to start gathering your ingredients. In the next few chapters, we are going to break down each individual ingredient, what they mean, and how to apply them to date night.

**Your Challenge:** Write down the best date night you and your partner have ever had together in Section 4 of your workbook. You don't need to write down all the details, but think about what made that date so special. As you go forward, see if the ingredients we talk about describe the date you've written down.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## TIME

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### **What Does it Really Mean?**

The ingredients are in a specific order. Each one builds on the last to help create the perfect date. The first ingredient is time. Dedicated time. The theory behind this is simple. In order to have a quality date night, you need to set aside dedicated time for each other, both physically and mentally.

This is important on a few different levels. First of all, time is a commodity. We tend to spend it on the things that mean the most to us. If you are not investing a dedicated block of time towards date night, it can be perceived that date night isn't important enough to make time for. By investing and spending our time on each other, which is a limited resource that could be spent in a million different ways, you are saying that your relationship is worth investing in, and that mindset will help you make the most of the time together.

The mental aspect of time is just as important. You need to invest some of your brain's time to focusing on your partner. This means being 100% engaged in and focused on whatever you are doing together. By doing this, you are saying to yourself and to your partner that your date is the number one priority in that moment. And by doing so, you will get the most of your couple time.

Are you ready for some staggering statistics on time? The National Marriage Project did a study on what they call “couple time” which is defined as one-on-one time interacting with each other. Of the married couples interviewed, those who had couple time at least once per week were 3.5 times more likely to classify their marriage as “very happy” compared to those who had it less than once a week (Wilcox & Dew, 2012). In addition, the predicted probability of divorce for those who had daily couple time was about 12% compared to 41% for couples who rarely had it. The takeaway? Quality couple time matters.

### **How to Apply it?**

Time can be one of the hardest ingredients to implement, which is why it is first on our list. If you can dedicate the time, the rest of the ingredients will fall into place.

If you and your partner are having a hard time dedicating time because of other obligations, there are ways you can work it into your schedule. Start small. You don't need to dedicate 4 or 5 hours to date night. In fact, you can create some of that QCT in just 15 or 30 minutes. On your calendar or in your phone, add a 30 minute block for date night once a week. As you get used to incorporating this into your schedule, try implementing an hour, or better yet, find 15 minutes every day dedicated to one-on-one time together.

The second part of time is focus. During that dedicated time, make sure you are all in. Turn off your phone, the TV, and all other distractions. Give your partner 100% of your attention.

### **Examples of Bad**

The obvious example of how to not dedicate time is to...well, not dedicate time. That being said, you can also jeopardize your date night by not adhering to the focus part of this ingredient.

As an example, let's say you both decide to go out to dinner. But while you wait for your food, you both on your phone or watching the TV in the corner. Sure, you set aside the physical time for date night, but you didn't dedicate your mental time, and because of that, you really won't get the most out of your date night.

### **Example of Good**

Taking that same example, let's say you both choose a new, local restaurant. It's a nice night, so you decide to sit out on the patio away from any distraction and you both turn your phones off putting them away in your purse or pocket. The rest of the time is spent focusing on and interacting with each other.

**Your Challenge:** In Section 5 of your workbook, write down some of the reasons it is hard to either make time for date night or to stay focused while you are on your date. Be honest with each other. Our purpose is to help you improve your dating life, and that starts with looking at some of things that need improving.

# CHAPTER SIX

## DETAIL

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### **What Does it Really Mean?**

The next ingredient is detail, or the effort it takes in planning your date. Unlike all the other ingredients, this one has a sliding scale determined by your own circumstances, mostly how much dedication you can put into planning your date.

The more time you have to invest, the more complex or detailed your dates can be. This usually takes place in the courtship phase of your relationship. During this phase, you may not have as many responsibilities or obligations, so planning and organizing a fun and unique date night can be a lot easier.

In contrast, if you both work demanding jobs and have two kids under the age of five, for example, you may have much less time to create a well thought out date.

Depending on what stage you are in, too much or too little detail can hurt your experience. If you are that hardworking parent, trying to plan a super detailed date night can be exhausting and stressful which can lead to missing out on quality time together. At that point, something that is either simple or already planned out for you may be a better option because you don't have to think, all you need to do is focus on building that QCT.

### **How to Apply it?**

It all comes down to that quality time together and how to maximize it during date night. You'll need to take a deeper look at your individual circumstances to see how much detail you need as a couple to get the most out of date night.

