

# The Five Love Languages

How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate

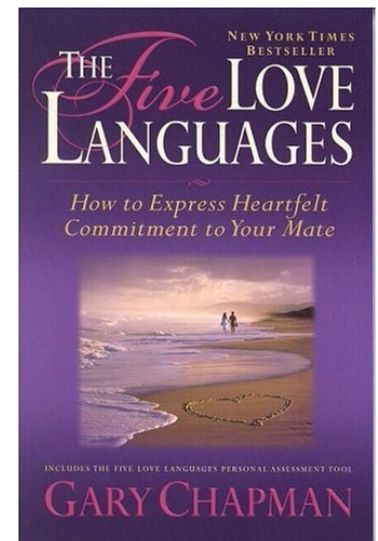
By Gary Chapman; Northfield Publishing, 1995

During courtship and dating, you (as a couple) act as if you had been “stoned in love,” fascinated by the thrill of each other’s persona and energized by the idea of a promising relationship. You are just “so into the other person,” and when you are together, nothing else matters. Nothing also ever goes wrong, save for some petty skirmishes that do not persist because you simply cannot stand the thought of hurting your loved one and not being able to see him/her. You find your self more patient, more tolerant, more giving, more understanding, more attuned to the other person’s needs. For the first time, you find your self loving right, and before long, you two are bound for the altar.

Yet after several years (some only months), you find a gaping hole in your marriage and see each other as totally different individuals. The excitement, the sweetness, the energy, the magic, the love all seemed to have dissipated and left two people “strangers-again.” You suddenly ask, “What went wrong?” Gary Chapman explains that this is so because couples have brushed aside each other’s emotional love language. Explicit and heart-warming in his writing, Gary Chapman slots in a tinge of hope in your waning married life and reminds you that the relationship can be rectified and revived, if you only know the genuine language of love.

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## BOOK OF THE WEEK:



### INSIDE THIS SUMMARY:

- The Big Idea
- On Loving and Being In-Love
- Beyond Complacency: Intersubjective Meanings in Marriage
- Love Language # 1: Words of Affirmation
- Love Language # 2: Quality Time
- Love Language # 3: Receiving Gifts
- Love Language # 4: Acts of Service
- Love Language # 5: Physical Touch
- Revive Your Marriage

## On Loving and Being In-Love

The dating phase puts the couple in a rather hazy state of being in-love, that almost magical feeling of being with someone whose, in the words of Gary Chapman, physical characteristics and personality traits create enough shock to trigger your love alert system. As you spend time with each other, you desire to know the person more, and quite surprisingly (or gallingly for that matter), everything you see is positive. In your eyes, he/she is the paragon of fineness, and with this person you anticipate countless possibilities, all of them equally optimistic. There is no doubt that you are caught up in inflated euphoria and delusion; you have never been this much happy and never been this much vibrant, and you feel like you will never be your old self again.

As romance progresses, you become more emotionally obsessed with each other. You stay up until the wee hours of the night just thinking about how it would be like to have him/her close. You wake up in the morning and get an intense rush with the first thought of that person. When you hold hands, it is as if yours was made to fit his/hers perfectly, and when you are both locked in an embrace you never want to let go. A minute or two of not being together is almost like a year of waiting. You started watching basketball because it was his favorite pastime. You, on the other hand, suddenly got into classical music and ballet shows because it was what exhilarated her. There is so much fun, so much fit, so much contentment.

Most couples enter marriage through this so-called in-love experience and were made to believe that it will last because, "We were in-love." If you are one of these couples, you might harbor the conviction that everything can be conquered and nothing can ever go wrong. This may prove true, perhaps throughout the honeymoon stage or the first few months of married life, where the two of you still have either that "climactic hang-over" or that fairy tale-like reverie you never want to wake up from. Unfortunately, the belief that the in-love experience in dating will be carried on exactly the same in marriage is utterly erroneous. More likely than not, couples contend with the acrid opposite.

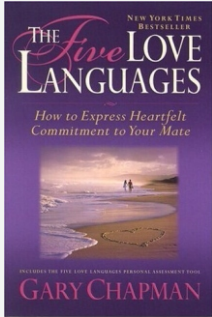
Citing Dr. Dorothy Tennov, a psychologist, Gary Chapman indicated that the average life span of a romantic obsession is two years. If it is a secretive affair, it may last a little longer. Eventually, however, we all descend from the clouds and plant our feet on earth again. This is the murky reality that many couples do not know of, if not totally refute. In your rather delusional state of mind, you fail to recognize the other person's personality or attitudinal flaws. Inside the marriage, and in trying to sustain a semblance of marital bliss, you overlooked his propensity for verbal abuse or her penchant for vanity. You have not anticipated that he could be withdrawn and uncaring, or that she could be high-strung and suicidal.

