The Daily Handy

A Playful Guide to
Hands-On Loving Every Day



PUT YOUR PHONES DOWN.
PUT YOUR HANDS BACK ON EACH OTHER.

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CHAPTER 1

Touch Changes Everything



A hand lovingly applied can interrupt a bad mood faster than a meditation app. It is also ten dollars cheaper than the smoothie I keep buying. Why does such a small thing make a difference?

You've probably heard oxytocin called the cuddle hormone. Scientists will tell you the real story is messier than the nickname, and I believe them. Here's the version I can stand behind, because I've felt it: a long hug in the kitchen changes the temperature of a room. Shoulders drop. Voices soften. People stop needing to be right about whatever was being discussed.

Touch is also the oldest language we have. It came before speech, before poetry, and long before desire became something that should be saved for special occasions. You spoke fluent touch once. You just may not have had a proper conversation in a while.

Leave the rose petals to whoever wants to vacuum them up. A hand parked on your partner's hip while you wait for the kettle to boil will do.

Slow is the speed limit

Here's a fun fact about your skin. Researchers who study touch have found that skin has nerve fibers that respond best to slow, gentle stroking, roughly the speed you'd pet a cat you love. Not a poke, not a pat, and definitely not the frantic buffing you'd give a car. Those fibers are tied to the parts of the brain that handle emotion and bonding. So when this book keeps telling you to slow down, I'm serious. Your skin voted.

Why touch beats sex, some days

Does it seem that sex has become a special event that you and your partner need to save up for? Has regular touch gotten demoted to background noise? You and your partner have a silent language that is all your own. Small touches can provide the daily language between the big moments. It bridges the gap between *I love you* and *I'm still annoyed, but I'd like to be near you again*. Once touching becomes a habit (again!), you get better at reading each other's small signals. A hand on the shoulder is an apology. A finger at the hip is an invitation. Nobody needs to send a memo.

Awkward is allowed

You'll bump noses, make an unexpected noise, or have to stop and ask, "Wait, what are you doing?" Sometimes you'll both laugh. Sometimes one of you will need to move a knee. Adjust and carry on. You can be tired, distracted and a little clumsy and still enjoy touching each other.

AT OUR HOUSE

If you share your home with a cat, you know this one. Ours has strong opinions about breakfast, and the moment he decides it's running late, he announces them from the hallway. Nothing kills the mood like a yowl (or twenty). It's hard to stay focused (and not to laugh a little) when a fluffy someone is narrating his woes. Interruptions like this are part of the fabric of a relationship, though. They remind us that we're two people in a real home, still choosing to reach for each other.

Loved, and still touch-starved

You can adore someone and still be quietly starved for touch. Being loved and being touched are two separate things, and having one doesn't replace the other. The fastest way I know to close the gap is to say it out loud: *I love you, and I would also like to be touched more.*

Foreplay is all day

Foreplay used to mean something was about to happen. Try thinking of it as a separate language you speak all day. Everything that keeps you busy is still there, but you make a practice of touching on purpose: a hand on the back at the stove, a longer hug at the door. Those small touches set the mood for everything else. By the time anything "happens," it's already been happening all day.

Are you touch-starved?

Think back over the past week. Who touched you, and was there any reason beyond a hello, a goodbye, or a hand passing you a dish? If the honest answer is "not really," you're in good company. This book is for you.

TOOL: THE TWENTY-SECOND HELLO

Time: 20 seconds / **Mess:** none
Snack: no / **Phones:** down

Next time you're reunited after any length of separation, try a twenty-second hug. Count in your head. Around twelve seconds, somebody will probably laugh. Twenty seconds is longer than it sounds when you're standing in the kitchen holding the groceries.



LITTLE SPARK: THE FIVE-SECOND KISS

Time: 5 seconds / **Mess:** lipstick, maybe
Snack: no / **Phones:** ignored

Once a day, kiss for five full seconds. Count them. It's longer than a peck and shorter than a commitment, and it's a surprisingly good way to interrupt a distracted day. It is fun and also feels a bit goofy at first.

Your assignment for today: touch your person for twenty seconds with no goal and no commentary. Report to nobody.

Tomorrow is where things get interesting. Chapter 2 is about making a habit of the good stuff.