Now, there is one thing we need to clear up. Simplicity does not equal laziness. We are not saying to flop on the couch and watch a movie because it is easy. What we are saying is that you need to find options that allow you to create the most amount of interaction with the least amount of stress.

### **Examples of Bad**

There are two ways we can miss out on quality couple time when it comes to detail. The first is over-planning to the point that it becomes stressful, causing you to miss the opportunity of enjoying your date. For example, let's say you both sit down to plan a day trip out of town. You both are exhausted from a week of work, yet you still try and power through, planning every intricate detail and mapping out every hour you are away. Eventually things get too overwhelming and even more so when things don't go the way you want them to during the trip.

The other mistake couples make when it comes to detail is not planning enough. Imagine it's Friday night. There is nothing on the calendar, and you have no obligations. Instead of taking this opportunity to plan something fun and unique, you resort to watching reruns of shows on TV while you skim Facebook. There is no interaction for four hours and by the time you realize it, it's time for bed.

### **Example of Good**

For the first example, let's change things up. Recognizing that you both are far too exhausted to plan anything super specific, you decide to build some spontaneity into your out of town date. You choose when you want to leave, what your destination will be, and when you want to head back. That's it. What you will do, what you will see, and where you'll eat will all be decided as they come. A clear and stress-free mind gives you the opportunity to really enjoy the time with your partner.

As for the second example, instead of resorting solely to television, you decide to take this rare night of freedom and plan a special movie night. You go out together and pick up ingredients for a gourmet meal to cook together, relishing the time together. As you eat dessert, you sit side by side on the couch watching the first movie you saw when you were dating. The nostalgia brings back fond memories of when you first met, allowing you to feel closer.

**Your Challenge:** In Section 6 of your workbook, decide together if you have over-planning or under-planning tendencies when it comes to date night. How can you improve to help make date night more successful?



# CHAPTER SEVEN

## JOY

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### **What Does it Really Mean?**

Once you have dedicated the time and put in the effort to plan, it's time to enjoy your date! Joy can come in many different forms. You may find yourself laughing, growing closer intimately, or simply feeling at peace. There can be so many negative emotions resonating in our day to day lives, the optimal goal for date night is to have all those troubles disappear for a few moments while you create joy with your partner.

Because of this, it can be important to steer clear of anything that can jeopardize that opportunity for joy. You each should feel comfortable with your choice of date night, because if one of you doesn't, then the moment of joy may be missed.

It's also important to create a date that you both can enjoy equally. If one of you loves bowling and the other one absolutely despises it, it's probably not a good idea to go bowling. If one person has fun, but the other does not, then what good does that really do? Instead of creating a moment focused on each other, you are created one that focuses on just you, individually.

## How to Apply it?

When planning your date, ask yourselves the following questions:

1. Will we both feel comfortable with this option?
2. Will we both enjoy the activity?
3. Will there be moments to interact?
4. Can this bring us both joy?

If one or more of these answers is no, um, or not sure, you might want to rethink your plan. Joy and laughter are very powerful tools and are vital, not only to a successful date, but for a strong relationship.

## Examples of Bad

One of you decides to plan a surprise date night for the other. You pick them up and drive them to a penny arcade that just opened. You are having a blast, playing some of the games you played when you were younger, but your partner isn't. They aren't really into video games and the massive group of people is making them a little uncomfortable. Because of this, they decide to go sit down at the table and wait for you to finish.

## Example of Good

You surprise your partner with a new, couples board game for an at home date night. You love the competition and gamification and your partner enjoys spending time with you at home. The game includes a lot of conversation starters, so you find yourselves laughing with every question asked.

**Your Challenge:** In Section 7 of your workbook, make a list of a few things you wouldn't want to do for date night and ask your partner to do the same. In addition, jot down some things that might make you uncomfortable or uneasy while out on a date with your partner.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## DISCOVERY

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### **What Does it Really Mean?**

Discovery is probably our favorite ingredient because it is where you really start to see the true meaning of date night take form. Discovery is the act of learning (or relearning) something about your partner. As we talked about earlier in the book, date night may have seemed better or easier while you were first dating and a large reason for that is because there was so much discovery. Every conversation revealed some new or exciting fact about the person you would go on to love.

As our relationships progress, however, we begin to feel like we know everything there is to know about our partner. Once that complacency sets in and discovery diminishes, date night may begin to lose its luster. The truth is, there is always something new to learn about your partner.

