The 5 Love Languages

The Secret to Love that Lasts

GARY CHAPMAN

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

includes The Five Love Languages personal profile
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About The Book

With more than 30 years of experience as a marriage counselor, Dr. Gary Chapman has heard it all. He has helped couples at every stage of marriage and at pivotal points in their relationships—from those just discovering the joys and trial of marriage to those who are ready to call it quits.

After many years of counseling, Dr. Chapman noticed a pattern: everyone he had ever counseled had a “love language,” a primary way of expressing and interpreting love. He also discovered that, for whatever reason, people are usually drawn to those who speak a different love language than their own.

Of the countless ways we can show love to one another, five key categories, or five love languages, proved to be universal and comprehensive—everyone has a love language, and we all identify primarily with one of the five love languages: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch.

Since The 5 Love Languages™ debuted in 1992, over five million copies have been sold, making The 5 Love Languages a perennial New York Times bestseller. But numbers don’t measure the influence the book has had on couples and their marriages.

The 5 Love Languages has helped countless couples identify practical and powerful ways to express love, simply by using the appropriate love language. Many husbands and wives who had spent years struggling through marriages they thought were loveless discovered one or both spouses had long been showing love through messages that weren’t getting through. By recognizing their different love languages, they witnessed the rebirth of the love they thought had been gone for good.

The book has been translated into more than 40 languages and is healing marriages around the world!

The 5 Love Languages™

What if you could say or do just the right thing guaranteed to make that special someone feel loved? The secret is learning the right love language! Millions of couples have learned the simple way to express their feelings and bring joy back into marriage: The 5 Love Languages, Dr. Gary Chapman’s New York Times bestseller! Words of Affirmation—Actions don’t always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, “I love you,” are important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.
• **Words of Affirmation**

Actions don’t always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, “I love you,” are important—hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.

• **Quality Time**

In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, “I love you,” like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

• **Receiving Gifts**

Don’t mistake this love language for materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

• **Acts of Service**

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an “Acts of Service” person will speak volumes. The words he or she most want to hear: “Let me do that for you.” Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don’t matter.

• **Physical Touch**

This language isn’t all about the bedroom. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.
You’ve read the book—now talk about it! Whether you read *The Five Love Languages Men’s Edition* or *The Five Love Languages* “classic edition,” you want to put its ideas into action in your marriage or special relationship, and you want to talk about these ideas with your mate. Here, chapter by chapter, are some printable discussion starters for both couples and groups.

**Chapter One**  
**What Happens to Love After the Wedding?**

1. The opening illustration raises questions many married and divorced individuals are asking today. In your marriage, perhaps you have asked some of the same questions. Drawing from your own marriage experience, what other questions might you add to those?

2. What solutions have you found useful in solving some of the problems that couples face in their marital relationships?

3. Dr. Chapman states that “the desire for romantic love in marriage is deeply rooted in our psychological makeup.” As we strive to fulfill that desire, what is the basic truth many are missing?

4. What are primary and secondary languages? How does each function in our marriages? In our other relationships?

5. As we communicate with our spouses, what is the key to our being effective communicators of love?

**Chapter Two**  
**Keeping the Love Tank Full**

1. How would you define love? Given your exposure to Dr. Chapman’s concept of five love languages, might your definition have room for additional thought and development?

2. What fuels our need for love? Why is it an ongoing need?

3. Discuss the “love tank” metaphor the author describes. How often do you focus on your spouse’s love tank? How successful have you been keeping it filled?
4. Are you alert to signs that your spouse might be crying out for love? Are you gauging the possibility that his or her emotional love tank could be running on “empty”? What are some of the things that can cause one’s tank to dry up?

5. As you seek to grow in your marital relationship, what are some of the benefits of keeping your spouse’s emotional love tank at the proper level?

Chapter Three
Falling in Love

1. Have you had a “falling in love” experience? As you reflect, how much of it was illusion, and how much of it was reality? What were some of the illusions you had?

2. How long can we expect to sustain an “in love” experience? Early on, why do we tend to believe this euphoric state is so real? When reality sets in, what are some of the ways the illusion of intimacy evaporates?

3. What is the nature of real love? Contrast what it means to “fall in love” with experiencing “real love.” What characteristics of real love separate it from a euphoric, in love experience?

4. What is our most basic emotional need? What do we need to realize to begin aligning with our spouse and meeting that need?

