

The Five Love Languages

From the book by Gary D. Chapman
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The Five Love Languages are:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

Background

Most of us grow up learning the language of our parents which becomes our native tongue. Later we may learn additional languages, but usually with much more effort. In the area of love, it's similar. Your emotional love language and that of your spouse may be as different as Mandarin from English – no matter how hard you try to express love in English, if your spouse only understands Mandarin, you'll never communicate your love for one another.

Seldom do a husband and wife have the same primary love language. We tend to speak our own primary love language and become confused when our partner doesn't understand what we're communicating or doesn't show us love in a manner that matters to us. Once you identify your own love language and learn to speak your partner's primary love language, you'll have discovered an important key to a long-lasting, loving marriage or relationship.

Determining Your Own Love Language

You can discover your own love language by asking yourself these questions:

- When do I feel loved? What is my partner doing at this time?
- How do I show I care? What am I doing for another?

Speaking in your partner's love language probably won't be natural for you. Dr. Chapman says, "We're not talking comfort. We're talking love. Love is something we do for someone else. So often couples love one another but they aren't connecting. They are sincere, but sincerity isn't enough."

Words of Affirmation

Actions don't always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, "I love you" is important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten. Verbal compliments or words of appreciation are powerful communicators of love.

Encouraging words: "Encourage" means "to inspire courage." All of us have areas in which we feel insecure. When we lack courage we are often inhibited from accomplishing the positive things that we would like to do. Perhaps you or your partner has untapped potential in one or more areas of life. Encouraging words from you may awaken that potential.

Kind words: If we're to communicate love verbally, we must use kind words. That has to do with how we speak including the tone of our voice and body language.

Humble words: Love makes requests, not demands. In marriage or intimate relationships we are equal partners. If we're to develop an intimate relationship, we need to know each other's desires. If we make our needs known in the form of a request, we're giving guidance, not ultimatums.

If this is your partner's love language: Set a goal to give your spouse a different compliment or use encouraging words each day for a month.

Quality Time

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, "I love you" like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being *present*—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

Undivided attention does not mean sitting on the couch watching television together. It means taking a walk, just the two of you, or going out to eat and looking at each other while talking. Time is a strong communicator of love. The love language of quality time has many dialects. One of the most common is that of quality conversation – two individuals sharing their thoughts and feelings. A relationship calls for sympathetic listening with a view to understanding the other person's desires. We can be willing to give advice, but only when it's requested and never in a condescending manner.

Here are some practical listening tips:

- Maintain eye contact when your spouse is talking.
- Don't do something else at the same time.
- Listen for feelings and confirm them. Ask yourself "What emotion is my spouse experiencing?"
- Observe body language.
- Resist the urge to interrupt. Such interruptions indicate, "I don't care what you are saying; listen to me."

- Quality conversation also calls for self-revelation. In order for your partner to feel loved, you must reveal some of yourself, too.

If this is your partner's love language: Ask your partner for a list of five activities that he/she would enjoy doing with you. Make plans to do one of them each month for the next five months.

Receiving Gifts

Don't mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

Almost everything ever written on the subject of love indicates that at the heart of love is the spirit of giving. All five love languages challenge us to give to our spouse, but for some people receiving gifts, which are the visible symbols of love, speaks the loudest. A gift is something you can hold in your hand and say, "Look, he was thinking of me" or "She remembered me." A gift is a symbol of that thought. Gifts come in all sizes, colors and shapes. Some are expensive and others are free. To the individual whose primary love language is receiving gifts, the cost will matter little.

There is also an intangible gift that can speak more loudly than something that can be held in one's hand. Physical presence in the time of crisis is the most powerful gift you can give. Your body becomes the symbol of your love.

If this is your partner's love language: Keep a "gift idea" notebook. Every time you hear your spouse say, "I really like that," write it down. Select gifts you feel comfortable purchasing, making or finding, and don't wait for a special occasion. Becoming a proficient gift giver is an easy language to learn.

Acts of Service

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an "Acts of Service" person will speak volumes. The words your partner most wants to hear are: "Let me do that for you." Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language that their feelings don't matter.

People who speak this love language seek to please their partners by serving them and express their love by doing things for their partners. Actions such as cooking a meal, setting a table, washing the dishes, sorting the bills, walking the dog or dealing with landlords are all acts of service. They require thought, planning, time, effort and energy. If done with a positive spirit, they are indeed expressions of love. I'm not saying become a doormat to your partner and do these things out of guilt or resentment. No person should ever be a doormat. Do these things as a lover.

If this is your partner's love language: What one act of service has your spouse nagged you about consistently? Why not decide to see the nag as a tag? Your spouse is tagging this particular task as a really important thing to him or her.

Physical Touch

This language isn't all about the bedroom. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.

Holding hands, kissing, hugging and sex – all of these are lifelines for the person for whom physical touch is the primary love language. With it, they feel secure in their partner's love. "Love touches" don't take much time, but they do require a little thought, especially if this isn't your primary love language or you didn't grow up in a "touching" family. Sitting close to each other as you watch TV requires no additional time, but communicates your love loudly. Touching each other when you leave the house and when you return may involve only a brief kiss, but speaks volumes.

If this is your partner's love language: While eating together let your knee or foot drift over and touch your partner. Find other ways of comfortably reaching out and touching your partner.