

“Love consists of a commitment which limits one’s freedom - it is a giving of the self, and to give oneself means just that: to limit one’s freedom on behalf of another.”

Pope Saint John Paul II - *Love and Responsibility*

Eventually, it became obvious. I needed to prioritize the good things in my life. The highest good was my wife and family. If something else was taking over, it needed to be dropped, or at the very least, got under control. It was hard to do initially as I felt very attached to these things but it wasn’t long before the positive effects started to show.

I have also learned that grandiose acts of service are not the only way to communicate love. Little acts of service each day are appreciated much more.

Getting home on time after work, fixing things when needed (not six months later) and keeping the kids quiet while mum has a sleep in, are little things which help show love.

We have learned the importance of daily communication. Having a good understanding of the love languages helps to improve the quality of this communication. Hearing the words “I need better quality time”, sends a clear message. A busy mum not only needs quality time with her spouse, but also quality time by herself and her friends. Quiet time for reflection or for developing friendships with other mothers are opportunities for quality time that a husband can help facilitate. Dads should welcome the opportunity of spending quality time with their own kids.

Jane

Courtship is a fun time for couples. You get to enjoy getting to know the other person, you go places and do exciting things. But it can also be a confusing time as you try to work out what makes the other person tick and, as John said, go from being selfish to selfless. He made the point that I don’t need ‘words of affirmation’. I’ve always been self-sufficient and I tend to distrust flattery, so when John would praise me for every little thing, I thought he was overdoing it. I also couldn’t understand why he kept looking to me to give him affirmation for his hard work, talents and achievements.

Sadly, I responded with sarcasm and made fun of his ‘neediness’ which made him withdraw from me and be less open about sharing the things he was proud of.

Thankfully, my husband and I are both talkative types, spending long hours chatting about everything, so it wasn’t long before he confided in me that he needed me to articulate how I felt about him. You know the old joke about the married couple where the man says, “I told you I loved you on our wedding day. If anything changes I’ll let you know”. Well, I was like the man in that scenario! I was so miserly with my verbal affection that the love of my life wasn’t sure how I felt! He needed to know that I was proud of him, that I didn’t take him for granted. Giving him small words of encouragement each day actually cost me nothing and really helped to build up our relationship rather than tear it down, which is what my sarcasm was doing. I still occasionally tease him about the amount of praise he expects but now he knows that I think he’s the greatest husband, father and friend ever to walk the earth, he laughs it off.

As our family grew and I got busier, I had another lesson to learn. I suppose it’s universally known that all husbands like physical affection (at least I get that impression from talking with other

married women!). It’s also known among married couples that when kids arrive and mum is torn between littlies, her daily work, and other commitments, she has perhaps less energy and time for showing affection to her husband. I certainly felt that when my husband walked in the door and I was up to my neck in toddlers while trying to cook dinner, I didn’t have time to kiss him hello or give him a hug. Sometimes he would stand in the doorway looking lost while I, in my busy-competent-mum mode, got on with ‘important’ work. I would feel frustrated that he was just standing there getting in my way, until I realised that he needed me to stop for just a tiny moment and give him a hug to show him I was glad he was home. After a long day away from me, this small act of affection made him feel connected to me again. It turned us into a team again, the ‘one flesh’ that we were meant to be. After that hug, he found his place and stopped looking lost and helpless. He grabbed the crying baby, shooed the other kids out from under my feet and set them to work setting the table or clearing up their toys. Dinner time ran a lot more smoothly once mum and dad worked as a team.

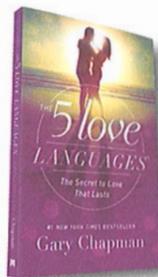
The lessons I learned while growing closer to my husband have certainly helped to make me more empathetic in my relationships with others. As I said, I tend to be self-sufficient and unsympathetic but softening my tone for my spouse’s sake and seeing things from his perspective has not only made me nicer to be around (I hope) it has also made me happier. I learned that when someone trusts me with their heart, their hopes and their very self, I better take that responsibility seriously. It takes daily effort to put someone else’s needs above your own wants, but it certainly pays off.

When Saint Pope John Paul II said in *Mulieris Dignitatem* that “man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self” I really believe he was speaking of the great happiness and fulfillment we find when we sacrifice ourselves for the good of another person. ■

(John and Jane were married in 2003.)

Dr. Gary Chapman is a renowned author, speaker, counselor, and director of Marriage and Family Life Consultants, Inc. *The 5 Love Languages*, is one of Chapman’s most popular titles, topping various bestseller charts for years, selling over eight million copies and landing on the #1 spot of the *New York Times* best-seller list. Chapman has been directly involved in real-life family counseling for more than 35 years.