5. When couples find themselves falling out of love, what are their two common courses of action? The author has good news for married couples who have lost their “in love” feelings? Describe the author’s third alternative.

Chapter Four
Love Language #1: Words of Affirmation

1. What makes verbal compliments work as motivators?

2. Do you take the time to encourage your spouse? In what way or ways have your words of encouragement helped your spouse realize hidden or latent potential?

3. Dr. Chapman points out that the keys to providing the right kinds of encouragement are: (1) empathy; and (2) seeing the world from your spouse’s perspective. Is this an area you might be able to improve upon? What creative steps can you suggest for learning what is important to your spouse?
4. When we have wronged our spouse, what role can kind words play in reconciliation and forgiveness? How do such words become an expression of love?

5. What is the best way we can handle yesterday’s failures? Why are words of affirmation a powerful means of restoring intimacy?

6. Give examples of humble words. What do humble words communicate to our spouse?

7. The author suggests several other creative “dialects” of affirmation. Perhaps you have some ideas of your own you can share.

Chapter Five
Love Language #2: Quality Time

1. Describe the author’s concept of quality time. What are some ways we can invest quality time with our spouse? With our families?

2. What is focused attention? What is its goal?

3. The author teaches that quality conversation is one of the dialects of quality time. In what ways does quality conversation differ from words of affirmation? How could you enhance your conversations with your spouse?

4. Discuss the author’s five guidelines for engaging quality conversation. Do you consider yourself a good “quality conversation” listener? Can you identify ways you can become a better listener?

5. Dr. Chapman suggests that if we need to learn the language of quality conversation, we should begin by noting the emotions we feel away from home. What are some good examples of events to note during the course of this exercise? What is the point of this exercise?

6. Contrast the “Dead Sea” and “Babbling Brook” personalities. Which are you? Which one describes your spouse? What are keys to making these opposite personalities more compatible?

7. The author suggests several quality activities. Discuss your favorite. Can you suggest other quality activities in which you and your spouse can engage?
Chapter Six
Love Language #3: Receiving Gifts

1. What makes receiving a gift so special? How does it become an expression of love between two people?

2. If your spouse’s primary love language is receiving gifts, what beginning steps can you take to become a proficient gift giver?

3. What is the key to becoming an effective gift giver? In what ways might gifts be both an immediate and lasting investment in one’s marital relationship?

4. Describe the gift of self. How does the power of presence become a symbol of love?

5. Discuss Dr. Chapman’s excellent suggestions for filling your spouse’s “love tank” with gifts. Which ones appear to be a good fit for your spouse?

Chapter Seven
Love Language #4: Acts of Service

1. Explain how acts of service function as a love language. Why do acts of service qualify as expressions of love?

2. Dr. Chapman draws three truths from his illustration of Mark and Mary’s relationship. Discuss each truth and what we may learn from each.

3. Should acts of service become acts of manipulation, they are no longer acts of love. To prevent such occurrences, what does learning the love language of acts of service require of us? What should be our response if our spouse’s primary love language asks something of us that seems inappropriate to our role?

4. Dr. Chapman lists some creative ideas we can exercise to embrace our spouse’s love language of acts of service. Briefly discuss these. If your spouse’s love language is acts of service, which ones would you consider using?

Chapter Eight
Love Language #5: Physical Touch

1. Discuss the power of touch as a love language. If this is your spouse’s love language, what are some considerations in learning your spouse’s love dialect with this language?
2. Why are concepts like open marriage so damaging to a marital relationship? How might marital unfaithfulness impact a spouse whose love language is physical touch?

3. Nonsexual physical touch can be a powerful communicator during times of crisis and disappointments. Reflect on events where your spouse’s hug or touch provided you the strength to make it through the crisis.

4. Dr. Chapman relates the story of Patsy and Pete. From their marriage counseling, what did Patsy and Pete discover to be their root problem? What might we learn from their experience regarding our own spouse and our aligning with his or her love language?

5. Is “physical touch” your spouse’s love language? If so, review some of the author’s suggestions for meeting your spouse’s need for physical touch.

Chapter Nine
Discovering Your Primary Love Language

1. The author mentions two kinds of people who may have difficulty discovering their primary love language. What are those two kinds, and for what reasons might they experience difficulty in determining their love language?

