

THE *Five* LOVE LANGUAGES



Love Languages?

Your emotional love language and the language of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English. No matter how hard you try to express love in English, if your spouse understands only Chinese, you will never understand how to love each other.

The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate

Words of Affirmation

Mark Twain once said “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” Verbal appreciation speaks powerfully to persons whose primary Love Language is “Words of Affirmation.” Simple statements, such as, “You look great in that suit,” or “You must be the best baker in the world! I love your oatmeal cookies,” are sometimes all a person needs to hear to feel loved.

Aside from verbal compliments, another way to communicate through “Words of Affirmation” is to offer encouragement. Here are some examples: reinforcing a difficult decision; calling attention to progress made on a current project; acknowledging a person’s unique perspective on an important topic. If a loved one listens for “Words of Affirmation,” offering encouragement will help him or her to overcome insecurities and develop greater confidence.

Quality Time

Quality time is more than mere proximity. It’s about focusing all your energy on your mate. A husband watching sports while talking to his wife is NOT quality time. Unless all of your attention is focused on your mate, even an intimate dinner for two can come and go without a minute of quality time being shared.

Quality conversation is very important in a healthy relationship. It involves sharing experiences, thoughts, feelings and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context. A good mate will not only listen, but offer advice and respond to assure their mate they are truly listening. Many mates don’t expect you to solve their problems. They need a sympathetic listener. An important aspect of quality conversation is self-revelation. In order for you to communicate with your mate, you must also be in tune with your inner emotions. It is only when you understand your emotions and inner feelings will you then be able to share quality conversation, and quality time with your mate.

Quality activities are a very important part of quality time. Many mates feel most loved when they spend physical time together, doing activities that they love to do. Spending time together will bring a couple closer, and, in the years to come, will fill up a memory bank that you can reminisce about in the future.

Whether it's sitting on the couch and having a brief conversation or playing together in a tennis league, quality time is a love language that is shared by many. Setting aside focused time with your mate will ensure a happy marriage.

Receiving Gifts

Some mates respond well to visual symbols of love. If you speak this love language, you are more likely to treasure any gift as an expression of love and devotion. People who speak this love language often feel that a lack of gifts represents a lack of love from their mate. Luckily, this love language is one of the easiest to learn.

If you want to become an effective gift giver, many mates will have to learn to change their attitude about money. If you are naturally a spender, you will have no trouble buying gifts for your mate. However, a person who is used to investing and saving their money may have a tough time adjusting to the concept of spending money as an expression of love. These people must understand that you are investing the money not in gifts, but in deepening your relationship with your mate.

The gift of self is an important symbol of love. Sometimes all your mate desires is for someone to be there for them, going through the same trials and experiencing the same things. Your body can become a very powerful physical symbol of love.

These gifts need not to come every day, or even every week. They don't even need to cost a lot of money. Free, frequent, expensive, or rare, if your mate relates to the language of receiving gifts, any visible sign of your love will leave them feeling happy and secure in your relationship.

Acts of Service

Sometimes simple chores around the house can be an undeniable expression of love. Even simple things like laundry and taking out the trash require some form of planning, time, effort, and energy. Just as Jesus demonstrated when he washed the feet of his disciples, doing humble chores can be a very powerful expression of love and devotion to your mate. Very often, both pairs in a couple will speak to the Acts of Service Language. However, it is very important to understand what acts of service your mate most appreciates. Even though couples are helping each other around the house, couples will still fight because they are unknowingly communicating with each other in two different dialects. For example, a wife may spend her day washing the cars and walking to dog, but if her husband feels that laundry and dishes are a superior necessity, he may feel unloved, despite the fact that his wife did many other chores throughout the day. It is important to learn your mate's dialect and work hard to understand what acts of service will show your love.

It is important to do these acts of service out of love and not obligation. A mate who does chores and helps out around the house out of guilt or fear will inevitably not be speaking a language of love, but a language of resentment. It's important to perform these acts out of the kindness of your heart.

Demonstrating the acts of service can mean stepping out of the stereotypes. Acts of service require both mates to humble themselves into doing some chores and services that aren't usually expected from their gender. However, these little sacrifices will mean the world to your mate, and will ensure a happy relationship.

Physical Touch

Many mates feel the most loved when they receive physical contact from their partner. For a mate who speaks this love language loudly, 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.

It is important to learn how your mate speaks the physical touch language. Some touches are irritating and uncomfortable for your mate. Take the time to learn the touches your mate likes. 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. It's important to learn how your mate responds to touch. That is how you will make the most of this love language.

All marriages will experience crisis. In these cases, physical touch is very important. In a crisis situation, a hug can communicate an immense amount of love for that person. A person whose primary love language is physical touch would much rather have you hold them and be silent than offer any advice.

Final Thoughts

It is important to remember that this love language is different for everyone. What type of touch makes you feel secure is not necessarily what will make your partner happy. It is important to learn each other's dialects. That way you can make the most of your hugging, kissing, and other physical contacts.

Reprinted from Dr. Gary Chapman's website, www.fivelovelanguages.com. The preceding is a summary of Dr. Chapman's book, "The Five Love Languages."