

COMING BACK TO WARMTH



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Warmth Is Not A Feeling. It Is A Practice.

You are waiting to feel close to him again so that you can act close to him. It runs the other way round, and always has.

Most women in a cold marriage are waiting for a moment. A holiday. A night away. A conversation that fixes it. Something big enough to match the size of what has been lost.

It almost never comes, and when it does it rarely holds. Couples come back from the weekend away and by Wednesday the house is exactly as cold as it was before they packed.

Because closeness was never built by big moments. It was built by about four hundred tiny ones a month — the hand on the back, the shared joke, the two minutes of asking about a day, the look across a room — and those four hundred moments disappeared one at a time over two years without either of you noticing a single one of them go.

That is how it must be rebuilt. Not by one enormous act. By putting the small things back, deliberately, until they stop being deliberate.

WHAT THIS GUIDE ASKS OF YOU

Twenty-eight days. One small action each day, most of them under two minutes.

Not one of them requires his cooperation. Not one of them requires you to feel warm first. You are not performing love you do not feel — you are practising the actions that generate it, which is what every long marriage has always quietly done.

Two warnings before you start

Do not keep score. The moment this becomes a ledger — nine days of effort from me and nothing from him — it stops working, because resentment is visible from across a room and it undoes everything the action was meant to do.

Do not announce it. Do not tell him you are working on the marriage. Do not say “I read a book.” A man who knows he is a project behaves like a project. Just do the days.

What Warmth Is Actually Made Of

Four channels. Most cold marriages have lost all four, and most women try to rebuild only one.

One. Attention

Being looked at. Being asked something and having the answer received. This is the first thing to go and the most important to restore, because it is the one that says *you are still someone to me*.

Two. Touch that leads nowhere

A hand on the shoulder, a moment of contact in the kitchen, sitting close enough to be touching. In a drifted marriage, all touch has usually collapsed into either nothing or sex, and when those are the only two settings, ordinary affection disappears entirely and both people feel it as rejection.

Three. Ease

Being in a room together without effort. Laughing. Silence that is comfortable rather than loaded. This is the channel most damaged by the drift, because every silence in your house has now acquired a meaning.

Four. Being known

Him knowing what is happening in your week, and you in his. Not logistics — the actual texture. Who annoyed him. What he is worried about. What made him laugh at 11am.

WHICH ONE IS YOURS?

Read the four again and name the one that has been gone longest in your home. Write it down.

Most women discover it is not the one they have been fighting about. They have been quarrelling about touch when what actually vanished, two years earlier, was attention — and touch simply followed it out of the door.

Attention

This week is entirely about looking at him. Nothing else.

Day 1. When he comes in, stop what you are doing and look at his face for the length of a greeting. Not at his hands, not at the door, not over your shoulder while stirring something. His face. Say something ordinary.

Day 2. Protect the first ninety seconds of his arrival. No problems, no admin, no fees, no generator, no what-your-mother-said. Ninety seconds only. It will keep.

Day 3. Ask one question about his day that cannot be answered with “fine.” *“What was the most annoying part of today?”* is the best one I know, because complaining is easy and a withdrawn man will often take the invitation.

Day 4. When he answers something, ask one follow-up question and nothing more. The follow-up is what proves you were actually listening. Then let it go.

Day 5. Put your phone in another room for the hour after dinner. Do not mention that you have done it.

Day 6. Notice one thing out loud. *“Thank you for sorting that out.”* Specific, small, in a normal voice.

Day 7. Sit in the same room as him for twenty minutes doing your own thing. No conversation required. You are practising being near him without needing anything from it.

END OF WEEK ONE

Write one line in your diary: what was hardest this week?

For most women it is Day 2 — holding the problems for ninety seconds. That difficulty is itself the finding. It tells you how much of your remaining contact with your husband is administration.

Touch That Asks For Nothing

The aim is to make ordinary contact ordinary again. It will feel strange. That strangeness is a measurement.

Day 8. One hand on his shoulder or back as you pass him. Two seconds. Say nothing and keep walking.

Day 9. Sit close enough on the sofa that your arm touches his. Do not lean in, do not make it a moment. Just sit there.

Day 10. When he leaves the house, walk to the door with him.

Day 11. A proper greeting when he comes home — a hand, a touch, three seconds rather than the sideways peck that has replaced it.

Day 12. Ask him for something small and physical. “*Can you reach that?*” “*Hold this a minute.*” Small requests he can easily meet quietly restore his sense of being useful to you, which many withdrawn men have lost entirely.

Day 13. Sit outside or in the same room for ten minutes at the end of the day, near each other, phones away.

Day 14. Whatever you have found easiest this week, do it twice today.

IF TOUCH FEELS IMPOSSIBLE

If there is another woman, or if something happened that you have not resolved, your body may refuse this week entirely. Do not force it. Forced touch teaches your body that your own signals do not matter, and that is a high price for a marriage exercise.

Skip to Week Three and come back to this one later — or not at all, until the other thing is settled. Read *If She's Already There* first.

Ease

Bringing lightness back into a house that has become careful.

Day 15. Share something funny with no hook attached — a video, something a child said. Then drop it. Do not wait for a response and do not comment if none comes.

Day 16. Restore one small dead ritual. The tea you used to have. The programme on Thursdays. The walk to buy something in the evening. Do not ask him to commit; just start doing it and be there.

Day 17. Say something to him that is not about the house, the children, money, or the marriage. Anything. A news story, a neighbour, a memory.

Day 18. Let one small irritation go entirely. The thing he did not do. Choose it deliberately, in advance, and simply do not raise it.