2. Do you know for certain your primary love language? What might be your secondary language or languages? Dr. Chapman suggests spending time writing down what you think is your primary love language. Then, as you weigh them, list the other four languages in their order of importance.

3. Now write down what you think is the primary love language of your spouse. List the other four in order of importance as well. When time permits, sit down with your spouse and discuss what you guessed to be his or her primary love language. Then tell each other what you consider to be your own primary love language.

4. Dr. Chapman provides questions we can ask ourselves to help us discover our primary love language. Discuss these approaches and determine which works best for you. Perhaps you and your spouse may find it helpful to do this exercise together.

Chapter Ten
Love is a Choice

1. We are all likely guilty of poor choices in the past. If not dealt with, how can hurt, anger, and resentment affect a marital relationship over time?
2. How can our expressions of love, within the context of knowing our spouse’s love language, enable us to deal with past conflicts and failures in our marriages?

3. Why does the “in love” experience eventually fail to meet one’s need for real love after time? Explain what the author means by “love is a choice.” How do our choices make a difference in our relationships?

4. Dr. Chapman explains that our actions must precede our emotions. What does he mean by that statement? Why is that order essential?

Chapter Eleven
Love Makes the Difference

1. Drawing from the author’s discussion, what does it mean to be significant?

2. How important to us is our need to feel significant? Explain how love functions in meeting this need.

3. Within some marriages, what is the key to renewing and reenergizing emotional love?

4. Given your spouse’s love language, what new or renewed actions can you take to make your spouse feel more significant?

Chapter Twelve
Loving the Unlovely

1. Describe the situation Ann faced in her marriage. What hypothesis did Dr. Chapman suggest to Ann? Upon what foundation did he build his hypothesis?

2. Drawing from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, what does Dr. Chapman consider to be love’s greatest challenge? What is the nature of this challenge?

3. Dr. Chapman draws a specific principle from Jesus’ sermon in Luke 6:38. Read this passage. Discuss this principle and how it applied to Ann’s situation. How applicable is this principle to all relationships?
4. Have you ever been in a “loving the unlovely” relationship (not necessarily marriage)? How did you handle it?

5. Review the author’s assessment of Ann and Glenn’s experiment and his recommendations to his readers. Discuss his four steps toward regaining a healthier marriage.
Five Love Languages Q & A

1. What if I cannot discover my primary love language?

“I’ve taken The Love Language Profile and my scores come out almost even except for Receiving Gifts. I know that is not my primary love language.”

In the book, I discuss three approaches to discovering your love language.

• First, observe how you most often express love to others. If you are regularly doing acts of service for others, this may be your love language. If you are consistently, verbally affirming people, then Words of Affirmation is likely your love language.

• What do you complain about most often? When you say to your spouse, “I don’t think you would ever touch me if I did not initiate it,” you are revealing that Physical Touch is your love language. When your spouse goes on a business trip and you say, “You didn’t bring me anything?” you are indicating that Receiving Gifts is your language. The statement, “We don’t ever spend time together,” indicates the love language of Quality Time. Your complaints reveal your inner desires. (If you have difficulty remembering what you complain about most often, I suggest that you ask your spouse. Chances are they will know.)

• What do you request of your spouse most often? If you are saying “Will you give me a back rub?” you are asking for Physical Touch. “Do you think we could get a weekend away this month?” is a request for Quality Time. “Would it be possible for you to mow the grass this afternoon?” expresses your desire for Acts of Service. (Your answer to these three questions will likely reveal your primary love language.)

One husband told me that he discovered his love language by simply following the process of elimination. He knew that Receiving Gifts was not his language so that left only four. He asked himself, “If I had to give up one of the four, which one would I give up first?” His answer was Quality Time. “Of the three remaining, if I had to give up another, which one would I give up?” He concluded that apart from sexual intercourse, he could give up Physical Touch. He could get along without the pats and hugs and holding hands. This left Acts of Service and Words of Affirmation. While he appreciated the things his wife did for him, he knew that her affirming words were really what gave him life. He could go a whole day on a positive comment from her. Thus, Words of Affirmation was his primary love language and Acts of Service his secondary love language.

2. What if I cannot discover my spouse’s love language?

“My husband hasn’t read the book, but we have discussed the love languages. He says that he doesn’t know what his love language is.”

