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The Five Love Languages

A summary of Dr. Gary Chapman's principles

Discovering Your Primary Love Language

What is your primary love language? What makes you feel most loved by your partner? Three ways to discover this include;

1. What does your partner do or fail to do that hurts you most deeply?

The opposite of what hurts you most is probably your love language.

2. What have you most often requested of your mate?

The thing you have most often requested is likely the thing that would make you feel most loved.

3. In what way do you regularly express love to your partner?

Your method of expressing love may be an indication that would also make you feel loved.

The First Love Language: *Words of Affirmation*

Verbal compliments, or words of appreciation, are powerful communicators of love. They are best expressed as straightforward statements of affirmation. The object of love is not getting something you want but doing something for the well-being of the one you love. But when we receive affirming words we are far more likely to be motivated to reciprocate.

Encouraging words means “to inspire courage.” All of us have areas in which we feel insecure. We often lack courage, and that lack of courage can hinder us from accomplishing the positive things that we would like to do. The latent potential within your partner in his or her areas of insecurity await your encouraging words. Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your mate’s perspective. We must first learn what is important to our partner. Only then can we give encouragement.

Kind words. If we are to communicate love verbally, we must use kind words. Sometimes our voices are saying one thing, but our tone of voice is saying another. Your partner will usually interpret your message based on tone of voice, not the words you use.

Words of forgiveness. Love doesn’t keep a score of wrongs. Love doesn’t bring up past failures. None of us is perfect. In a relationship we do not always do the best or right thing. We have sometimes done and said hurtful things to our partner. We cannot erase the past. We can only confess it and agree that it was wrong. We can ask forgiveness and try to act differently in the future. If you have been wronged by your partner and they have confessed and requested forgiveness, then you have a choice. You can extend justice or forgiveness. If you choose forgiveness, intimacy can be restored. Forgiveness is the way of love. We can choose to live today free from the failures of yesterday. Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a commitment. It is a choice to show mercy, not to hold the offense up against the offender.

Humble words. Love makes requests, not demands. While dating or in marriage, you and your mate are equal adult partners. We are not perfect to be sure. If we are to develop an intimate relationship, we need to know each other’s desires. The way we express those desires, however, is all-important. If they come across as demands, we have erased the possibility of intimacy and will drive our partner away. If, however, we make known our needs and desires as requests, we are giving guidance, not ultimatums. When you make a request of your partner, you are affirming his or her worth and abilities. A request introduces the element of choice. Your mate may choose to respond to your request or to deny it, because love is always a choice. Your partner may comply with a demand, but it is not an expression of love. A request creates the possibility for an expression of love, whereas a demand suffocates that possibility.

Some tips: Give indirect words of affirmation about your partner to others when s/he is not present. Affirm your mate in front of others. Consider an experiment - write out a list of positive traits behaviors of your partner. For one week suspend all criticisms. Instead give daily verbal appreciation of their positive traits and behaviors.

Words of Affirmation

- Let me express myself without agreeing or punishing
- Let me know about your day
- Tell me about when you feel proud of me and why
- Tell me how you feel, your intimate thoughts
- Tell me when you like the way I look.
- Talk directly to me about your feelings – don’t clam up
- Compliment me in front of others
- Tell me I’m doing a good job.
- Tell me something you appreciate about me.
- Say you’re sorry.
- Picture something positive about our future together.

The Second Love Language: *Quality Time*

Togetherness. Togetherness has to do with focus, giving your mate your undivided attention (not sitting on the couch watching TV together). It means that we are doing something together and that we are giving our full attention to the other person. The activity in which we are both engaged is incidental, it is simply a vehicle that creates the sense of togetherness.

Quality Conversation. Sympathetic dialogue involves shared experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context. Quality conversation focuses on what we are hearing - drawing out your partner's thoughts, listening sympathetically, asking questions (who, what, how, where, gentle why) with a genuine desire to understand.

- Maintain eye contact when your mate is talking.
- Don't listen to your partner and do something else at the same time.
- Listen for feelings (glad, mad, sad, bad or afraid)
- Observe your partner's body language.
- Refuse to interrupt.

Learning to Talk. Self-revelation does not come easy for some of us. Awareness and expression of our emotions (glad, mad, sad, bad or afraid) is essential for a healthy relationship. Emotions are neither good nor bad. They are simply our psychological responses to the events of life. In each of life's events, we have emotions, thoughts, desires, and eventually actions. It is the expression of this process that we call self-expression.

Personality Types. How we communicate has a great deal to do with our personality type and gender. Are you a "Dead Sea" or a "Babbling Brook?" Men and women tend to have basic differences in how and what they communicate, and how they problem solve. Become aware of your own and your partner's personality style and shape your communication accordingly.

Quality Activities. These can include anything in which one or both of you has an interest. The emphasis is not on what you are doing but on why you are doing it. The purpose is to experience something together, to walk away from it feeling "My partner cares for me. S/he was willing to do something with me that I enjoy, and did it with a positive attitude." The essential ingredients in a quality activity are: at least one of you wants to do it, the other is willing to do it, both of you know why you are doing it - to express love by being together.