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The 5 Love Languages book is filled with In-depth insights, daily examples and self-discovering questions contained in each chapter. Reading this book feels like talking a walk with a wise friend. Applying it will forever change your relationship. Includes *The 5 Love Languages* personal profile.

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INFORM

Informative
Intelligent
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The 5 Love Languages

Dr. Gary Chapman



Understanding your
God-given Love Language

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How do we meet each other’s deep emotional need to feel loved?
In this edition of INFORM we look into *The 5 Love Languages* by renowned author Dr. Gary Chapman.

Is there really more than one way to show love? Yes! In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, author Dr Gary Chapman explains that a 'love language' is how someone wants to be *shown* love because it satisfies a deep-seeded need.

These five love languages are based on the pattern that he witnessed through counselling married couples over the last thirty years. What he experienced, was that these individuals universally expressed and interpreted love in the same five ways.

Our Cry for Love

The author explains that "Something in our nature cries out to be loved by another. Isolation is devastating to the human psyche. At the heart of humankind's existence is the desire to be intimate and to be loved by another. Marriage is designed to meet that need for intimacy and love. That is why the ancient biblical writings spoke of the husband and wife becoming 'one flesh.'" That did not mean that individuals would lose their identity; it meant that they would enter into each other's lives in a deep and intimate way.

The Love Tank

"Inside every child is an emotional tank waiting to be filled with love. When a child really feels loved, he will develop normally, but when the love tank is empty, the child will misbehave. Much of the misbehaviour of children is motivated by the cravings of an empty 'love tank'."

A 'love language' is how someone wants to be *shown* love because it satisfies a deep-seeded need.

This is a metaphor that the author resonates with. He explains in detail throughout his book that this emotional need follows us naturally into adulthood and into the marriage relationship; "The 'in love' experience

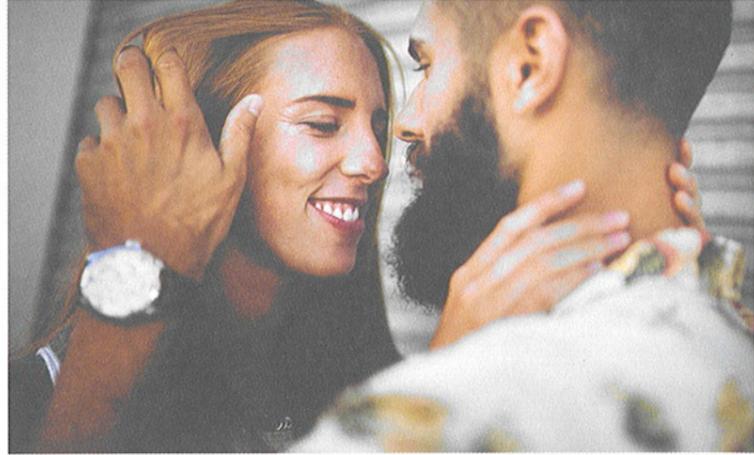
(that we feel at the start of a new relationship) temporarily meets that need, but is inevitably a quick fix and, has a limited and predictable life span. After we come down from the high of the 'in love' obsession, the emotional need for love resurfaces because it is fundamental to our nature. It is at the centre of our emotional desires. We needed love before we 'feel in love', and we will need it as long as we live."

Love Languages

According to Dr. Chapman, the five love languages are: Quality Time, Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Acts of Service and Physical Touch.



When you speak your spouse's love language the result is the filling of their 'love tank.' He writes that when "he feels secure in your love, the whole world looks bright and your spouse will move out to reach his highest potential in life." Dr. Chapman observes how much our relationships can benefit when we're able to understand and speak all these languages fluently. "It's a very simple idea," he asserts, "But when you apply it, it really does change the climate between two people."



The 5 Love Languages

A brief explanation:



WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

"The tongue has the power of life and death" (*Proverbs* 18:21). 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," are important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.



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 that he or she most wants to hear is "Let me do that for you." Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them, tell speakers of this language their feelings don't matter.



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.



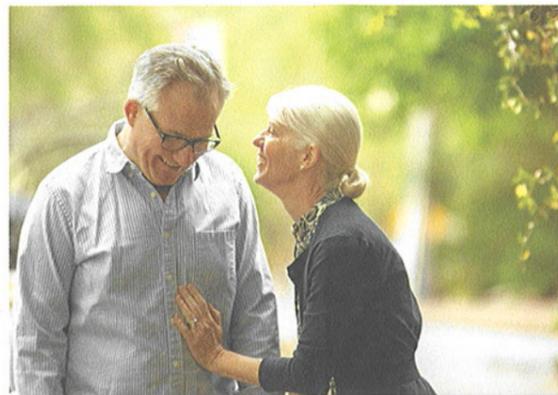
QUALITY TIME

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 there—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.



