

## **Using Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages To Reconnect and Repair Your Marital Closeness**

**By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

In his popular book, The Five Love Languages, Gary Chapman identifies five different ways that spouses show love. He points out the importance of communicating love to your spouse in the way s/he wants to be shown. Different individuals express love in different ways. Different people look for evidence of being loved in ways that fit with their world views and life experiences. Individuals want to be shown love in ways that mean (to them) that they are loved.

A communicational disconnect can occur when one person is looking for signs of being loved by the spouse in the particular ways that mean "I love you" and the other person is demonstrating his love in his own preferred style. If these styles do not match, the action or gesture and its meaning (i.e., "I love you") can get lost along the way because the two people are not speaking the same language. Their behavior has different meanings to them. When one person expresses loved in a language different from the love language used by the receiver, the message of love is not received.

It is important to get on the same page to understand what each partner values as a message of love. If one partner expresses love with gifts and the other person needs to be shown love with "acts of service" both partners may end up feeling hurt and rejected, since the gesture of a gift will not meet the needs of the other partner who is looking for an act of service as evidence of being loved. Chapman's five different love languages are shown below:

### **Words of affirmation**

These are compliments and words of affirmation, that can help build your spouse's confidence and self-esteem. Examples are unsolicited compliments, "I love you's", an impromptu list of things s/he likes about you, or frequent words of appreciation.

### **Quality time**

Many spouses perceive the investment of time spent doing things together or focusing on them as evidence of being loved. This involves turning the television off, looking in your spouse's eyes when s/he talks to you, making date night a sacred event, and making being together consciously (usually not just in the same room) a high priority.

### **Gifts**

Many people feel loved when someone buys or gives them thoughtful gifts. To this person, the carefully thought out selection of a gift tells them that they are cared about, cherished and prized.

### Acts of Service

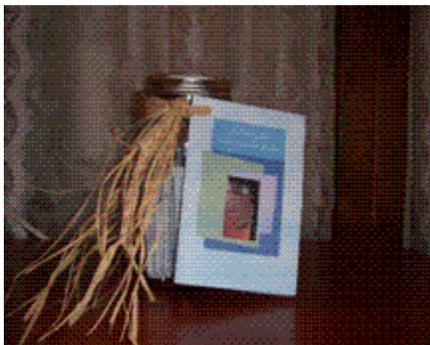
Many spouses feel loved by their partner's act of doing something for them. These acts of service could be anything that the partner values. Acts of service tells the other person that you are paying attention and considering their wants or needs in the midst of your own responsibilities and that you have deemed it important to do something for your spouse that s/he will value or appreciate.

### Physical Touch

Physical connection, like hand holding, kisses, and casual touching, is one way that some people feel loved. The reminder of the physical presence of someone that you love, who reaches out to make a physical connection, lets you know that you are in their thoughts. Physical touch is reassuring and a sign of care and love.

If you think you may be speaking different languages, identify how you typically like to show love. Which styles do you prefer to use to show love? Then think back to complaints your partner may have or have had, about not spending time together, not receiving gifts, not hearing compliments, not getting enough hugs/kisses/touches, or not considering them enough to do things that they have asked you to do. Many times, when you can identify the contents of your spouse's complaints, you have a good clue as to his/her love language. You could always remove all doubt by asking.

If you get defensive and think "It's not in my nature to show love in that manner," then learn how. You would want and maybe even expect your spouse to learn to show you love in the way you want to be shown. It is learned behavior. You **learned** to show love in a specific kind of way; you **can** learn to show love in a different way.



Human beings need affirmation of being loved. Chapman uses the metaphor of the "love tank" to describe how people will often act out their feelings of needing to be shown love when their love tank is running on empty or on fumes.

To improve communication and restore closeness, you have to move from acting out feelings into direct, honest communication.

Think  
your  
feelings,  
and feel, and where you can solve relationship problems without undue distress and fear.



about what it might be like to have an emotional climate in relationship where no one feels like they have to act out where you can communicate freely what you really think

To create this new emotional climate in your relationship, think about how you can fill up your partner's love tank. Don't worry so much about whether s/he will reciprocate and

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fill yours up. Take responsibility for what you can do. What you can do, is to show your partner that you love him/her in the way that s/he wants to be shown. Then keep doing it. Don't complain. Don't bring it to his/her attention about what you have done for him/her. Don't keep score. Don't give up.

Source: Chapman, Gary, (1984) The Five Love Languages, Northfield Publishing, Chicago, IL

*If you are looking for something to get the conversation between you and your spouse flowing once again, "The Honey Jar" is a couple's communication exercise, that you can serve that purpose. It consists of 250 sentence stems, each one serving as an open-ended prompt to discuss one of a number of individual or couple subjects. While it is designed to assist couples that have been in the marriage for a long time and who seem to have run out of things to talk about, it has been found to be very helpful to couples at any stage of their committed relationship. PDF File format. \$19.95*

<http://www.peggyferguson.com/TheHoneyJar.en.html>

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**Marriage books "The Five Love Languages" Relationships**

LOVE LANGUAGES *What are the love languages* Love and Marriage

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