The best date nights in some way incorporate discovery. And when we say discovery, don't overthink it. It could be anything. You find a new food that they like. You notice how good they are at a certain skill that you didn't know before. You learn about a new childhood memory they have. Or even that you re-discover a feeling for your partner that you haven't felt in a while. When we cut through the surface and start to get to know our partner more intimately, that's when true love really shines through.

## **How to Apply it?**

When planning a date night, look for opportunities for discovery. Things like taking a cooking class together or visiting a new restaurant. Do something that involves interaction between you both. Intertwined with discovery is spontaneity, which can also lead to great opportunities to learn. As our relationships progress, we tend to fall into a rhythm or “auto-pilot” when it comes to dating. By searching for new opportunities to learn with your partner, you are getting yourselves off the normal track which leads to learning more about each other and developing a stronger connection.

## **Examples of Bad**

Going to the movies is a typical date night option. You both go back and forth until someone chooses a movie. You grab your usual drinks and popcorn and sit to watch the flick. Two hours later you leave without saying a word to each other. There was no interaction, no one-on-one contact, and no opportunities for discovery.

## **Example of Good**

Instead, let's say you decide to take a cooking class together. You spend the whole night working together, learning how to create a dish. You discover how great your partner is at cooking (or maybe you are finally seeing it in action). You've created this moment you will never forget and now you have a new recipe to cook on occasion together, in memory of this time with your partner.

**Your Challenge:** In Section 8 of your workbook, go out and find one skill or hobby your partner has that you didn't know before. Then, taking those answers, come up with a date idea for each that allows you to learn more about your partner and these topics.

# CHAPTER NINE

## CONNECTION

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### **What Does it Really Mean?**

Connection is the most important part of a successful date night and is the result of adding all the other ingredients we've talked about. Connection occurs when you and your partner find a way to grow closer together. The bond in your relationship gets tighter. Your friendship gets stronger. Your ability to understand each other grows. In one way or another, you have a better relationship than you did before your date.

Now, we aren't talking about some hidden or impossible to reach emotion, so don't overthink. Connection can be as simple as you learning something new about your partner's interests while you cook dinner, or feeling physically closer as you stargaze. The most important thing to remember is that connection occurs from one-on-one interaction, which is why all the previous ingredients are so important. They give you the ability to create that time to reconnect.

### **How to Apply it?**

Think back to some of your favorite date nights in the past. What do you remember most? Typically, the things that are most memorable are the same things that create connection. We don't remember scheduling the date or making sure we stay focused on each other. We remember those moments of reconnection, intimacy, and interaction. So, when you are on your next date, make sure to create some time for you and your partner to interact and create that connection for you to remember!

## **Examples of Bad**

It's been a busy week for you both and you haven't been able to spend much time together. You both have been getting home later than usual which doesn't leave much time to interact. Wanting to reconnect, you both decide to order a pizza and watch a movie together. However, you each sit on your own separate couches while the movie plays and one of you falls asleep half way through.

## **Example of Good**

Your partner has just started a new project at work and has been working longer hours. You feel emotionally and physically distant from them. So, you invite your parents over for the night to watch the kids while you and your partner take a walk around the neighborhood, holding hands. You both talk about the things in your lives that are causing you stress, while offering support for each other. As you walk hand-in-hand, the physical closeness translates to intimacy. Although the walk only lasts 30 minutes, you feel like your relationship has been refreshed and you feel reconnected to your partner.

**Your Challenge:** In Section 9 of your workbook, write down one reason why you sometimes feel disconnected from your partner or one way you would like to grow closer. For example, maybe you feel emotionally distant or you don't feel as physically close. Maybe you don't feel understood, appreciated, or noticed. Try and be vulnerable with your partner and remember not to judge. We feel things for a reason, whether or not your partner feels the same way. Once you have the two things you each think need to be rejuvenated, create a date night that focuses on reconnecting those aspects of your relationship.

# CHAPTER TEN

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

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### **How to Tie Everything Together**

The idea is pretty simple: combine all of these ingredients and you have the perfect date night. But, like most great things, it's a lot easier said than done. We also know that it won't always feel very romantic to whip out this list and check each ingredient off one by one to make sure they are present in your date night.

So how do you naturally start to put all these things together? Well first, we suggest to go back and look at a few of your past date nights and evaluate them. Did they include all the ingredients? Were they missing any? And if so, why? Being able to analyze your past date nights will help you create better ones in the future.

