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Back | Home

Family Man

Speaking The Five Languages Of Love

By Michael Wayland



Imagine that you and your spouse speak completely different native languages. When you are in love, chemistry rules and words matter very little. But after you are married, things like managing a home or raising children become more complicated. Consider resolving issues that come up in the typical marriage without a common vocabulary. It is going to be very challenging besides the normal tensions most couples suffer. You may choose to continue in your marriage and experience enormous frustration; you may attempt to learn the other person's language, or you may

even leave and seek someone who speaks your own language.

Often we hear the term "the language of love". Most people fall in love, get married and assume they are communicating on the level of love. What most people don't understand is that, just like national languages, there are multiple languages of love. Author Dr. Gary Chapman has identified five major love languages. If you and your spouse speak different love languages, but don't realize it, you could be heading for marital disaster rather than marital bliss.

Your love language determines how you experience love; how you know that you are loved. For some people it is holding hands and snuggling on the sofa, while for others they know their husband loves them when he brings them flowers or jewelry. Chapman has developed a simple thirty-question inventory that can be used to identify your love language. The five major languages he identifies are "Words Of Affirmation", "Quality Time", "Receiving Gifts", "Acts of Service", and "Physical Touch".



The five love languages

"Words Of Affirmation" Mark Twain once said "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Verbal appreciation is extremely important to persons whose primary Love Language is "Words of Affirmation." Simple statements, such as, "you look great today" or "I am so impressed with your business savvy" carry the day here.

"Quality Time" Setting aside focused time with your mate is an important part of quality time. It is more than being together; it is being focused on each other. It could be talking while swinging on the back porch swing, or leaving the office early and going to dinner with the cell

phone shut off.

“Receiving Gifts” Some spouses need tangible symbols of love. If they speak this love language, they are more likely to value a gift as an expression of love and devotion. For these people, the cost of the gift is not as important as the fact you cared enough to think about them and get them something. A constant flow of tiny things is more important than one big gift once a year.

“Acts of Service” Taking the time to do something for your spouse is an act of service. If your spouse has a thing for making the bed every morning and you take the time to do it for them, you may floor them. Acts of service can be little things or major projects. It does not matter. What matters is the value to the other person. If you spend your weekends building the deck you have always wanted on the back of your house, no matter how hard you work, this is not an act of service if the deck is unimportant to your spouse or if they are just going along to please you. You may be better off doing the grocery shopping for them.

“Physical Touch” Dr. Chapman says “many spouses feel the most loved when they receive physical contact from their partner. For a mate who speaks this love language, physical touch can make or break the relationship. Sexual intercourse makes many mates feel secure and loved in a marriage. However, it is only one dialect of physical touch. Many parts of the body are extremely sensitive to stimulation. It is important to discover how your partner not only physically responds but also psychologically responds to these touches. They can be big acts, such as back massages or lovemaking, or little acts such as touches on the cheek or a hand on the shoulder.”

What it all means

If you are bringing home flowers to someone who really just wants to hold hands and walk around the block, you are speaking different languages. The flowers may be noticed, but they may also be meaningless in terms of communicating love.

The good news is that the love language inventory is not a compatibility test. It is not important that you speak the same language, rather that you know what your spouse's language is and you learn to speak it. Says Mike, a 42 year old professional, “when my wife and I took the survey, I learned that she experiences love when I give her words of affirmation. There is no limit to how many times a day she can hear me say I love you.” But it goes beyond that, he says. “I used to notice something, anything, and think in my head oh that's nice. I have learned to verbalize those things to her. It is not BS'ing, it is saying the unsaid things that I already thought”.

His wife Sara says, “It means so much when I hear him tell me positive things. Last weekend we were in the mall and our four year old had a complete tantrum in front of everyone. I was mortified and embarrassed. When we were driving home, Mike told me he was so proud of how I handled the situation in front of everyone. I can't tell you how much that meant to me, I almost cried”.

Sara is well aware that physical touch is Mike's love language. She says she goes out of her way to make physical contact with him. “Even if we are passing by each other in the kitchen, I reach out and stroke him. It has become effortless because I love him. While he is working on the computer I will walk by, kiss him on the neck, run my fingers through his hair and walk away”. Says Mike, “When she does that, it's like wow, she loves me!”

People can perceive and respond to all five love languages, but we all have one dominant love language. Sometimes a person may have a secondary language too. In making a marriage last a lifetime, it is key to know how your spouse understands that they are loved and to learn to communicate in that language. If they are high in need for a language that is different than yours, talk about each other's needs openly. Give each other feedback (“hey I really appreciate those words of affirmation” or “it feels so good when you touch me like that”). Just like learning to speak a different country's language you can learn to speak each other's love languages.

Notes:

The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate (Men's Edition) Gary Chapman 1992 Northfield Publishing, Chicago ISBN 1-881273-10-5