Day 19. Bring back one thing from early on — a song from then, the food from your first year, the place you used to go. Do not explain what you are doing.

Day 20. Laugh at something of his. Even a small thing. A withdrawn man has usually not been funny in his own home

for a long time, and he misses it more than he could say.

Day 21. Do nothing at all today except be pleasant. Rest. This is a marathon.

Being Known

The deepest channel, and the one that decides whether any of this holds.

Day 22. Tell him one real thing about your day — not a report, something you actually felt. *“I was so embarrassed in that meeting today.”* Then stop. You are modelling what you want back.

Day 23. Ask him what he is worried about at the moment. Then be quiet for longer than is comfortable.

Day 24. Tell him one thing you are looking forward to. Nothing invites a person back into a shared future faster than hearing that one exists.

Day 25. Ask him about something from before you — his childhood, his first job, his father. Men who cannot talk about the present will often talk at length about the past, and the talking itself reopens the channel.

Day 26. Tell him one specific thing you appreciate about who he is, not what he does. There is a large difference and he will feel it.

Day 27. Ask: *“Is there anything you have been wanting to say to me?”* Then be quiet. This is a small door. Some men walk

through it.

Day 28. Look back at the four channels and write down which one moved and which did not.

AFTER THE TWENTY-EIGHT DAYS

Do not judge the marriage on this month. Judge the direction.

Ask three questions. Is the house warmer than it was four weeks ago, even slightly? Did he meet any of it — not all, any? And what did doing this do to *you*?

That last one matters as much as the others. Many women discover they had stopped being warm to anyone, including themselves, and that starting again changed something that had nothing to do with him.

If nothing moved at all

Then you have something valuable, even though it does not feel like it.

Four weeks of steady, unannounced, unresented warmth is a fair test. If the temperature of the house has not shifted at all, you are no longer guessing about whether this is a man who is temporarily lost. That is information you did not have a month ago, and you paid for it honestly.

Take it into Step Five and Step Six. Have the conversation. Draw the line. You have earned the right to be direct, because nobody — not him, not his mother, not you at three in the morning — can say you did not try.

— *Dede Okeke*

When He Starts To Meet You

Nobody prepares women for this part, and it is where a great deal of good progress is quietly destroyed.

Somewhere in the four weeks, many women get a response. He initiates a conversation. He touches your arm. He asks a question about your day for the first time in a year.

And the relief is so enormous that she does the one thing guaranteed to close him again.

The three mistakes of the good week

She floods. Months of stored feeling arrive at once. Everything she has not said since March comes out in twenty minutes, because the door finally opened. He experiences it as a wave, and by the following evening he has retreated to a safe distance.

What to do instead: match his size. If he offers a sentence, give a sentence. Let the door open at the speed he is opening it.

She audits. "So why have you been like this for a year?" It is a completely fair question and it is fatal at that moment. He has just taken a small risk; the first thing that meets him should not be an invoice.

The audit can happen later, in the Opening, properly. Not in the first warm hour.

She stops. The most common of the three. Things improve, so she quietly abandons her own life — the friend, the class, the twenty minutes — and returns to organising herself entirely around him. Within two months the house is exactly as it was.

Whatever happens, keep Step Three. It was never a tactic to get his attention. It was the ground you now stand on.

How to receive it well

- **Say thank you, small.** “I liked that.” Real, brief, and not a ceremony.
- **Do not analyse it aloud.** Naming a change too early makes a man self-conscious about it, and self-conscious men stop.
- **Do not test it.** Resist the urge to push at it to see if it holds. It is new; it will not hold yet.
- **Expect it to go backwards.** Warmth returns in a zigzag — three good days, then a flat week. The flat week is not evidence that it failed.

Three months from now

If the marriage genuinely turns, the change you will notice is not romance. It is ordinariness — being able to sit in a room with him without reading the room. That is the actual destination, and it is worth far more than it sounds.

And if it turns, there is one more thing to do, in a quiet moment: agree between you that you will say things now. That the two of you will not do another two years of silence. Marriages that survive a drift and never name it usually drift again, for the same reasons, three or four years later.

The drift did not happen because you stopped loving each

other. It happened because you both stopped saying things out loud. That is the habit to change, not the feeling.

— Dede Okeke

Sixteen More Small Things

When the twenty-eight days are finished, do not stop. Pick from this list, one or two a week, for as long as it takes.

- Greet him properly when he walks in, every single time, for the rest of your marriage.
- Learn one thing he is currently interested in well enough to ask a real question about it.
- Sit outside together for ten minutes after the children sleep.
- Say his name when you speak to him instead of starting straight into the sentence.
- Send one message a week with no request in it.
- Let him finish a story without correcting a detail.
- Do one small thing he has been putting off, without mentioning that you did it.
- Ask his opinion on something real and then actually use it.
- Cook the thing from your first year together, on an ordinary Tuesday, for no reason.
- Touch him once a day somewhere that is not on the way to anywhere.

- Tell him one thing that made you laugh today.
- Stop yourself once a week from raising something small that does not matter.
- Go somewhere with him where neither of you has a role — not church, not family, not work.
- Put the phone in another room for one hour every evening.
- Say “I am glad you are home” when it is true.
- Every so often, look at him for a moment longer than necessary.

WHY THE LIST IS SO ORDINARY

Because marriages are ordinary. They are not lost in one dramatic season and they are not saved in one either.

Everything on that list takes under two minutes. Do four of them a day for a year and you will have put roughly fifteen hundred small warm moments back into a house that had almost none.

That is the whole method. There has never been another one.

— *Dede Okeke*