

Love Languages

Summary of Figuring out Families Podcast with marriage counsellor Derek Boylen

Love languages is such an interesting idea and it's become more than just pop psychology. US counsellor and researcher Gary Chapman came up with the concept. What he realised is that sometimes couples have different what he refers to as Love Languages. What makes me feel loved in my relationship with my partner or with my children isn't necessarily the same thing that makes them feel loved.

And language is the important word here. A couple can speak the same language but can be on different pages in terms of their relationship.

If I spoke, for instance, English and no other language, and Karen (my wife) spoke German, I could spend all day everyday telling her that I love her; that she means the world to me; that she looks beautiful. But for Karen that would mean nothing. If we can work out how to love this person in the right language, then they're going to encounter loving in a much warmer, authentic, fulfilling kind of a way.

What Chapman realised is that most people have one of about five key Love Languages. He talks about five different types. For most people, their Love Language typically falls within these five areas. The first one is *Words of Affirmation*. In my marriage to Karen, *Words of Affirmation* is my primary Love Language.

For people who have this as their primary Love Language, they naturally show their love through their words. They say such things as, "I love you." "You mean the world to me." "You look so beautiful."

The second one is *Physical Touch*. People who have this as their Love Language must naturally show their love through touch. They'll show their love through a hug, a kiss. And they feel most loved when their partner does that for them.

The third Love Language is *Quality Time*. People who have this as their Love Language must naturally show their love by making time for their partner and for others. They've always got 20 minutes at the end of the day to sit down and have a cup of coffee and talk about what happened.

There are people who are great at organising *Quality Time*. "Why don't we go for a picnic this weekend? Or "Why don't we play a game instead of watching TV?" And they feel most loved when we speak their language and we say, you know what, "Why don't we go for a coffee this evening?" Or "Tell me all about your day." Now this is Karen's primary Love Language. So, people who have this as their Love Language, must naturally show their love by doing things i.e. vacuuming the floor, doing the dishes, making the bed.

Karen and I have different Love Languages. For me it's *Words of Affirmation* and for Karen it's *Acts of Service*. The challenge for families is that sometimes we can sort of disconnect around that in the sense that I say, "I'm coming home in the evening" and I want Karen to know that I love her and I missed her. If I walk in the door, put the kids in the bath, clean the playroom and help her with dinner that says to her, *This guy loves me*. We are a team and we're making all of this work ... that's what makes her feel most loved.

But it is kind of important for me to look around and say, "Wow, this place looks amazing." It was an *Act of Love*. I think it took me a long time to realise the Karen doesn't do the dishes in our house because she likes doing the dishes. She does it because it's an *Act of Love*. She does it because she knows if there is one job I hate above all other jobs, it's the dishes.

The fifth Love Language is *Receiving Gifts*. If Karen's had a particularly tough day, I will stop at a shop on



the way home and I'll pick up a mango because Karen loves mangoes. What it communicates to Karen is 'Derek was thinking about me.' 'Derek cares about me and wants me to be happy.'

Gary Chapman has expanded his work to Love Languages for children and for teenagers. It's always the same five Love Languages. When you look at your own family, everyone has their own unique Love Language. For instance, one of our sons, his Love Language is *Words of Affirmation*.

He loves to be tickled and hugged and cuddled. He's always the one who will be the first to climb up on your lap. Working at our individual family members' Love Languages and working out how to love them in their language is a really great way to help strengthen family relationships.

We communicate with more than just words. We communicate with a loving touch or a hug. We also communicate when we reach out and help someone, even when it's uninvited and we say, "How can I help or let me learn that for you."

Love Language is an ideal way to better connect with your partner and your family, irrespective of how long you've been together.

Strategies

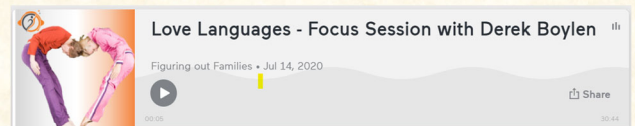
Words of Affirmation. You really need to keep in mind that words mean more to this person than it does to other people. Let's say for instance, they cook dinner.

A normal thing to say would be, "Thanks for cooking dinner." But you could also add, "Oh wow, this meal tastes amazing."

With *Physical Touch* the key is similar to *Words of Affirmation*. It's about remembering that touching means more to these people than it does to other people. Sometimes even the smallest touches are very warm and connecting for them. Something as simple as a hand on the shoulder as you pass by. It might be going out for a coffee. It might be going for a walk (also *Quality Time*). It could be talking about what happened over the course of the day.

Receiving Gifts is not about money. It is the thought. "I think about you and I care about you." It can be an SMS during the day that says, "I miss you." And *Acts of Service* is about occasionally putting your partner and your children above your needs like Karen doing the dishes for me. A kind act which can mean so much to the other person.

You don't want to waste your time trying to do a whole lot of things that don't work so I always encourage people to ask a family member. "What is it that makes you feel loved?"



Figuring out Families Podcast

Derek Boylen, an experienced marriage and relationship counsellor and a lecturer in relationships at the University of Notre Dame. We have put together this most valuable podcast series which we are calling the Focus Sessions.

The series focusses on many aspects of family relationships and can help in strengthening your family. We hope you'll find the series beneficial and get some insights on issues you may face in your family.

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