The first few times, try to sit down together and plan a date that you know will hit every one of these ingredients. Keep it simple to start, but try and actively integrate the topics we've talked about throughout this book.

Finally, have fun and don't overthink it! Date night isn't supposed to be rigid and scientific. At the end of the day, the most important thing is that one-on-one connection between you and your significant other!

### **Missing an Ingredient?**

Another benefit to analyzing your past date nights is to help you both identify some opportunities for growth. If you start to see a pattern, and are missing one ingredient on a consistent basis, it may be worth exploring why it is missing and how to resolve it.

You can use these tools to not only help improve date night, but also to help you improve your relationship as a whole.

**Your Challenge:** The fun part! In Section 10 of your workbook, create your own perfect date night using the ingredients we've talked about in this book. Determine a budget, decide what you will do, and choose a date for your date! Before you go out (or stay in), briefly explain why you believe this date will help you connect



# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## HOW WE APPLY THIS TO CRATED WITH LOVE

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### **Our Focus at Crated with Love**

We try to implement every one of the topics we've talked about in this book into our Crated with Love boxes. We know how important date night is, but we also know how difficult it can be to put all of these ingredients together, especially when you have so many other obligations in your life. Every box that is delivered to you includes all the games, activities, and items to help create the perfect date night recipe!



### **Example of a Theme Using the Five Ingredients**

Our Tropical Escape theme sends you and your partner on an adventure to your own deserted island (right from your own home). You must work together through a series of games and activities to “survive the island”. Here are examples of how this theme breaks down the five ingredients for you!

**Time:** We package the entire box so that all you need to do is pick a dedicated time to do your Crated with Love date. The activities or games within the date are also very interactive, making sure that the time you set aside is focused on each other. For example, our “Sea Glass Mosaic” activity within the Tropical Escape date has you both creating a piece of art using the sea glass in your box. The trick, however, is that you each must place one piece at a time. The goal is for you both to work together while also promoting communication. This activity requires you to be 100% focused on your partner, investing in that one-on-one time together.

**Detail:** We plan everything out for you! Each date comes with four or five challenges that we create in-house with our team of relationship experts and marriage counselors to provide fun and unique activities that can also help strengthen your relationship. The activities are also somewhat fluid, allowing you to do each date according to your specific circumstances. Most challenges can be done on the go or even broken up into different days. One of our main goals is for you to be able to plan each date so that it fits perfectly into your schedule.

**Joy:** One of the foundational pieces of Crated with Love is laughter. Every time we create a new theme, we ask ourselves, “how can we get our couples to laugh?” We believe that joy can be a great foundation for a more intimate experience, so many of our games or activities try and get you to be silly. For example, one of the games in the Tropical Escape box is called “Escape the Island”. It is a resource gathering game where you and your partner must scavenge the island together to obtain items for your survival tools. However, you each have a communication limitation. One person can only speak using one word sentences, and the other cannot speak at all (only hand gestures and facial expressions). As you travel throughout the island, there will be certain things you’ll need to warn your partner about, keeping your limitations in mind. Let’s just say watching your partner mime a lion running toward you or a pirate’s hideout can be pretty funny.

**Discovery:** Once you dedicate time and start to laugh together, it's amazing how much you can learn (or relearn) about your partner. Within each box that we ship, we try and add a few moments where you have the opportunity to learn about your partner. In the Tropical Escape box, we include some Crated with Love water beads and a jar (if you aren't familiar with water beads, they're fun and amazing). The objective of this activity is to create a promise to your partner while mixing the water beads (similar to a sands ceremony at a wedding). But, in this activity, your promises are more geared toward small acts of appreciation for your significant other. Our motive with this activity is to get you talking and help you discover some areas in your partner's life where they need some support.

**Connection:** Add all of these things up and hopefully you will feel more connected to your partner. The Tropical Escape date is great because it not only allows you to connect on what it would be like to be trapped on an island, but the activities bring it back to a more real-life perspective. Focusing primarily on teamwork, this date challenges you to work together (with varying amounts of difficulty), and shows you just how important you are to one another.

### **Want to Give Crated with Love a Try?**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our book! We would absolutely love for you to become a member of the Crated with Love family and see just how powerful date night can be to your relationship!

If you are interesting in learning more about Crated with Love or are ready to begin your own date night adventure, please visit us at [www.cratedwithlove.com](http://www.cratedwithlove.com) !

Don't forget to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), & [Pinterest](#) (@cratedwithlove)

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