

Connecting with Others Using the Five Love Languages

Cheryl Kaczor, WVU Extension Agent, Marshall County

Terrill Peck, WVU Extension Agent, Raleigh County

Jane Riffe, WVU Extension Specialist, Family and Human Development

Educational Objectives

1. Learn the five love languages and how this knowledge can improve your relationships.
2. Identify your top two love languages.
3. Learn to “speak” the love language of one other person important to you.

As you read the following questions, ask group members to shake their heads yes or no in response.

Have you ever. . . ?

. . . Felt that you and your loved ones were just “missing each other” when you tried to talk?

. . . Felt misunderstood and wished that your spouse, parent, child, or friend would know better what you needed?

. . . Felt that your best efforts to show love just were not working?

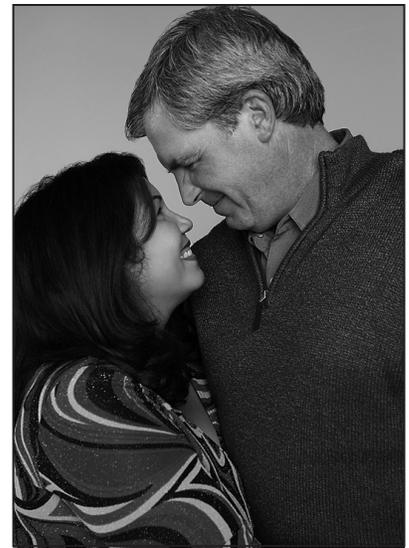
The 5 to 1 magic ratio

The magic ratio for relationships: accentuate the positive; don't eliminate the negative. Dr. John Gottman has found that “. . . what really separates contented couples from those in deep marital misery is a healthy balance between their positive and negative feelings and actions toward each other.” Happy couples showed five positive interactions for every negative interaction between them. This means it takes five positive actions to balance out every negative one.

If it is so important to connect with others in a positive way, how can we do that?

Dr. Gary Chapman, counselor and best-selling author, has created a fun tool to help. He has found that an easy way to improve our relationships with others is to learn to love and appreciate others in a way they can receive it.

In his many books and on his website, he describes common ways in which people give and receive love and appreciation, which he calls “**The Five Love Languages.**”



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How do the Love Languages work?

- We love someone through our actions.
- We tend to give to others in the ways we most like to receive, or by using our primary “Love Language.”
- Others who have a different love language may not appreciate what we have done for them and prefer receiving love in another way.

Example 1: You spend a lot of time baking cookies for someone you care about, tiring yourself out in the process. When you give the person the cookies, he/she is not impressed, because he/she would have preferred you to just sit and visit.

Example 2: Your spouse or friend has arranged a remodeling weekend to redo your closet. In the process, you are disappointed that your weekend away together will be cancelled.

What’s going on here? The two of you are speaking different love languages.

Dr. Chapman has found that learning and using each other’s love languages can increase the quality of our relationships. He identifies five common patterns of giving and receiving affection and attention. They are:

- Words of Affirmation
- Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Quality Time
- Physical Touch

Say to participants, “As you hear the following descriptions of these love languages, you might ask yourself, ‘Is this me?’”

Words of Affirmation

Mark Twain once said “I can live for two months on a good compliment.” Actually, most of us require a little more than that, particularly if Words of Affirmation is our primary love language. Spoken words convey to the other person that you acknowledge, appreciate, and honor things he/she does for you or how important he/she is to you.



When we are praised for the things we do, we are more likely to repeat that behavior and also more likely to praise others for what they do. If you know someone whose love language is Words of Affirmation, here are some things you can do:

- Praise the person for something that he/she did for you. Say thank-you.
- Compliment the person on his/her strengths. Acknowledge contributions no matter how big or small.
- Set a goal to give the person one compliment each day. Eventually it will become a habit. This is a quick way to make your relationship happier.

