

Love Translated

UNDERSTANDING THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES®

Love can feel akin to speaking a foreign language at times, but The 5 Love Languages® can provide a much-needed translation guide



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Gary Chapman, PhD, is a well-known marriage counsellor. *The 5 Love Languages®* is one of Dr Chapman's most popular titles, selling over 20 million copies, and has been translated into 50 languages.

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WORDS EMMA GREEN

Love is a universal human need, yet everyone experiences it differently. Some people feel loved through cuddles, while others crave heartfelt words or meaningful time together. When these preferred expressions of love fail to appear in relationships, romantic or otherwise, it can leave the hopeful recipient feeling unloved, frustrated and resentful. Have you ever found yourself saying to a partner, 'I do so much for you, but you

don't appreciate it'? Or perhaps you've felt repeatedly neglected, even when your partner believes that they're doing their best to show you they love you. The issue may not necessarily be a lack of love but rather, a mismatch in love languages.

What is a love language?
Love languages describe the different ways people interpret love. Just as we speak different languages across cultures, we also 'speak' different emotional languages when it comes to how we show care, affection

and appreciation. The concept was first introduced in 1992 by pastor and marriage counsellor Dr Gary Chapman in his book, *The 5 Love Languages®: The Secret to Love That Lasts*. According to Dr Chapman, we each have a preferred way

“LOVE LANGUAGES DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENT WAYS PEOPLE INTERPRET LOVE”



THE 5 LOVE LANGUAGES®

WHAT'S YOUR LOVE LANGUAGE?

The quickest way to figure out your primary love language is to take an online quiz (you will find one for free at 5lovelanguages.com). If you are still unsure, reflect on the following questions for further clarification:

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL MOST LOVED IN A RELATIONSHIP?

Think about the moments when you felt truly cared for. What was happening in those moments? Your strongest emotional memories can give clues to your most-valued love language.

HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY SHOW LOVE TO OTHERS?

Do you like to write sweet notes, give gifts or offer physical comfort? Pay attention to which type of actions make you feel most fulfilled and connected. Sometimes, the way we express love can be a clue as to how we like to receive it.

WHAT HURTS YOU THE MOST IN A RELATIONSHIP?

Pay attention to what you complain about most. Do you wish that people would compliment you more, spend more time with you or make more of an effort to celebrate your special moments?

WHAT DO YOU REQUEST MORE OFTEN FROM OTHERS?

Whether it's asking for a cuddle, a few minutes to talk or help around the house, repeated requests can often point to your emotional needs.

It was during a counselling session with a married couple of 30 years that it first dawned on Dr Chapman that what makes one person feel loved doesn't necessarily make the other feel the same:

"The lady said to me, 'Dr Chapman, let me tell you the problem. I don't feel any love coming from him. We are cordial, but we are like roommates living in the same house. He does his thing. I do my thing. I just feel empty'.

"I looked at the husband, and he said to me, 'I don't understand her. I do everything I can to show her that I love her. I don't know what else I can do'.

"I said, 'What do you do to show your love to her?'.

"He said, 'Well, I start the evening meal. Sometimes I have it ready when she gets home. I wash the dishes every night. On Thursday night, I vacuumed the floors. On Saturday, I washed the car, I mowed the grass, and I helped her with the laundry. I do all of that, and she says she doesn't feel loved'.

"I looked back at her, and she said, 'He's right. He is a hardworking man, but we don't ever talk. We haven't talked in 20 years. He's always mowing the grass, washing the dishes and vacuuming the floors'.

"And I realised here was a sincere husband who was loving his wife the best way he knew how, but he was not connecting with her emotionally."

After hearing similar stories in his office from other frustrated couples, Dr Chapman soon realised he was witnessing a pattern. Reading back through several years worth of counselling notes, he wondered, 'When someone says they feel as if their spouse doesn't love them, what is it they actually want?'

His answers fell into five categories, which he would later identify as *The 5 Love Languages*®.