What you've both dreamed of throughout the in-love phase does not entirely replicate in the real world of marriage. At this point, intimate lovers turn into the worst enemies and since then started repudiating married life. In addition, the rapture during the in-love phase has given both of you the illusion that you have achieved a certain level in your relationship that qualifies marriage. Little did you know that the in-love experience is not what is vital for a marriage to work but "real love."

Dr. Dorothy Tennov and psychiatrist, M. Scott Peck, have concluded that the in-love experience is not "real love" for three reasons:

1. Falling in-love is not an act of the will or a conscious choice. Often, we fall in love at inopportune times and with unlikely people;

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2. Falling in-love is not real love because it is effortless. What we do in the in-love state requires little discipline or conscious effort. The instinctual nature of the in-love experience pushes us to do outlandish and unnatural things for each other;

3. The one who is in-love is not genuinely interested in fostering the personal growth of the other person. Our purpose when we fall in-love is to terminate our loneliness and perhaps ensure this result through marriage.

Because the aforesaid reasons paint a rather sinister picture of being in-love, does this mean that you'd rather not go through this episode? Does this portend only a miserable life with your spouse? Gary Chapman argues that this should not necessarily be an austere case. His advice is to recognize the in-love experience as an ephemeral stage, what he dubs as "a temporary emotional high," after which you are called to pursue "real love," one that goes beyond emotional obsession, a love that is spurred by reason, act of will, and discipline, and recognizes the need for the other person's growth.

With "real love," you love because you see in the person something worth loving. That recognition alone requires heartfelt effort, to understand, to accept, to appreciate, and to be continually moved by the mystery of finding out more about the other person. In Gary Chapman's words, "Real love is the choice to expend energy in a desire to benefit the other person, knowing that if his or her life is enriched by your effort, you too will find a sense of satisfaction the satisfaction of having genuinely loved another." This means that real love is selfless, even when the in-love experience has run its course.

In the absence of the in-love feelings, you become more mindful of the shortcomings of your spouse. Yet if in such absence, you choose to be kind, understanding and generous, then that is real love. That kind of love begins with an attitude a way of thinking. The one who chooses to love after the in-love

obsession had died out will (always) find appropriate ways to express that decision. But how could that be? How can you meet the emotional needs of your spouse and at the same feel loved yourself? How can your "love tanks" be constantly filled to the brim?

## Beyond Complacency: Intersubjective Meanings in Marriage

As married couples, your most important task is to avert "love expiry" to keep the emotional love tank full and make your spouse feel incessantly secure in your love. Most couples find themselves at a sort of stalemate; they seem to be two different people devoid of any intimate connection whatsoever. There are those whose marriage climate had been so laid-back, almost to the point of insensibility. Couples tend to do or say things "on the surface," without much thought of the deeper yearnings of their spouse that they used to easily respond to when they were still dating.

Sadly after marriage, the shooting stars and the magic of it all seemed to just fade away. The couples cease to think love, talk love, and act love in the same "wavelength" as before and oftentimes, this leads to fights whose consequences are irreparable. This is so, because couples have different "love languages" that need to be understood and met in order for the marriage to work. It is so much like you speaking Chinese as your primary language, and your spouse, Greek. No matter how hard you try, even if you learn quite a portion of the other language, one way or another, there would be junctures when intersubjective meanings what you have taken to mean for one thing is the same as what your spouse have construed or interpreted cannot simple materialize.

With that, Gary Chapman brings to the fore, the 5 Love Languages in order to help resuscitate a married life on its last legs. Though not, in itself, a panacea, Gary Chapman's work proffers practical steps that would aid married couples in finding the "real love" they thought they already lost and in living happily ever after.

## Love Language # 1: Words of Affirmation

### • **A Compliment Speaks a Thousand Words.**

Admiring comments come from almost everybody around you—your superior and colleagues at work, your friends, your parents, your children, and more. Yet at sundown, it is your spouse's flattering remarks that will essentially complete the day's "high." Yes, other people's praises do serve as launching pads that send you higher in attitude and performance, but your wife's/husband's compliments touch you and motivate you in a (special) way nobody else can. A life without your spouse's accolades is like bland food, missing out on that single ingredient but you cannot yet decipher what it is.

As you see in your mind's eye and observe with your heart, you would know relatively what is important to your spouse. If you see him embarking on a small business, express your approval by telling him what a brilliant idea he has. If you know your wife has the potential for writing, encourage her to submit her works to newspapers or magazines because there is always the possibility they might get published. If your husband is vying for a promotion, ease his anxiety by letting him know that he can make it and that you will be with him no matter what. If your wife is trying out a weight-loss program, inspire her more by telling her that she can achieve whatever she sets her mind on.