PHYSICAL TOUCH

This language isn't all about sexual intimacy. 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 can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse is inexcusable and destructive. >



...God speaks all five love languages fluently...

Determining Your Own Love Language

The way you *feel* loved is also the way you *show* love. The best way to identify your love language is to think about the ways in which you most often communicate love to other people. How we show love to others often reflects our own love language.

- How do I express love to others?
- What do I complain about the most?
- What do I request most often?

God Speaks the Love Languages

Dr Chapman realised rather quickly that all of these love languages flow from God's love. "He speaks all five languages fluently. The Bible is filled with 'Words of Affirmation' where God verbalises His love to us. Christmas reminds us that He gave us the greatest gift of all when He sent His son. Yes, God is a 'Gift Giver'. What about 'Acts of Service'? That is what the cross is all about. Christ paid our penalty. Follow the life of Jesus and you see Him speaking the love language of 'Physical Touch'. And for all who want it, God is ready to spend 'Quality Time'. Turn your thoughts toward him and you will find his thoughts are already on you. God is love."

Love is a choice and it makes all the difference

Dr Chapman writes "Love doesn't erase the past, but it makes the future different. When we choose active expressions of love in the primary love language of our spouse, we create an emotional

"When we choose active expressions of love in the primary love language of our spouse, we create an emotional climate where we can deal with out past conflicts and failures"

climate where we can deal with out past conflicts and failures. If I feel loved by my spouse, I can relax, knowing my lover will do me no ill. I feel secure in her presence. My sense of self-worth is fed by the fact that my spouse loves me. After all, if she loves me, I must be *worth* loving. My parents may have given me negative or mixed messages about my worth, but my spouse knows me as an adult and loves me. Her love builds my self-esteem."

"Our actions precede our emotions. The same is true with love. We discover the primary love language of our spouse, and we *choose* to speak it whether or not it is natural for us. We are choosing to do it for his or her benefit. We want to meet our spouse's emotional need, and we reach out to speak their love language."

Testimony from a Married Couple

John

When two become one in marriage, a reconfiguration needs to take place. You need to make the transition from thinking of yourself first, and how things affect you only, to thinking of someone else first, and how things you do affect them. This reconfiguration or going from selfish to selfless should start during

courtship. If it doesn't, it can be the reason you don't make it to the altar in the first place, or lead to trouble in the early days of marriage.

The Scriptures call everyone to "lay down their life", not just those living the married vocation. Thinking of others first is something all parents try to nurture in their children. Marriages cannot work without both spouses putting the needs of the other first. The love languages are a helpful way of better understanding ourselves, and our spouses. Understanding the love language of others in our workplace and community help us to have healthy and fulfilling relationships with these people too.

During our courtship, I made mistakes about showing my future wife affection. I thought that all women liked to receive flowers and would often buy them for her. I thought she would like them, and it was a public way I could demonstrate my feelings. I wanted other people to know how I felt about her, as much as I wanted to show her. The trouble was, if your girlfriend doesn't like attracting attention, the last thing she wants is to lug a big bunch of unwieldy flowers home on a crowded bus. And besides, you can't eat flowers. She would have much preferred a box of chocolates. Much easier to get home! My now wife, likes to occasionally receive gifts, but it is not the primary way she likes to be shown affection.

Another mistake I made was thinking that my primary love language, 'words of affirmation', was her primary love language. She is a talented graphic designer, editor, organiser, activist and a faithful friend. I did not have to look hard to find ways to praise her for the projects she was working on, or her achievements. But instead of growing our love, my words of affirmation were causing frustration. She knew she was doing a good job, and didn't need my praise. She needed to be shown gratitude, it just needed to be shown in a *different* way.

My wife's primary love language is 'quality time'. It took me some time to work this out and there were more mistakes along the way. One of these mistakes was giving quality time and energy to other people and to good causes and not giving it to my wife. I am naturally inclined to acts of service, and this usually requires time. Time which was being taken away from my wife.

Situations absorbing my time were various volunteer activities and committees. These were good things I had been involved in before we were married and I naturally wanted to continue supporting them. It took some time to realise that my involvement was not essential and that they didn't stop being good things, even if I wasn't involved. Someone who is naturally inclined to acts of service can fall into the trap of thinking that the time they have to give is endless. They keep spreading themselves thinner and thinner. They can also think they are indispensable. Church working bees, choir practice and committee meetings were taking up valuable time. This left less time for my wife and affected the quality of the time we spent together. Working full time, being involved in a number of things and a growing family meant the time was getting less, and the quality poorer and poorer. My wife felt stressed and unloved. >