Gifts

Giving gifts is an expression of love that transcends all cultural barriers. Gifts are visual symbols of caring that often have great emotional value. Most everyone enjoys receiving gifts, but to the person who has the “language” of Gifts, not receiving a gift from



someone significant may make him/her feel unloved. The person who is good at giving gifts is probably the one who likes to receive them. Be careful not to dismiss this expression of love as materialistic or shallow. For the one who speaks this language, gifts are very important. The key to remember is that the present must be something the other person would enjoy, not what we would like to have. Gift-giving is probably the easiest language to learn to support your loved one.

Here are some things to consider when giving gifts:

- Carefully chosen presents can be inexpensive but have a high sentimental value.
- Don't wait for special occasions.
- Find out what the other person really likes to receive.

Acts of Service

Communicating through Acts of Service is another way to express love and care. This means doing something for another person that you know he/she will appreciate. It could be doing something out of the ordinary or just helping with regular needs. Routine activities are often taken for granted, but when they are done willingly they express love. However, it is the nonroutine acts of service that communicate love most powerfully to those with this love language. In any relationship, it is important to help one another. When life becomes hectic, we tend to think, "Why aren't you helping me?" When someone asks, "What can I do to help you?" or just does the job without asking, it speaks love and appreciation to the one receiving it. Ways to show service might include:

- Helping with chores that the other person normally does (e.g., pitching in with housework or cleaning the garage).
- Surprising someone by doing an unexpected action (e.g., watching a family member's child, washing and cleaning out the car).

Quality Time

Quality time means giving someone your undivided attention. Simply sitting on the couch and watching TV does not constitute quality time spent together. Sitting on the couch together, looking at each other and talking is quality time. Quality time is that time you take to talk and listen to each other or go for a walk together. That time is devoted to the other person without cell phones, texting, TV, or other distractions. Research shows that the average person listens for only 17 seconds before interrupting. Active listening is a skill that must be practiced. If you know someone whose love language is Quality Time, there are some things you can do:

- Have that person make a list of what he/she likes to do and do them with him/her.
- Make time every day to talk and share the events of the day.



Physical Touch

Of the five senses, touching, unlike the other four, is not limited to one localized area of the body. Physical touch is vitally important in a relationship. Touch can be giving a hug, holding hands, or patting the back. Research shows that babies who were held, hugged, and kissed developed a healthier emotional life than those who were rarely touched. If you know someone whose love language is Physical Touch, there are some things you can do:

- Give the person a hug.
- When talking, reach over and touch a hand or an arm.

How can I determine my Love Language?

Here are some clues to your love language:

1. Observe your own behavior: In what ways do you tend to express love to others?

Do you tend to:

- Give people a hug or pat on the back?
- Tell them how much you appreciate what they did for you?
- Bring them a gift?
- Invite them to your house or spend time talking with them on the phone?
- Enjoy doing things for others?



2. Notice your requests of others: What have you most often asked of the other person?
3. Observe your complaints: What does your spouse (or other) do that hurts you most deeply?

Activity: What do you think your primary love language is? Turn to a person sitting close to you and discuss which of the five styles above seems to describe you best. Why do you think so?

How can I figure out the love language of my spouse, friend, or family member? The same things you used to find your language will give you clues.

- Observe how the person expresses love to you.
- Listen to requests.
- Listen to complaints.

Knowing the love language of those most important to us can serve as a guide when we want to make them feel appreciated or loved. It will take more than one observation to identify a person's love language.

Activity: (5 minutes)

1. On a piece of paper, write the name of a person whom you love and care about.
2. Think about the person for a moment.
3. Consider the five love languages. Based on your experience with the person and the clues listed above, what do you think are that person's top one or two love languages? Write them on your paper.
4. Now, write down three things you choose to do to express love or caring using what you believe to be his/her love language(s).

Remember, there is no best love language. Everyone is wired differently. We are all unique individuals.

Want to know more? Take the quick online quiz www.fivelovelanguages.com/30sec.html#love

References

- Chapman, Gary (2009). *The Five Love Languages: Singles Edition*. Chicago: Northfield.
- Gottman, John (1994). *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail . . . And How You Can Make Yours Last*. Fireside: New York, pp 56-8.