My first suggestion is to give him a copy of The 5 Love Languages Men’s Edition. Since it is geared specifically to husbands, he is more likely to read it. If he reads it, he will be eager to
share his love language with you. However, if he is unwilling to read the book, I would suggest you answer the three questions discussed above.

- How does he most often express love to others?
- What does he complain about most often?
- What does he request most often?

Though our spouse’s complaints normally irritate us, they are actually giving us valuable information. If a spouse says, “We don’t ever spend any time together,” you may be tempted to say, “What do you mean? We went out to dinner Thursday night.” Such a defensive statement will end the conversation. However, if you respond, “What would you like for us to do?” you will likely get an answer. The complaints of your spouse are the most powerful indicators of the primary love language.

Another approach is to do a five-week experiment. The first week, you focus on one of the five love languages and seek to speak it every day and observe the response of your spouse. On Saturday and Sunday, you relax. The second week—Monday through Friday—you focus on another of the love languages and continue with a different language each of the five weeks. On the week you are speaking your spouse’s primary love language, you are likely to see a difference in their countenance and the way they respond to you. It will be obvious that this is their primary love language.

### 3. Does your love language change as you get older?

I think that our primary love language tends to stay with us for a lifetime. It is like many other personality traits that develop early and remain consistent. For example, a highly organized person was likely organized as a child. A person who is more laid-back and relaxed likely had that trait as a child. This is true of numerous personality traits.

However, there are certain situations in life that make the other love languages extremely attractive. For example, your primary love language may be *Words of Affirmation*, but if you are the mother of three preschool children, then *Acts of Service* by your husband may become extremely attractive to you. If he gives you only *Words of Affirmation* and does not offer to help you with household responsibilities, you may begin to feel “I’m tired of hearing you say, ‘I love you’ when you never lift a hand to help me.” For those years, it may appear that *Acts of Service* has become your primary love language. However, if *Words of Affirmation* cease, you will quickly know that this continues to be your primary love language.

If you experience the death of a parent or a close friend, even if *Physical Touch* is not your primary love language, an extended hug by your spouse may be the most meaningful thing for you at the moment. There is something about being held in the midst of our grief that communicates that we are loved. While *Physical Touch* is not your primary love language, it is extremely meaningful on such occasions.

### 4. Does the 5 love language concept work with children?
Most definitely. I like to visualize that inside every child there is an emotional love tank. If the child feels loved by the parents, the child grows up normally. But if the love tank is empty and the child does not feel loved, he/she will grow up with many internal struggles and during the teenage years will go looking for love, often in the wrong places. It is extremely important that parents learn how to love children effectively. Some time ago, I teamed up with psychiatrist Ross Campbell and wrote the book *The Five Love Languages of Children*. It is written for parents and is designed to help them discover the child’s primary love language. It also discusses how this interfaces with the child’s anger, the child’s learning, and with discipline.

One of the points we make in the book is that children need to learn how to receive and give love in all five languages. This produces an emotionally healthy adult. Thus, parents are encouraged to give heavy doses of the child’s primary love language, then sprinkle in the other four regularly. When the child receives love in all five languages, he/she will eventually learn how to give love in all five languages.

5. **Do children’s love languages change when they get to be teenagers?**

A parent said, “I’ve read your and Dr. Campbell’s book *The Five Love Languages of Children*. It really helped us in raising our children. However, now our son has become a teenager. We’re doing the same things we’ve always done but it doesn’t seem to be working. I’m wondering if his love language has changed.”

I do not believe that a child’s love language changes at age thirteen. However, you must learn new ways to speak the child’s primary love language. Whatever you have been doing in the past, the teenager considers to be childish and will want nothing to do with it. If the teen’s love language is *Physical Touch* and you have been hugging and kissing on the cheek, the teenager may well push you away and say, “Leave me alone.” It does not mean that he does not need physical touch; it means that he considers those particular touches to be childish. You must now speak *Physical Touch* in more adult dialects such as an elbow to the side, a fist to the shoulder, a pat on the back, or wrestle the teen to the floor. These touches will communicate your love to a teenager. The worst thing you can do to a teenager whose love language is *Physical Touch* is to withdraw when the teen says, “Don’t touch me.”

In my book *The Five Love Languages of Teenagers*, which is written for parents, I also discuss the teen’s desire for freedom and the necessity of linking advanced freedom with advanced responsibility. As teens get older, they become more capable. Thus they need to have more responsibilities. When these responsibilities are tied with increased freedom, the teenager is motivated to become a responsible young person.