Gary Chapman avers that, "Most of us have more potential than we will ever develop. What holds us back is courage. But a loving spouse can supply the all-important catalyst."

• **Control That Cutting Tongue.** As a loving spouse, you must be cognizant of the destructive might of unkind words. When your wife/husband has wronged you, you dissolve anger with forgiveness and practice generosity of spirit. And just as you do not keep a record of wrongs and forgive the flaws of your spouse, you, too, must also be quick to admit your wrongdoing and ask forgiveness for it. A furious rejoinder in the midst of a fiery argument will only

make matters worse. But if you reciprocate anger with compassion and understanding, you become genuinely loving and reconciliation is not too far off.

In addition, most married couples are prone to conflict caused by bringing up past "issues." Real love does not condemn the person for what he/she has committed in the past. It goes with the acceptance that you and your wife/husband are not

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



**Gary Chapman** has traveled extensively around the world challenging couples to pursue healthy, growing marriages. His first book, *Toward a Growing Marriage* (Moody, 1979, 1996), began as an informal resource he gave to couples with whom he was counseling. Once officially published, this book became a blessing to thousands of people and helped launch Gary's popular "Toward a Growing Marriage" seminar.

Since 1979, Gary has written more than 15 books. His book, *The Five Love Languages* (Northfield Publishing, 1992, 1993), has sold 3 million copies in English alone and has been translated into 34 languages including Arabic and Hindi. He has also appeared on several television and radio programs and has his own daily radio program called "A Growing Marriage" that can be heard on more than 100 radio stations across the United States.

In addition to his busy writing and seminar schedule, Gary Chapman is a senior associate pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where he has served for 35 years. Gary and his wife, Karolyn, have been married for 45 years, have two adult children, and two grandchildren.

Gary Chapman is a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in anthropology from Wheaton College and Wake Forest University, respectively. He received M.R.E. and Ph.D. degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and has completed postgraduate work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Duke University.

To know more about the author, go to:  
<http://www.garychapman.org>

perfect. Yes, you cannot erase the past. Some vestiges of it may still be heartrending up to this day. But because you choose to love genuinely, you repair your brokenness with forgiveness, and with that, intimacy can be restored. As Gary Chapman puts it, "Forgiveness is the way of love."

- **Dispel Dominance.** Real love makes requests, not demands. When you tell your spouse what needs to be accomplished and do so by lashing out over-assertive words, even if you mean well, you inexorably make your spouse feel "stupid" and your words seem to belittle his/her know-how. But if you make a humble request to your spouse, you are affirming his/her worth and abilities. In the words of Gary Chapman, "you are in essence indicating that he/she has something or can do something meaningful and worthwhile to you." Thus, a gentle request becomes an expression of affirmation and real love.

## Love Language #2: Quality Time

- **Being Close Does Not Mean Being Together.** Two people sitting close to each other in a room are proximate, but they are not necessarily together. Togetherness involves a more intense connection between you and your spouse, a jiffy where your eyes speak volumes and you never have to say, "I love you," because your actions say it all. However, togetherness does not mean you have to consume all of your time gazing dreamily into each other's eyes. Togetherness means that you two are doing something in concert, giving your full, focused attention to the other person. You can engage in several activities that avow your enjoyment of each other's company. Spending time in a common pursuit indubitably communicates love and strengthens your "bonding" as husband and wife.

- **Talk Less. Listen More.** You and your spouse's togetherness may be enhanced by once in a while engaging in quality conversation, or what Gary Chapman calls, sympathetic dialogue. This is an opportunity for you and your spouse to share your

thoughts, experiences, feelings, and desires in a deeply personal, welcoming, uninterrupted context. Quality conversation is about giving your spouse full reign of what he/she wants to express, and you, in turn, would listen with your heart and give him/her your absolute understanding.

Most of the time, couples find it hard to listen to each other. When a wife bewails her woes in the workplace, a husband will more likely dispense pieces of advice, telling his wife that she should do this and that and ending it with a rather condescending statement, "If you will do what I advised you to do, you will not come crying to me again."

As a result, the wife is even more disheartened. She wanted to tell her husband about her problems at work and she expected him to listen and not add to her anxiety. On the other side of the coin, the husband really meant well. Because men are trained (and expected) to be more objective and less emotional, the husband's immediate response is, "Okay, here is what you're supposed to do."

Gary Chapman stresses that quality conversation goes beyond the exigencies of hearing what your spouse has to say. It involves considerate or supportive listening, something which a wife/husband must learn in order to keep the love alive.

