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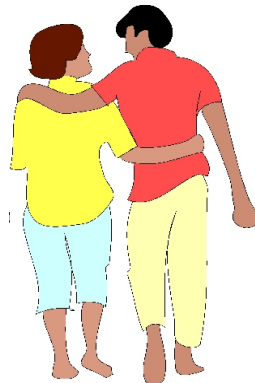
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On Human Touch

Sidney Simon

There is nothing magical about touching. It is the simple but potent combination of touch itself and the human affirmation it delivers in a direct, unmistakable, nonverbal way. And it keeps on working, over and over again. There are no limits, and no side effects - you won't even gain weight!

Beyond all this, human touch establishes in the very young the building material for better communication in all human relationships - with mother and father, sister and brother, cousins, aunts and uncles, friends and classmates - even teachers. It results in people who are more open to the experience of life itself - people who feel secure enough to know how to ask for what they want and need and who are generous enough to give others what they need in return.



- It makes better children and it makes better, gentler, more loving and successful parents.
- It makes better husbands and wives - better lovers, better marriages.
- Touching and being touched make better people.

A Few Words About Hugs

For many families what I have to say here may seem purely superfluous - you hug well and you

hug often. But for thousands of others, aware, gentle, unsupervised hugs in their families are few and far between.

One of the problems is that we spend our time giving what this book calls "Non-Hugs" - there are five of these in common use. These are hugs that don't do any good. They are members of the family of pseudo or wasted touches.

Non-Hug 1: A-Frame Hug

In this non-hug, two people come together, their shoulders touch, but nothing else does. The feet remain resolutely three or four feet away from their opposite pair. The effect is a massive leaning so that the two people look like a ski lodge or at best a collapsing pyramid. (Whenever I show this, I love to wave one of my arms through all the free air space between our bodies and comment that a skier could probably pass between us with no difficulty. People laugh and get the point).

Non-Hug 2: Half a Chest Is Better Than None

Here people make contact with one-half of the top part of their bodies. They twist at the waist and touch in the most limited manner possible. These hugs are to be seen everywhere and I would ask the family to keep their eyes open the next time they go to a party or a family gathering and count how many half-chested hugs they see, and experience consciously how unsatisfactory and non-nourishing they are.

Non-Hug 3: The Chest to Chest Burp

Lucky us! We actually make full chest to chest contact here but it makes everyone so nervous that they have to defuse the contact immediately. As soon as the two bodies touch, one, two, three, or four hands all start to pat on the opposite back - just as if they are burping a baby. Remember what we said about feeling safe touching babies? It is our way of neutralizing and reducing the person being hugged to a safe, infantile status. Just observe the next ten hugs you get - you'll be burped every time. (The family may enjoy this demonstration all the more if you can produce a nice loud burp when you are being patted.)

Non-Hug 4: The Wallet Rub

In this non-hug the two people make contact (sort of) by standing next to each other, not looking at one another, but merely touching hips - or their wallets, as it were. I always say that it might make your wallet feel warm and safe and welcome, but it doesn't do much for skin-hunger needs.

Non-Hug 5: The Jock Twirl

This beauty is most often inflicted on children or women. The larger hugger shows what a great "jock" she or he is by scooping up the other and twirling them around. It has a certain shock value, to be sure, but it doesn't fill any of the criteria for closeness and tenderness. "Besides, if you're not careful," I would tell a family, "you can slip a disc or get a hernia."



they are about to hug. That is, there is no one hug for all people.

You try as hard as you can to personalize and customize each hug you give. As you hold the person you unconsciously include and exude all the experiences and feelings you have recently shared, and memories of past experiences, as well. Above all, it is not routine or perfunctory.

As family members come to know what it is like to hold and be held in a full bodies, all over, genuine hug, they will never be willing to settle for less. Everything else is tokenism, an insult to individuality and love, and does nothing for anyone's skin-hunger needs.

Three Hugs A Day

For a family, the minimum daily requirement of skin-nourishment units varies. But we would insist that each persons give and receive at least three hugs - family hugs - a day. Any less than that and you will be suffering from skin-hunger malnutrition. And here is one place where it is permissible to lie. If anyone has had her or his minimum, and nobody has been counting, it is okay to say, "I've only had two so far today."

Have You Hugged Your Kid Today?

I don't know who made up or first hung out the sign that asks that question, but I'm beginning to see more and more of them. And what a glorious sign it is. I urge every family to hang that question on their refrigerator door, over the medicine cabinet mirror, and on the dashboard of the family car. Nothing needs saying more. No child I know has ever been hugged enough - nor any adult, for that matter.



A skin-nourishing, fulfilling hug involves the following essential elements. First, it is a full body hug that includes no burping or lifting off the floor. The two people coming together take time to really look at each other. There is no evasion or ignoring who it is