For example, if you are going to allow the teen to drive a car, this freedom should be accompanied by a responsibility such as washing the car every Saturday by noon. If they fail to meet this responsibility, there should be specific consequences already in place, such as losing the privilege of driving for two days. If the parent consistently applies the consequences, the teenager will have an extremely clean car and will learn that freedom and responsibility are opposite sides of the same coin.
6. **What if the primary love language of your spouse is difficult for you?**

“I did not grow up in a touching family and now I have discovered that my spouse’s love language is *Physical Touch*. It is extremely difficult for me to initiate physical touch.”

The good news is that all of the five love languages can be learned. It is true that most of us grew up speaking only one or two of these love languages. These will come natural for us and will be relatively easy. The others must be learned. As in all learning situations, small steps make for big gains. If *Physical Touch* is your spouse’s language and you are not by nature a “toucher,” begin with such small things as putting your hand on the shoulder of your spouse as you pour the cup of coffee or give a “love pat” on the shoulder as you walk by. These small touches will begin to break down the barrier. Each time you touch, the next touch will be easier. You can become proficient in speaking the language of *Physical Touch*.

The same is true with the other languages. If you are not a *Words of Affirmation* person and you discover that your spouse’s language is *Words of Affirmation*, as I indicated in the book, you can make a list of statements that you hear from other persons or read in magazines or books. Stand in front of a mirror and read the list until you become comfortable hearing yourself say those words. Then choose one of the statements, walk in the room, and say it to your spouse. Each time you affirm them, it will become easier. Not only is your spouse feeling good about your changed behavior, but you are also feeling good about yourself, because you know that you are effectively expressing love to your spouse.

7. **Are some of the love languages found more among women and others with men?**

I have never done the research to discover if the love languages are gender-slanted. It may be true that more men have *Physical Touch* and *Words of Affirmation* as their love language and more women have *Quality Time* and *Gifts*. But I don’t know if that is true.

I prefer to deal with the love languages as being gender-neutral. I do know that any one of these love languages can be the primary love language of a man or the primary love language of a woman. The important thing in marriage is that you discover the primary and secondary love languages of your spouse and you speak these regularly. If you do this, you will create a healthy emotional climate for marital growth.

8. **How did you discover the five love languages?**

In the book, I share some of my encounters with couples through the years that brought me to realize that what makes one person feel loved does not necessarily make another person feel loved. For a number of years, I have been helping couples in the counseling office discover what their spouse desired in order to feel loved. Eventually, I began to see a pattern in their responses. Therefore, I decided to read the notes I had made over twelve years of counseling couples and ask myself the question, “When someone sat in my office and said, ‘I feel like my spouse doesn’t love me,’ what did they want?” Their answers fell into five categories. I later called them the five love languages.
I then started sharing these languages in workshops and study groups. Every time I shared the concept of the love languages, the “lights came on” for couples and they realized why they had been missing each other emotionally. When they discovered and spoke each other’s primary love language, it radically changed the emotional climate of their marriage. Therefore, I decided to write a book in which I would share the concept, hoping to influence thousands of couples whom I would never have an opportunity to meet in person. Now that the book has sold over five million copies in English and has been translated into thirty-eight languages around the world, my efforts have been more than rewarded.

9. Do the love languages work in other cultures?

Since my academic background is anthropology, this was my question when the Spanish publisher came first and requested permission to translate and publish the book in Spanish. I initially said, “I don’t know if this concept works in Spanish. I discovered it in the Anglo setting.” The publisher said, “We have read the book and it works in Spanish.” So I was glad to know the book was to be translated and published in Spanish. Then came the French edition, the German, the Dutch, etc. In almost every culture, the book has become the bestseller of the publisher. This leads me to believe that these five fundamental ways of expressing love are universal.

However, the dialects in which these languages are spoken will differ from culture to culture. For example, the kind of touches that are appropriate in one culture may not be appropriate in another culture. The Acts of Service that are spoken in one culture may not be spoken in another culture. But when these cultural adaptations are made, the concept of the five love languages will have a profound impact upon the couples in that culture.

10. Why do you think The 5 Love Languages has been so successful?

I believe that our deepest emotional need is the need to feel loved. If we are married, the person we would most like to love us is our spouse. If we feel loved by our spouse, the whole world is bright and life is wonderful. On the other hand, if we feel rejected or ignored, the world begins to look dark.

