



The Mentor's Guide to Using
The Five Love Languages



Using the Five Love Languages

I love *The Five Love Languages*. My wife and I find the concepts laid out by Gary Chapman to be extremely useful for couples at all relationship stages. Whether they're preparing for marriage, newly-wed or struggling, couples we've worked with have reported that understanding their spouse's love language helped them focus on finding new ways to demonstrate love to their spouse.



This guide is meant to help mentors, lay-leaders and pastors successfully leverage this great resource.

I first read *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman almost twenty years ago. My wife and I were struggling in our marriage. We both felt like we were trying and giving a lot, but it didn't seem to be working. I felt that I was constantly showing love to her and yet she didn't seem to feel it. How could that be? By reading the book, Michelle realized that her primary love language is words of affirmation and she didn't feel affirmed by me.

My response was, "What do you mean? I tell you I love you all the time."

She acknowledged that while that was good, she also needed me to tell her *what* I loved about her. Hmm... that was more challenging. I don't need much affirmation and the concept was foreign to me.

The book helped us to love each other more effectively. Since then, we have recommended this material to countless couples. I pray that this short guide will give you a few ideas on how to best leverage this great book.

About Connected Marriage

Connected Marriage is dedicated to equipping people who work with married couples with online interactive curriculum, surveys and customized reports that lead to healthier and stronger marriages. We pray that together, God will use all of us to encourage and equip couples through material that is Biblically based, psychologically sound, practical and effective.



Overview

If you have not read *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman, do that. This guide is not meant to be a substitute for reading the book.

However, I'll give a quick refresher if you haven't read the book for a while.

The Five Love Languages

Gary Chapman outlines five love languages. His premise is that we all have one primary and perhaps one secondary love language.

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



The challenge is when our partner speaks a different love language than we do.

My wife likes words of affirmation. She likes specific words, like me telling her that she did something well.

I love quality time. My wife tells me that I get grumpy if she doesn't spend time with me.

I used to spend time with Michelle without affirming her. In other words, I spoke my language to her. She didn't hear it. That wasn't love to her.

Michelle used to tell him how great I looked or that she appreciated my work around the house. It's nice, but it doesn't really speak love to me. She was speaking her love language.

The consequence? We both felt that we weren't being loved. Now, she has learned to set aside some time to talk to me and I have learned to give her compliments.

The core of *The Five Love Languages* is about opening a dialog about what will help you to feel loved and how to speak love.

Validate the Hurt

Couples usually meet with mentors because something isn't working. They are often hurt. When someone is in pain, it's hard to see the positive. They focus on what's hurting them. So, they blame their spouse for the pain.

As marriage mentors, we want to create a very safe place to talk about issues. So, we validate the hurt. This helps people to open up. It says that we understand.



Honestly, unless people feel that you are hearing their pain, it will be difficult to help them to refocus the conversation on how to build their bond.

Validating the hurt can be as simple as repeating their thoughts and feelings.

"It sounds like you're angry when your partner criticizes you. Is that right?"

"You feel ignored when your husband goes out with friends. Am I understanding?"

"I hear you saying that you are both hurt and angry. Neither of you is feeling loved at this moment. Am I getting it?"

Start with acknowledging the hurt that couple is experiencing.

Questions to ask:

- What is happening that is hurting your relationship?
- What aspects of your marriage do you find satisfying?
- What's not satisfying in your marriage?
- What is a situation that illustrates how you are not satisfied?

Focus on the Bond

Most couples come to marriage education because they want a better connection. They want to have a great relationship. They want to trust each other and to feel safe.

This becomes the focus of our conversation with them. How do you create a better marriage bond? How do you stay connected to each other, even when you are hurt?

As marriage coaches, we start by focusing the couple on their end goal – better connection.

When we set this goal up early in our meetings, we can refer people back to that objective. We frame this as one of our main goals.

The problem is that couples get stuck in their negative patterns.

John Gottman is one of the top marriage researchers in the world. His research found that happy marriages have five positive interactions for every negative interaction. They have a 5:1 ratio. Happy couples are better at creating a positive feeling inside of a relationship.

We explain that we want to help the couples to work through their negative interactions, but it's easier to start with increasing positive interactions. We want them to know that we are taking their pain seriously and we will work on it.

Many couples are thinking, "What about all the past offenses?"

If this comes up I'll say, "We'll get to the tough stuff, but it's far easier to add in more positive than to unwind the negative."

Questions to ask:

- How do you turn to your spouse for comfort, rescue, support and soothing?
- What do you do that improves your bond?
- What do you do that tears down your bond?
- What will be the impact if you continue to tear down your bond?
- What will be the impact if you work on building your bond?