## Love Language #3: Receiving Gifts

- **Gifts: A Remembrance, a Symbol of Love.** Not surprisingly, there are some husbands/wives whose spouses' primary love language is receiving gifts. With gifts, you make your spouse feel important, cherished and sweetly remembered. Recall that intimate moment when you brought flowers for your wife even if there were no occasion at all and she exclaimed in happiness with tears in her eyes. How about that birthday when you surprised your husband with the watch he has been eyeing on for months? How about sending him food for lunch, or buying her new pots for her kitchen? In all shapes and sizes, and notwithstanding the cost, gifts are

gestures of real love, and your efforts for getting them are priceless.

- **The Gift of Self.** What could be better than your gift of self, especially at times when your spouse needs you to be physically and emotionally present? There are ones-in-a-lifetime event in your life and there is no other person that you wish to be on your side but your spouse. It is during these times that real love is tested as well as your conviction to choose your spouse over whatsoever activity that equally requires your presence. Choosing to be with your spouse instead of attending an important meeting at work, or partying with your boss, is one ultimate proof of real love. It is a pure attestation that your spouse matters to you more than any other person or happening in the world.

## Love Language # 4: Acts of Service

- **In Everything You Do, Do It For Love.** Isn't it uplifting when once in a while you see your husband doing the laundry, or seeing your wife struggling to get a busted water pipe fixed? Isn't it so sweet when everyday your wife has the breakfast table set with scrumptious food so you could get a good meal before you go to work, or having your husband take a day-off so he could bring the kids to school, mow the lawn, repaint your sunroom, and go to the grocery? The list could go on with so many things that you do for your spouse and vice versa, dubbed as "acts of service."

When you know that acts of service form your spouse's primary love language, you also know that whatever you do for the house, or for the kids, or for her, would be appreciated and you, in turn would be loved in the most unimaginable ways. These simple deeds signify loads of caring and love for you spouse. They also reinforce your connection with each other and thus bring about a contented and peaceful married life.

## Love Language # 5: Physical Touch

- **Hold her when she cries.** Some men cannot bear to see their wives breaking into sobs. It's either they walk out of the room to smoke, let out a sermon, or go the fridge for an ice-cold drink. But the husband who is genuinely loving, will do nothing but to hold his wife in a tight embrace, run his fingers through her hair, kiss her head, stroke her hand, and make her feel safe in the power of his arms. Most women feel the overflowing love of their husbands through this comforting act, the touch alone assuring that everything will be fine. According to Gary Chapman, "a physical touch can make or break a relationship. It can communicate hate or love." At the time of crisis, nothing speaks of your love but to hold her close to your heart.

- **Touch as if it's always the first time.** The physical touch of your spouse is a great emotional booster, in the same manner as it is an indication that the flames of love the passion, the excitement, the heat is kept ablaze even after years of marriage. When you husband comes home from a stressful day at work, a soothing back massage could be the perfect antidote. When your wife also comes home from a rough day in the office, massaging her head in between kisses in her eyes would surely ease the strain.

Physical touch is also a very important factor prior to sexual intercourse. Some women tell tales of more powerful orgasms because their husbands were very intense in their touch. Similarly, men yearn to be touched in specific areas of their body and wives adept at doing so make husbands feel truly loved. Hence, to touch is also to convey love, comfort, and security. To break away from physical touch is tantamount to severing the emotional connection between you and your spouse.

## Revive Your Marriage: Know Your (and Your Spouse's) Love Language and Make it Work

There may be so many other ways by which you let your spouse know how much you love him/her, but the 5 love languages proffered in here are also of great merit and can right away be included in your list of "remedies." However, it must be remembered that knowing what your spouse's primary love language takes great time, effort, understanding, and emotional openness. Some couples took months. Some took years and have only realized their love language with the marriage at the brink of extinction. For you, there is no better time than now. Start being more attuned to the needs of your spouse. Take note of what generally makes him/her happy and what disappoints him/her, and tell your self that you will do everything in your power to try speaking the love language of your spouse as this will make the marriage happier and more secure.

With love, nothing is impossible. This is an old adage that to this day, affords couples with results better than ever. Yes it is true. As mentioned earlier, real love is a choice. You choose to be more patient in the midst of a stifling argument. You choose to be more tolerant even if dirty socks are all over your room. You choose to be more emotionally responsive even if you disdain crying. You choose to be more giving and more humble because you do not want the misunderstanding to escalate into a looming divorce. Whatever it is, you simply become a better person when you love genuinely.

Begin listening with your heart and opening your mind for cues. The love language of your spouse will not be very difficult to detect. For once you chance upon whichever of the 5 love languages thrashed out with your spouse glowing with more appreciation and love, you know that you hit it right and hit it well, and you also know that from then on, you will never let go.

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