Most couples get married when they still have the euphoric feelings of being in love. When the euphoric feelings evaporate some time after the wedding and their differences begin to emerge, they often find themselves in conflict. With no positive plan for resolving conflicts, they often find themselves speaking harshly to each other. Harsh words create feelings of hurt, disappointment, and anger. Not only do they feel unloved, but they also begin to resent each other.

When couples read The 5 Love Languages, they discover why they lost the romantic feelings of courtship and how emotional love can be rekindled in their relationship. Once they begin speaking each other’s primary love language, they are surprised to see how quickly their emotions turn positive. With a full love tank, they can now process their conflicts in a much more positive manner and find solutions that are workable. The rebirth of emotional love creates
a positive emotional climate between the two of them and they learn to work together as a team—encouraging, supporting, and helping each other reach meaningful goals.

Once this happens, they want to share the message of the five love languages with all of their friends. Every year since its first publication, the book has sold more than it did the year before. I believe the success of *The Five Love Languages* can be attributed to the couples who have read it, learned to speak each other’s language, and recommended it to their friends.

11. What if I speak my spouse’s love language and they don’t respond?

“My husband would not read the book so I decided to speak his love language and see what would happen. Nothing happened. He didn’t even acknowledge that I was doing anything differently. How long am I supposed to continue speaking his love language when there is no response?”

I know that it can become discouraging when you feel that you are investing in the marriage and are receiving nothing in return. There are two possibilities as to why your husband is not responding. First and most likely, you are speaking the wrong love language. Wives often assume that their husband’s love language is *Physical Touch*. Therefore, they make significant changes in the way they respond to their husband’s sexual desires. Often they will initiate sexual intercourse. She is sincerely trying to speak his love language. When he does not so much as acknowledge her efforts, she becomes discouraged. In reality, his primary love language may be *Words of Affirmation*. Because she feels no love coming from him, she may be verbally critical of him. Her critical words are like daggers to his heart, so he withdraws from her. His only pleasure in the marriage is those moments of sexual intimacy, but they are not enough to alleviate the emotional sense of rejection he feels from her critical words. He suffers in silence while she becomes frustrated that her efforts for improving the marriage are unsuccessful. The problem is not her sincerity; the problem is that she is actually speaking the wrong love language.

On the other hand, assuming you are speaking your spouse’s primary love language, there is another reason why they may not be responding positively. If the spouse is already involved in another romantic relationship, either emotionally or sexually, they will often reason that your efforts have come too late. They may even perceive that your efforts are temporary and insincere and that you are simply trying to manipulate them to stay in the marriage. Even if your spouse is not involved with someone else, if your relationship has been hostile for a long time, they may still perceive your efforts as being manipulative.

In this situation, the temptation is to give up, to stop speaking their love language because it is not making any difference. The worst thing you can do is to yield to this temptation. If you give up, it will confirm their conclusion that your efforts were designed to manipulate them. The best approach you can take is to continue to speak their love language on a regular basis no matter how they treat you. Set yourself a goal of six months, nine months, or a year. Your attitude is “Whatever their response, I’m going to love them in their love language over the long haul. If they walk away from me, they will walk away from someone who is loving them unconditionally.” This attitude will keep you on a positive road even when you feel discouraged. There is nothing more powerful that you can do than to love your spouse even when they are not
responding positively. Whatever the ultimate response of your spouse, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done everything you could do to restore your marriage. If your spouse eventually chooses to reciprocate your love, you will have demonstrated for yourself the power of unconditional love. And you will reap the benefits of the rebirth of mutual love.

12. Can love be reborn after sexual infidelity?

Nothing devastates marital intimacy more than sexual unfaithfulness. Sexual intercourse is a bonding experience. It unites two people in the deepest possible manner. All cultures have a public wedding ceremony and a private consummation of the marriage in sexual intercourse. Sex is designed to be the unique expression of our commitment to each other for a lifetime. When this commitment is broken, it is devastating to the marriage.

