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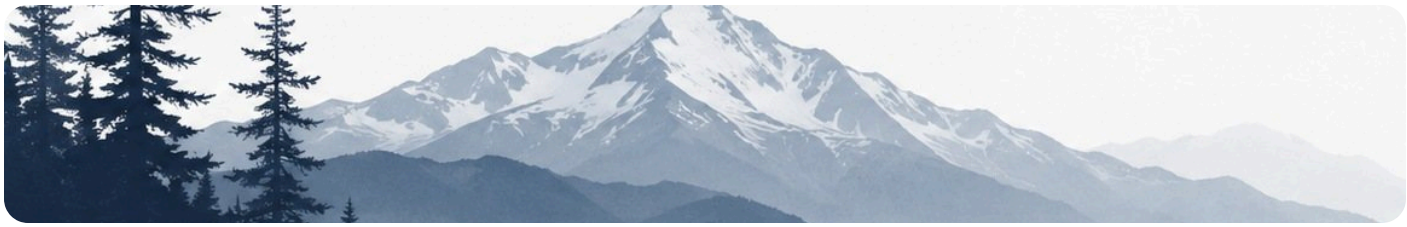
CLIENT HANDOUT



COUPLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Five Love Languages

How you show love, how you like to receive it, and how to talk about the difference.

Most couples aren't short on love. They're often expressing it in ways that don't land. One partner shows love by fixing the leaky faucet. The other is waiting to hear "I'm proud of you." Both are trying, and both end up feeling unseen.

Counselor and author Gary Chapman described five common ways people give and receive love. Most of us lean toward one or two, and we tend to give love the way we'd most like to get it. That's where the misses happen.

Use this handout as a communication tool. It gives the two of you shared words for what makes each of you feel cared for, so you can ask for it plainly and notice when your partner is already trying.

Read the five languages on page 2. Fill out the checklist on page 3 on your own, one copy each. Then sit down together with the conversation guide on page 4.

QUICK REFERENCE

The five at a glance

LANGUAGE	SOUNDS LIKE	FEELS LIKE A MISS
Words of affirmation	"I noticed how hard you worked on that."	Harsh criticism, or good effort that goes unmentioned.
Quality time	Phones down, a walk together, a real conversation.	Being half-listened to. Plans that keep getting canceled.
Receiving gifts	A small thing that says "I thought of you."	Forgotten occasions, or gifts that show no thought.
Acts of service	Taking on the task they dread, without being asked.	Promises to help that don't happen.
Physical touch	A long hug, a hand on the back, sitting close.	Pulling away. Long stretches without contact.

A tool, not a test.

Most people value all five, and research hasn't shown that couples need matching languages to be happy. Use your results to start a conversation, not to settle one.

Not an excuse.

"That's just not my language" isn't a reason to stop trying. Learning what your partner needs takes practice, and the effort itself says something.

It can change.

Stress, a new baby, illness or grief can change what you need. Check in with each other again when life shifts.

✳ PART ONE

The five languages

Each language has its own dialects. The goal isn't to guess. It's to learn what yours and your partner's actually look like.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Say it out loud

Spoken or written words that say you see them and value them: thanks, compliments, encouragement, "I love you." For this person, one sincere sentence can carry them for days. Specific beats general. "You handled that call with your mom really well" lands harder than "You're great."

TRY A note in their bag. Thanks for something ordinary. Praise in front of other people.

HURTS MOST Criticism, sarcasm, and effort that no one mentions.

QUALITY TIME

Give your full attention

Being in the same room isn't the same thing. Watching the game while half-listening doesn't count. Quality time means real conversation, where you listen to understand instead of to fix, and doing things together that build shared memories.

TRY Phones away at dinner. A walk with no agenda. Ask a question and let them finish.

HURTS MOST Distraction, canceled plans, being listened to with one ear.

RECEIVING GIFTS

Show you were thinking of them

A gift is something they can see and hold that says they were on your mind. It isn't about money. A flower from the yard, their favorite snack, a song you sent because it reminded you of them. Showing up for them on a hard day is a gift too. If spending feels hard for you, think of it as investing in the relationship.

TRY Keep a running list of things they mention wanting. Mark the dates that matter to them.

HURTS MOST Forgotten occasions and last-minute, thoughtless gifts.

ACTS OF SERVICE

Lighten their load

Every chore takes time, planning and energy, and taking one on says "I've got you." Find out which tasks matter most to them. A partner who wanted the laundry done may not register the clean garage, however long it took. Do it because you want to, not to keep score. Help that comes with resentment doesn't feel like love.

TRY Ask, "What's one thing I can take off your plate this week?" Then follow through without reminders.

HURTS MOST Broken promises to help, or being left to carry it all.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Close the distance

Hugs, holding hands, a hand on the shoulder, sitting close. For many couples, sexual connection is part of it, but only one part. In a crisis, a long hug can say more than any advice. Everyone's dialect is different, so ask what kind of touch feels good, and when. Touch is only loving when it's welcome. Ask, and respect the answer.

TRY Hug hello and goodbye, and hold it a few seconds longer. Sit close on the couch.