Create Curiosity

There is a mattress company that has made a whole advertising campaign around asking, “What’s your sleep number?”

It’s brilliant. It raises curiosity and you want to know.

People love assessments and surveys. It gives them insight into themselves. We suggest that they go to the [5 Love Language website](#) and take the assessment.



Some couples are familiar with the book. Others are not. Some couples don't know their spouse's love language. Most couples have never really defined what specific actions communicate love.

The best part is of this conversation is that it acknowledges that people have different approaches to their needs. What works for one person, doesn't work for the other.

The approach also teaches that your spouse may be speaking love in a way that you can't understand. So, it opens up good intent. Your spouse may have great intent, but the two of you are not speaking the same language.

Questions to ask:

- What do you think your love language is?
- Do you have the same love language?
- How do you feel when your partner does speak your love language?
- What happens when you don't receive *insert love language?*
- What's the impact to your connection with each other?

Change the Conversation

We use *The 5 Love Languages* to change the conversation. Instead of focusing on blame and what the other person isn't doing, we want to focus on how to build connection.

The great thing is that it changes the dialog to what speaks love. Couples start to focus on specific actions each could take that would be meaningful.



Laura and Tom told us about how this helped them to change the conversation. Laura's love language was words of affirmation. She didn't feel that she was given much affirmation and she had turned very critical of her husband.

The week after hearing our talk, Laura was making dinner. She ran out of milk. Tom jumped up and said he'd go to the store. As he drove away, Laura realized that Tom was always doing those things. Laura realized that Tom was showing love with acts of service. She thought back over their 20 years of marriage and she realized that Tom was expressing love to her, but she never heard it.

Laura and Tom's experience changed their attitudes. They realized that they needed to work on actions that their partner could hear. They also realized that they had misjudged each other's intent.

It changed their conversation.

Questions to ask:

- What positive actions do you do that your partner doesn't seem to appreciate?
- Are you speaking your love language to them and they aren't hearing it?
- How does your partner speak love to you in a way you don't hear?
- Do you ever feel that your spouse isn't speaking your language? How do you react?
- How would you feel if your partner tried to speak your language?

Focus on Specific Actions

I like using *The Five Love Languages* because it allows you, as a mentor, to talk about specific actions that show love. The action steps can get very practical.

Since the dialog focuses on what each person's love language is, it works for both of them. How can each person work to show each other love in practical ways?

We often have couples take this down to a detailed level. If your love language is affirmation, what makes something affirming? When isn't it affirming? Are there particular times that you feel affirmed? Specific areas?

We'll ask couples to be sure that they point out when their partner does it right. Your spouse may not know when they are doing something well. We explain that your partner needs a feedback mechanism to know when it's working.

We have found this to be a great way to help couples create more positive interactions that build their bond.

I like it because it gets very practical.

Questions to ask:

- You identified your love language as insert love language. What is a specific action that expresses that to you?
- What is an example of a time that your partner did it really well?
- Is there a small, every day thing that would express love to you?
- Your partner identified their love language as insert love language. What is one action that you could do this week that would communicate love to your partner?
- How many times this week will you commit to doing it?



Conclusion

Let me sum this up by repeating these simple steps:

- Validate the hurt
- Focus on the bond
- Create curiosity
- Change the conversation
- Focus on specific actions

The really exciting part of is that if a couple takes a few small actions it can have a huge impact.

We once had a woman stand up in one of our classes and say, "It's amazing what a little understanding can do." Guess what? Her love language was quality time and her husband committed to sitting down and just listening to her.

Another couple told us that they had been very disconnected to each other. They decided that they would spend one minute every day just holding each other. Initially, they had to time it. After a while, they extended the time. They credit that action with saving their marriage.

When we told that story, another guy came up to me and said that before going to sleep, he and his wife decided that they would hold hands. It's had a bit impact on them. I asked him, "What's your love language?" Of course, it was physical touch.

These small actions can create a positive feeling in the relationship that builds connection.

Are there other deeper issues that sometimes need to be addressed? Of course.

The really cool part is that anyone can learn to help a couple improve marriage satisfaction. If you are compassionate, able to learn a few techniques, willing to listen and able to pray with and for others, you can have a big impact!

Connected Marriage is committed to training you with resources, tips and tools that can help you to educate other couples on proven concepts that will impact their marriage satisfaction.

Reference:

Chapman, Gary D. *The 5 love languages: the secret to love that lasts*. Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2015. Print.