However, this does not mean that the marriage is destined for divorce. If the offending party is willing to break off the extramarital involvement and do the hard work of rebuilding the marriage, there can be genuine restoration. In my own counseling, I have seen scores of couples who have experienced healing after sexual infidelity. It involves not only breaking off the extramarital affair, but discovering what led to the affair. Success in restoration is a two-pronged approach. First, the offending party must be willing to explore their own personality, beliefs, and lifestyle that led them to the affair. There must be a willingness to change attitudes and behavior patterns. Second, the couple must be willing to take an honest look at the dynamics of their marriage and be open to replacing destructive patterns with positive patterns of integrity and sincerity. Both of these will normally require the help of a professional counselor.

Research indicates that those couples who are most likely to survive sexual infidelity are those couples who receive both individual counseling and marriage counseling. Understanding the five love languages and choosing to speak each other’s language can help create an emotional climate in which the hard work of restoring the marriage can be successful.

13. What do you do when a spouse refuses to speak your love language even when they know it?

“We both read The 5 Love Languages, took the profile, and discussed our primary love languages with each other. That was two months ago. My wife knows that my love language is Words of Affirmation. Yet, in two months, I have yet to hear her say anything positive. Her love language is Acts of Service. I have started doing several things she has asked me to do around the house. I think she appreciates what I am doing, but she never tells me.”

Let me begin by saying that we cannot make our spouse speak our love language. Love is a choice. We can request love, but we cannot demand love. Having said that, let me suggest some reasons why your wife may not be speaking your love language. She may have grown up in a home where she received few positive words. Her parents were perhaps very critical of her. Thus, she did not have a positive role model of speaking Words of Affirmation. Such words may be very difficult for her to speak. It will require effort on her part and patience on your part as she learns to speak a language that is foreign to her.
A second reason that she may not be speaking your love language is she fears that if she gives you *Words of Affirmation* for the few changes you have made, you will become complacent, and you will not go on to make the major changes that she is hoping for. It is the mistaken idea that if I reward mediocrity, I will curtail the person’s aspirations to be better. That is a commonly held myth that keeps parents from verbally affirming children. Of course, it is untrue. If a person’s primary love language is *Words of Affirmation*, those words challenge the person to greater levels of accomplishment.

My suggestion is that you initiate the love tank game discussed in the book. You ask her, “On a scale of zero to ten, how full is your love tank?” If she answers anything less than ten, you ask, “What could I do to help fill it?” Whatever she says, you do it to the best of your ability. If you do this once a week for a month, chances are she will start asking you how full your love tank is. And you can begin making requests of her. This is a fun way of teaching her how to speak your love language.

14. Can emotional love return when it has been gone for thirty years?

“We are not enemies. We don’t fight. We simply live in the same house like roommates.”

Let me answer this question with a true story. A couple came to me at one of my seminars. The husband said, “We have come to thank you for bringing new life to our marriage. We have been married for thirty years, but the last twenty years have been extremely empty. If you want to know how bad our marriage has been, we have not taken a vacation together in twenty years. We simply live in the same house, try to be civil, and that’s about it.

“A year ago, I shared my struggle with a friend. He went into his house, came back with your book *The 5 Love Languages*, and said to me, ‘Read this. It will help you.’ The last thing I wanted to do was read another book, but I did. I went home that night and read the whole book. I finished about 3:00 a.m. and with every chapter, the lights began to come on. I realized that we had failed to speak each other’s love language through the years. I gave the book to my wife and asked if she would read it and tell me what she thought of it. Two weeks later, she said, ‘I read the book.’ ‘What did you think about it?’ I said. ‘I think if we had read that book thirty years ago, our marriage would have been very different.’ I said to her, ‘That’s the same thought I had. Do you think it would make any difference if we tried now?’ She responded, ‘We don’t have anything to lose.’ ‘Does that mean you are willing to try?’ I asked. ‘Sure. I’ll try,’ she said. We discussed our primary love languages and agreed that we would try to speak each other’s language at least once a week and see what would happen. If anyone had told me that in two months, I would have love feelings for her again, I would never have believed it. But I did.”

His wife spoke up and said, “If anyone had told me that I would ever have love feelings for him again, I would have said ‘No way. Too much has happened.’” She then said, “This year we took our first vacation together in twenty years and had a wonderful time. We drove four hundred miles to come to your seminar and enjoyed being with each other. I’m just sad that we wasted so many years of simply living in the same house when we could have had a love relationship. Thank you for your book.” “Thank you for sharing your story,” I said. “I find it greatly
encouraging. I hope you make the next twenty years so exciting that the last twenty will be a dim
memory.” “That’s what we intend to do,” they both said together.