Does quality activities mean careful planning? Yes. Does it mean we have to give up some individual activities? Perhaps. Does it mean we have to do some things we don't particularly enjoy? Certainly. Is it worth it? Without a doubt.

Some Tips. Get your "Daily Minimum Requirement" - establish a daily sharing time in which each of you talks about three things that happened that day and how you feel about them. Consider taking a personality test (Myers-Briggs, 16 PF, Taylor-Johnson) and then discussing the implications of your personality types in your relationship. Read "Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus" together and discuss each chapter.

Quality Time

- Come home for dinner together
- Plan time to be alone with me
- Focus on what I'm saying - rather than being distracted when I talk
- Read a relationship book with me
- Make weekend plans with me
- Be protective of our time together

The Third Love Language: *Receiving Gifts*

Gift giving. Gift giving is a universal part of the love relationship, it is a fundamental expression of love that transcends cultural barriers. You must be thinking of someone to give them a gift, and the gift itself is a symbol of that thought. It doesn't matter whether it costs money, gifts may be purchased, found, or made. What is important is that you thought of your partner. And it is not just the thought implanted in the mind that counts, but the thought expressed in actually securing the gift and giving it as an expression of love.

The Gift of Self. The gift of self (or presence) is an intangible gift that can speak more loudly than a gift that can be held in one's hand. Being there when your partner needs you is a priceless gift, your body becomes the symbol of your love.

Some Tips. Make a list of all the gifts your partner has expressed excitement about receiving through the years (given by you or others). Recruit the help of family members who know your mate. Don't wait for a special occasion. If you are a "penny-pincher" you may resist spending money on gifts. Remember you don't have to spend a lot and the money you do spend is well invested.

Giving / Receiving Gifts

- Flowers
- Small surprise gifts
- Buy me my favorite magazine

The Fourth Love Language: *Acts of Service*

"Serve one another in love."(Galatians 5:13). Acts of Service means doing things you know your partner would like you to do. You seek to please them by serving, which requires thought, planning, time, effort, and energy. But requests for service cannot be demands, manipulation by guilt or coercion by fear. There are three principles to keep in mind:

Remember that what we do for each other before marriage is no indication of what we will do after marriage. Before marriage, we are carried along by the force of the "in-love" obsession. After marriage, we revert to being the people we were before we "fell in love." Love is a choice and cannot be coerced. Each of us must decide daily to love or not to love our partners. If we choose to love, then expressing it in the way in which our partner requests will make our love most effective emotionally. Your partner's criticisms about your behavior provide you with the clearest clue to his/her primary love language. People tend to criticize their mate most loudly in the area where they themselves have the deepest emotional need.

Overcoming Stereotypes. Learning the love language of acts of service will require some to reexamine their stereotypes of the roles of husbands and wives. A willingness to examine and change stereotypes is necessary in order to express love more effectively. Remember, there are no rewards for maintaining stereotypes. But there are tremendous benefits to meeting the emotional needs of your partner.

Some Tips. Make a list of three or four things you would like your partner to help with. Then exchange your lists. Don't add any more than 1 request per month. Remember, your partner can only choose to do what is on the list, it cannot be demanded. This love language of service has different dialects. The acts of service that you are willing to do may not be the ones your mate needs most from you.

Acts of Service

- Groom yourself in preparing for time together
- Do one of my regular household chores
- Do tasks around the home

The Fifth Love Language: *Physical Touch*

Physical touch is a fundamental expression of love and meets an essential biological need within each of us. Holding hands, kissing, embracing, back rubs and sexual intimacy are all ways of communicating emotional love to your partner. Since touch receptors are located throughout the body, lovingly touching your mate just about anywhere can be an expression of love. But remember your touch does not always need to be sexual in nature or intent.

Some Tips. Not all touches are created equal. Some will bring more pleasure to your mate than others. Your best instructor is your partner. Consider doing a sensate focus exercise. Caress your partner and try to discover the most sensitive areas of his/her body and the kind of stimulation s/he enjoys most. They may, for example, prefer a gentler touch, or perhaps a rougher one, than you yourself would enjoy. Your partner can use a “spectrum rating scale” to describe how positive or negative your touch is on different parts of their body. “1” up to “10” is for positive touch and “-1” down to “-10” is for negative touch. Remember, loving touch does not always need to lead to sexual intimacy.

Keep in mind that a time of crisis is a particularly important time to extend the gift of touch to your partner. Embracing, holding hands, a reassuring kiss can be sorely needed encouragement during loss.

If a back massage communicates love to your mate, then the time, money, and energy you spend in learning to be a good masseur or masseuse will be well invested. If sexual intimacy is your partner’s primary dialect, reading and discussing the art of sexual love making will enhance your expression of love.

Physical Touch

- Spend more with being affectionate
- Tell me more about what pleases you sexually
- Show me affection that doesn’t lead to sex
- Hold me when I’m upset
- Give me a back rub
- Give me a foot massage
- Comb my hair

We hope you have enjoyed this summary. If one of our counselors can help you with your relationship problems please call us at 386-423-9161 to schedule an appointment.