HURTS MOST Pulling away, or long stretches with no contact.

BEYOND THE FIVE

Other ways people show love

Five categories don't cover everyone. The checklist includes a few more: humor, food, advice, and being asked for your opinion. If one of these matters a lot to you, say so.

One common mismatch: one partner shows care with advice and solutions, and the other wants to be heard first. Try asking, "Do you want me to help fix it, or just listen?"

WE GIVE WHAT WE WANT TO GET

Most people show love in the way they'd like to receive it. That feels generous, and it often is, but it can miss. If you keep doing kind things and your partner still feels unloved, you may be speaking your language instead of theirs.

✳ PART TWO

Your love language checklist

Fill this out on your own before you compare. Print a copy for each of you. Check every statement that fits, then star your top three in each column.

NAME _____ DATE _____

	COLUMN A How I like to show love	COLUMN B How I like to be shown love	KEY
1	☐ With humor.	☐ With humor.	O
2	☐ Saying “I love you” or “I care about you.”	☐ Hearing “I love you” or “I care about you.”	W
3	☐ Giving notes and cards.	☐ Getting notes and cards.	W
4	☐ Touch and affection in private.	☐ Touch and affection in private.	T
5	☐ Through food.	☐ Through food.	O
6	☐ Giving gifts.	☐ Getting gifts.	G
7	☐ Doing things together.	☐ Doing things together.	Q
8	☐ Giving advice or suggestions.	☐ Getting advice from my partner.	O
9	☐ Taking care of my partner when they’re sick.	☐ Being taken care of when I’m sick.	A
10	☐ Offering to do things for my partner.	☐ When my partner offers to do things for me.	A
11	☐ Saying words of appreciation.	☐ Hearing words of appreciation.	W
12	☐ Asking for and valuing my partner’s opinion.	☐ Having my opinion asked for and valued.	O
13	☐ Touch and affection in public.	☐ Touch and affection in public.	T
14	☐ Sharing thoughts and feelings together.	☐ Sharing thoughts and feelings together.	Q

W Words of affirmation **Q** Quality time **G** Receiving gifts **A** Acts of service **T** Physical touch **O** Other ways

READING YOUR RESULTS

This isn’t scored. Some languages have more statements than others, so don’t count. Look at where your checks cluster, which of your starred items you’d miss most, and how your two columns compare.

Think it over

- ✳ What are the top three ways you like others to show they care about you?
- ✳ Where do you think those preferences came from? How was love shown, or not shown, in the home you grew up in?
- ✳ How might they differ in a romantic relationship compared with friends or family?
- ✳ Compare your two columns. Do you show love the same way you like to receive it?
- ✳ Think of a long-term relationship. Did each of you show care the way the other preferred? How did that affect the relationship?

✳ PART THREE

Talking about it together

Knowing your languages only helps if you use them. Set aside 30 minutes when neither of you is rushed, tired or already upset.

THE CONVERSATION

START HERE

Share your top three

Take turns sharing the three you starred in Column B. The listener reflects it back: “So you feel most loved when…” No debating and no defending yet. Just listen.

CREDIT

Name what’s already working

Tell your partner one thing they already do that lands. Most couples are doing more right than they realize, and starting there makes the rest easier to hear.

COMPARE

Look for the gaps

Lay your checklists side by side. Where does one of you give love in a way the other doesn’t especially need? Where is something you want going unnoticed? Get curious, not critical.

MAKING IT STICK

REQUESTS

Make it specific

“Spend more time with me” is hard to act on. “Twenty minutes on the couch after the kids are down, phones in the kitchen” is easy. Give each other a few small, doable requests.

WORDING

Ask, don’t accuse

“I feel loved when you…” opens a door. “You never…” starts a fight. These are requests, not a report card, and nobody gets graded on last month.

SMALL MOMENTS

Notice the reach

Partners reach for each other in small ways all day: a comment, a sigh, a hand on the arm. Turning toward those moments matters more than grand gestures.

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

Speaking your partner’s language may feel awkward at first, especially if it isn’t how love was shown where you grew up. That’s normal. Keep at it. And when your partner tries yours, notice it out loud, even if it isn’t perfect yet.

Our Love Language Plan

MY TOP THREE

MY PARTNER’S TOP THREE

THREE THINGS I’LL DO THIS WEEK IN MY PARTNER’S LANGUAGE

WHEN WE’LL CHECK BACK IN

BRING IT TO SESSION

If these conversations keep turning into arguments, or one of you feels like you’ve stopped trying, bring it in. We can work through it together.

This tool is for relationships that feel safe. If you’re afraid of your partner, or being controlled or hurt, reach out for support. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is free and confidential: call **1-800-799-7233** or text **START to 88788**.

If you’re in crisis, call or text **988** (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24/7) or call **911**.

✳ Educational material, not a substitute for clinical care. Based on Gary Chapman’s The 5 Love Languages. Checklist adapted from George Roleder’s “Two Sides of Affection” (FAMLAB, 5th edition, 1987). Turning toward small moments draws on John Gottman’s research on bids for connection. On the research behind love languages: Impett, Park and Muise (2024).