Words of affirmation

People with this preferred love language feel most loved when they receive expressions of affection or appreciation - either through spoken or written words. Compliments, declarations of gratitude or saying simple phrases such as 'I love you' or 'You mean so much to me' can strengthen the emotional bond between the receiver who values these kind words and the giver. Examples of this love language in action can include sending heartfelt texts, leaving thoughtful handwritten notes for someone or praising a partner's achievements.

Just as a preferred love language has the power to uplift a recipient, its opposite has the potential to crush them. Being on the receiving end of criticism can be painful for anyone, but for those who

thrive on words of affirmation, a harsh comment can be deeply hurtful to them.

Physical touch

For people with this love language, touch communicates warmth, comfort and security. It's not just about sexual intimacy, although that may be part of it. It's about the physical expressions of affection in everyday life, which may include hugs, handholding, pats on the back, high-fives, playful nudges, kisses, or just being close to someone.

Hence, physical neglect can leave someone who values touch feeling emotionally abandoned, even if all the other love languages are being communicated.

Quality time

For those who value quality time, it's not just about someone being there - it's about them being emotionally present, too. They crave connection and intentional, meaningful moments together, and distractions like phones, TV or multitasking can diminish this experience. Some examples of this language in action may include going on walks together, planning a weekend getaway or engaging in a shared hobby or project.

Cancelled plans, distracted conversations or a lack of attention can make someone who values this language feel unimportant or disconnected from their partner.

Dr Chapman describes how one woman he encountered during his counselling sessions yearned for quality time with her partner: 'She said to me, 'We don't ever talk'. She didn't mean they didn't discuss logistics, such as who was going to take the kids to school or which restaurants to go to. She meant, 'We don't ever have any sit-down time or look at each other or share our dreams and hearts with one another'.'

Acts of service

For some, actions truly do speak louder than words. They value helpful gestures that ease their burden, such as someone

doing the dishes, making a meal or running an errand for them. They might not need to hear 'I love you' as often as others because they appreciate concrete demonstrations of love where they feel supported.

A broken promise or someone neglecting to follow through on something they said they would do can be deeply hurtful for those whose primary language is acts of service, as they may interpret this as a sign of disrespect or as a lack of consideration.

Receiving gifts

For other people, receiving a well-chosen gift, a meaningful token, or a surprise treat can make them feel cherished. It communicates that you were thinking about them, even when you weren't together. It's not about materialism; it's about the gesture itself and the care and effort put into the gift. Some examples of this language in action can include bringing home a souvenir from a trip, looking out for clues of things that they like and reflecting this in your gift choice, or even something as simple as leaving a flower or card on their desk.

Forgetting a special occasion, such as a birthday or an anniversary or giving them a thoughtless gift can be more painful to those with this love language than others. To them, it can feel as if they have been forgotten or are unimportant.

Dr Chapman uses the analogy of the 'love tank' alongside the love languages to describe a person's emotional wellbeing in their relationships. When a partner conveys love in the other's dominant love language, it fills their tank. Conversely, if someone doesn't receive the right kind of fuel (or love, in this case), just like a car, their tank will run low, or worse, it could damage the relationship.

What influences our chosen love language?

Although there is no definitive answer to this question, our preferred love language appears to be shaped by a rich tapestry of experiences, personality, culture and emotional needs.

Our earliest relationships, especially those with caregivers, can have a profound impact on how we experience love. The way our parents modelled love can often set a template for how we learn to both give and receive love. If a child grew up with a lot of verbal encouragement, they might naturally crave or even expect words of affirmation in their relationships.

