

Marriage

Love Languages

"Hell is other people", Jean-Paul Sartre, Huis Clos, 1944.

In an ideal world, everyone would be like us, surely? That's why Sartre's famous quote is so insightful. Many of the conflicts we experience in marriage are because our partner is not like us. Understanding their differences can deepen our communication together.

In his book 'The Five Love Languages', Gary Chapman suggests that each of us has a slightly different 'picture' of love and what it means and feels like to 'be loved.' If we can learn this 'language', our partner can feel loved in a deeper way. He identified 5 individual ways people can receive love:

1. Words of Affirmation

...looking at them with respect and takes the time to say words that affirm, encourage and make them feel of value. Words like that transform or maintain their view of themselves. When they hear those words, they feel appreciated, affirmed and valued.

2. Quality Time

...deliberately creating little moments of quality time during the day. Little moments when their partner stops what they're doing and gives their total attention. And by creating these little moments of quality time it sends the message I value you. I want to be with you.

3. Tokens

...when their partner makes the effort to give them gifts, not big and extravagant gifts, it may be something little or something made - just little expressions of the heart that say I've been thinking about you – and I love to see you smile and realise how much I value you.

4. Acts of Service

...when their partner helps them or tirelessly carries on **supporting them through hard work and by everyday acts of care and loving service**. Their partner may not be the most expressive person in the world but you know they are cherished because he or she is always constantly working and doing those things that show you that you are loved and valued.

5. Touch and Affection

They know that they are valued when their partner makes the effort to be close and to convey the warmth of love through the reality of touch and affection. When their partner makes the time to touch them with willing and genuine love, they feel accepted, loved and valued.

What about your partner?

Most of us make the mistake of giving love in the way that we long to receive it. We assume that our partner speaks the same 'love language' that we do. We then get confused and hurt when we give according to what works for us and our partner doesn't appreciate it or respond. This is normally because our love language is different to theirs and we're not loving them in the way that they need.

All of us are self-centred - Marriage is the joining together of two self-centred people which means that marriage is never easy – but it is made easier when, with God's help, we leave our self-absorption behind and we try to notice and understand how our partner thinks and then respond in the way that makes them feel most loved.

For discussion together:

- Do you know what your love language is?
- Reading each of these descriptions, which one resonates with you?
- Can you identify your partner's love language?

Love in action:

Have a go at using your partners 'love language' when you want to express love and affection to them.

What difference does it make to communicate love in the way they best receive?