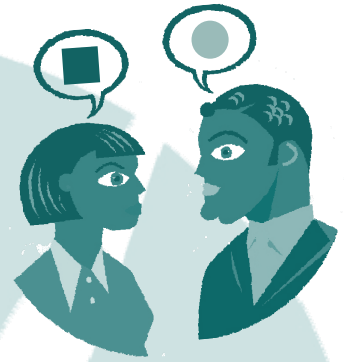


# What LANGUAGE does your spouse speak?

Marriage  
Tips  
Series



■ by Kimberly Kooyenga, MSW, Licensed Social Worker

**T**he old saying that “men are from Mars and women are from Venus” may seemingly ring true in many marriages when it comes to communication. Sometimes no matter how hard you try to show your spouse that you love him or her, your partner doesn’t get the message. You may start thinking, “What am I doing wrong? Why doesn’t my spouse understand?”

The truth is that what you express to be love may not be perceived as love by your spouse. For a woman, folding laundry and preparing lunches may be an expression of love. For a man, physical intimacy may be his expression of love. Each person prefers to be loved and demonstrates love in his or her unique way. You and your spouse probably don’t prefer to receive or express love in the same way. The question arises, then, how can spouses learn to understand each other’s preferred language? The answer to that question starts by identifying the variety of ways spouses demonstrate love.

## MARRIAGE TIP | Know Your Spouse’s Love Language

Gary Chapman explains differences in people’s preferences for love in his book [The Five Love Languages](#). He identifies five main ways that individuals prefer to get and give expressions of love:

- Quality time,
- words of affirmation,
- gifts,
- acts of service,
- and physical touch.

Quality time includes things like date nights and uninterrupted conversations. Words of affirmation can include compliments and encouraging words. Homemade items, flowers or jewelry would be appropriate for a spouse who prefers gifts. Acts of service include completing chores or “honey-do” lists and doing little favors. Massages, cuddling on the couch, and holding hands are all ways to show love with physical touch.

If you do not know your preferred love language, think about how you try to demonstrate your love to your spouse and what you most frequently ask from your spouse. Chances are good that whatever you do to show love to your spouse and whatever you ask most from your spouse, you wish your spouse would do regularly to show love.

It is important that you also know your spouse’s love language. Knowing your spouse’s love language can close the communication gap, so you no longer feel as though you are communicating with someone from a different planet. Ask your spouse what things you do that are the most meaningful to him or her and what he or she wishes you would do more often. Also, pay attention to the things your spouse asks of you. Once you identify their preferred love language, you can take steps to demonstrate love in their language and watch as your spouse finally gets your heartfelt message. ■



Kimberly Kooyenga sees clients in our Evergreen Park and South Holland offices

Chapman, G. (2004). *The Five Love Languages*. Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing.

Twenty-five percent of the people who come to Chicago Christian Counseling Center come for marital or couple counseling.

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