



How Was Your Day?

This article may not apply to everyone. Please continue reading only if all of the following applies to you:

- You have a “special someone” (SS) in your life eg spouse, partner, parent, child
- That SS is genuinely interested in what you do at work
- That SS is not lucky enough to be in the same profession or industry as you

OK, for those readers who fit this profile, I am going to attempt to address the challenge of answering the simple question “How was your day?”

Let me outline the problem as I see it... Your SS is genuinely interested and so it is important to share something material about your day to satisfy their curiosity. At the same time you are conscious that they are not familiar with your work issues and usually there is some complexity in those issues. How can you outline an important aspect of your day without boring them or confusing them? More positively, how can you explain that aspect in a manner that they understand and appreciate? The real test is whether your SS will be game enough to ask you the same question tomorrow!

Here are some suggested methods, with no guarantee of success. For the purpose of the illustration let's say that you have had a really good day, the highlight being a clever breakthrough that you have achieved while working on a product design project:

1. Let's stick with principles. There is little value in going into the details of the product and your breakthrough. Your SS will probably be satisfied with a broad description of the project, your role, and your clever breakthrough.
2. Think about what communication style usually works with your SS. A diagram may help for some people. An analogy may work for others. Some people like to hear the result first (like a newspaper report). Some people prefer the chronological approach (like a short story).
3. You might describe the emotions involved rather than focus on the technical matters, because your SS will almost certainly understand your feelings. eg Your frustration with the design flaw, your excitement in the research and your pride in the outcome.
4. Remember to pause occasionally to check that your SS is still engaged, interested and perhaps understanding your account. You might ask a question, or allow them to ask a question, to confirm that you are on the same frequency.



5. If you are feeling brave, you can seek informal feedback at the end of the conversation: “Darling, what did you like about that story?” “If I was to describe my day tomorrow night, what would you like me to do differently?”

What might be the benefits of getting better at relating significant elements of your day? Firstly, I suggest that if you can provide a simple outline to your SS - and they understand - you will improve your ability to convert complex to simple for other people as well. Secondly, you will probably feel better about sharing your challenges and achievements. Most importantly, I would like to think that your relationship with your SS will benefit as they improve their understanding and appreciation of you and your work life.

Talking business with your SS is not always easy. I would like to invite you to try something different with the aim of further developing your relationship. (And in all of the excitement, don't forget to ask your SS, “How was your day?”)