Can emotional love be reborn in a marriage after thirty years? Yes, if the two of you are willing
to try speaking each other’s love language.

15. How do I speak my spouse’s love language if he/she is away from me for a time (i.e.
deployment, work, school).

I am frequently asked how to apply the 5 love languages in long-distance relationships. Physical
touch and quality time are particularly challenging in these instances. The simple answer is this:
you must be creative and committed to staying connected despite the distance.

If your love language is physical touch, then here are a few creative ideas for speaking one
another’s love language. First, having photographs of yourself as a couple may remind you of
enjoyable times together. Having physical items that belong to one another may also remind you
of one another. Perhaps a shirt or the cologne or perfume of your significant other may remind
you of that person and of enjoyable times together. You also should email, text, write, etc., about
how you enjoy being with one another. You might even try keeping a calendar on which you
physically mark off the days until you’re able to be with one another again. This is not a
comprehensive list of ideas, but all of these are physical activities and items that will at least in
part help satisfy your physical love language.

As for quality time, the time you spend staying in contact, working to encourage one another,
sending one another notes and gifts, etc… is quality time. Of course, it’s not the preferred form
of quality time, but it is quality time nonetheless. You must learn to view it and appreciate it as
such.

More specific ways you can express the language of quality time are to talk often about how you
desire to stay close and keep your love alive. Read or re-read The 5 Love Languages together
while you’re apart, or listen to Dr. Chapman’s podcasts, and discuss these together as a way of
nurturing your relationship. This, too, requires commitment, but if you truly love one another,
then you’ll find the energy and time to stay connected.

Use your situation as an opportunity to practice the other languages as well. Notes and gifts need
to be viewed as more than “just” notes and gifts. They need to be viewed as physical effort and
words of affirmation meant to express love.

In closing, yes, distance is difficult on a relationship, but it does not have to be the end of the
relationship. Obviously, the more time you can spend together, the better. And, you should strive
for this. However, if you are a committed couple and are willing to be creative in how you speak
one another’s love language, then your relationship can survive and even thrive during your time
apart.

16. I’m single. How does the love language concept apply to me?
Through the years, many single adults have said to me, “I know you wrote your original book for married couples. However, I read it and it helped me in all of my relationships. Why don’t you write a book on the five love languages for singles?” And so I did. It’s entitled *The 5 Love Languages Singles Edition*. In the book, I seek to help single adults apply the love language concept in all their relationships. I begin by helping them understand why they felt love or did not feel love growing up as a child.

One young man who is incarcerated said, “Thanks for sharing the five love languages. For the first time in my life I finally understand that my mother loves me. I realize that my love language is *Physical Touch* but my mother never hugged me. In fact, the first hug I ever remember getting from my mother was the day I left for prison. But I realize that she spoke *Acts of Service* very strongly. She worked hard to keep us in food and clothes and to provide a place to live. I know now that she loved me; she simply wasn’t speaking my language. But now, I understand she really did love me.”

I also help singles apply the love language concept in their sibling relationships, work relationships, and dating relationships. I have been so encouraged by the response of single adults. I hope that if you are single, you will discover what others have discovered. Expressing love in a person’s primary love language enhances all relationships.
About the Author

As anyone who has attended one of his marriage conferences knows, Dr. Gary Chapman’s expertise in marriage begins with the success and failures he and his wife Karolyn have experienced in their marriage for more than 45 years. He is just the man to turn to for help on improving or healing our most important relationships. His own life experiences, plus over thirty-five years of pastoring and marriage counseling, led him to publish his first book in the Love Language series, The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate. Many of the millions of readers credit this continual New York Times bestseller with saving their marriages by showing them simple and practical ways to communicate love.

Since the success of his first book, Dr. Chapman has expanded his Five Love Languages series with special editions that reach out specifically to singles, men, and parents of teens and young children.


Dr. Chapman speaks to thousands of couples nationwide through his weekend marriage conferences. He hosts a nationally syndicated radio program, A Love Language Minute, and a Saturday morning program, Building Relationships with Dr. Gary Chapman, both airing on more than 200 stations. Dr. Chapman and his wife have two grown children and currently live in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he serves as senior associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church.

Dr. Chapman holds BA and MA degrees in anthropology from Wheaton College and Wake Forest University, respectively, MRE and PhD degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and has completed postgraduate work at the University of North Carolina and Duke University.