

The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman – A Synopsis and Adaptation

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,” or “You pay such good attention to detail!” 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 colleague 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 the recipient. A colleague taking notes (watching sports) while talking to his associate is NOT quality time. Unless all of your attention is focused on your recipient, even a designated meeting 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 partner will not only listen, but offer advice and respond to assure they are truly listening. Often others 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 really communicate, 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 another.

Quality activities are a very important part of quality time. Many people feel most valued when they spend physical time together, doing activities that they enjoy doing. Spending time together will bring a two people 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 working together on a grant, quality time is a love language that is shared by many. Setting aside focused time will ensure a happy association.

Receiving Gifts

Some people respond well to visual symbols of respect and caring. If you speak this love language, you’re more likely to treasure any gift as an expression of trust and acknowledgement. People who speak this love language often feel that a lack of gifts represents a lack of love. Luckily, this love language is one of the easiest to learn.

If you want to become an effective gift giver, you may have to change your attitude about money. If you are naturally a spender, you’ll have no trouble buying gifts. 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 caring. These people must understand that you are investing the money not in gifts, but in deepening your relationship.

The gift of self is an important symbol of love. Sometimes all another desires is for someone to be there for them, going through the same trials and experiencing the same things. Your pat on the back 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 the other relates to the language of receiving gifts, any visible sign of your love will leave them feeling encouraged and secure in your relationship.

Acts of Service

Sometimes simple chores around the office can be an undeniable expression of support. Even simple things like filing and taking out the trash require some form of planning, time, effort, and energy. Doing humble chores can be a very powerful expression of community and respect.

Very often, a colleague will speak to the Acts of Service Language. However, it is very important to understand what acts of service the other most appreciates. Even though colleagues are helping each other around the office, employees will still misunderstand because they're unknowingly communicating with each other in two different dialects. For example, an administrator may spend her day filing or typing, but if her secretary feels that email and budgeting are a superior necessity, s/he may feel unloved, despite the fact that s/he did other chores throughout the day. It is important to work to understand what acts of service will show your respect.

It's important to do these acts of service out of consideration, not obligation; to perform these acts out of the kindness of your heart. Someone who does chores and helps out of guilt or fear will inevitably not be speaking a language of regard, but a language of resentment.

Demonstrating acts of service can mean stepping out of the stereotypes. They may require a person to humble him/herself into doing some chores or services not usually expected of them. However, these little sacrifices will mean the world to another and ensure a happy relationship.

Physical Touch

Many people feel the most esteemed when they receive physical contact from another. For a person who speaks this love language, physical touch can make or break a relationship. A pat on the back makes many colleagues feel secure and admired. However, it's only one dialect of physical touch. In any relationship, it is important to discover how the other responds not only physically but also psychologically to touch. In professional settings, we have a separate set of rules for physical touch limiting our behavior to socially acceptable forms appropriate to our work setting, i.e. the hand shake, or back or arm pat, an offer of a needed object such as a pencil or a Kleenex can symbolize touch in settings where rules of physical touch are limiting.

Learn how the others speak the physical touch language: some touches are irritating and uncomfortable. Take the time to learn the touches the other receives. They can be big acts, such as back massages, or little acts such as a touch of a hand on the shoulder. Learn how another responds to touch. That is how you will make the most of this love language.

All enduring relationships will experience crisis and stress. Physical touch is very important. In a stressful situation, a hand shake or 'high five' can communicate an immense amount of community. A person whose primary love language is physical touch would much rather have you offer a 'high five' or a pat on the arm and be silent than offer any advice. This love language is different for everyone. The type of touch makes you feel secure isn't necessarily what will make another happy. It's important to learn each other's dialects to enhance the effectiveness of your communication.