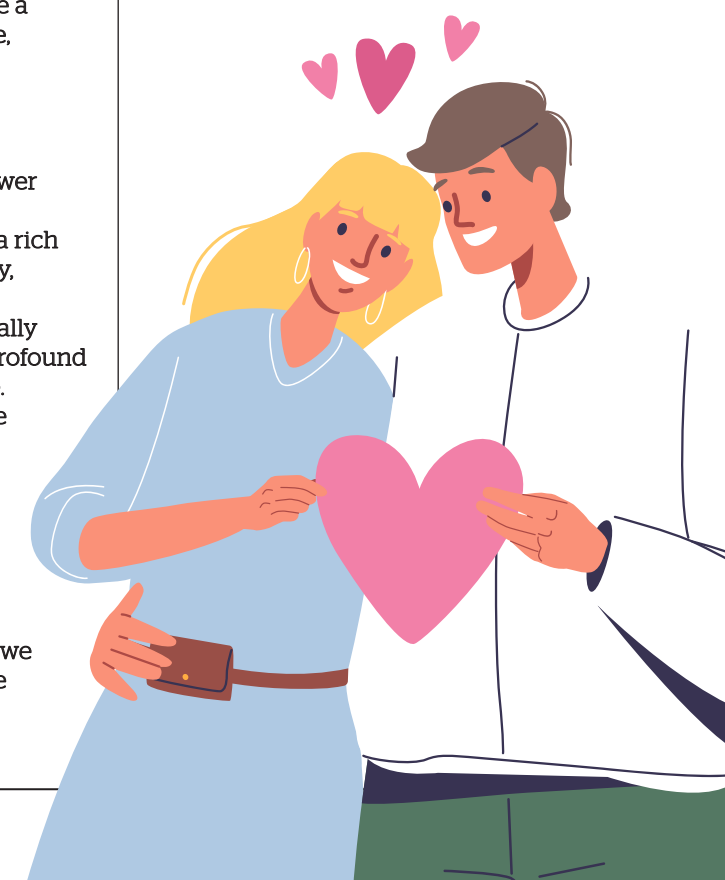
Another proposed theory is that we crave that which we did not receive as a child. Somebody with a deep-

seated need for validation, for example, may crave verbal acknowledgment because it affirms their sense of self-worth, while someone deprived of attention may value quality time. Others believe that the type of attachment style we develop in early childhood can influence how we seek out love and reassurance. For instance, someone with an anxious attachment style may crave frequent words of affirmation or physical touch in order to feel secure.

Temperament can also play a role in shaping our love language preferences. For example, an extrovert might feel energised by public declarations of praise, whereas an introvert, who might prefer one-on-one quality time, might recoil in horror at such a broadcast.

The culture we are brought up in also shapes how we show love. The cultural norms of Latin America and Mediterranean countries, for instance, encourage physical contact, whereas East Asian customs dictate a much more formal approach towards social interactions. This cultural context, therefore, can heavily influence what love languages people grow up feeling more comfortable with. "The dialects of the love languages will vary from culture to culture, but they are all common to human nature," Dr Chapman tells *Psychology Now*. "There are some cultures where when you greet somebody, you kiss them on both cheeks. We don't do that here in America, but it's a dialect of physical touch."

The societal gender expectations, family traditions, religion and community in which we are raised can all shape how love is communicated and experienced, too. Some societies encourage men >>



“OUR LOVE LANGUAGE IS SHAPED BY EXPERIENCES, PERSONALITY AND NEEDS”



to show love through acts of service rather than through verbal or physical sentiment. Furthermore, if you grew up in a physically tactile family, then it will seem second nature to express love through touch compared to those reared in a less physically affectionate environment.

The benefits of learning each other's love language

Understanding the way you most naturally express and receive love is a powerful step towards greater self-awareness. The more you recognise your own emotional needs, the better you can articulate them to others.

Learning the love languages of the key players in your life can utterly transform your relationships with them. When you express love in a way that the other truly understands, you create a stronger emotional bond - and it can be the difference between loving someone and making them feel loved.

It can also greatly reduce misunderstandings and feelings of frustration that arise from mismatched love languages. Once you understand your loved one's primary language, you

can stop pouring energy into gestures that don't land. Instead, you can meet their needs much more effectively.

Learning each other's languages can also be an opportunity for growth. Learning to speak your loved one's preferred language, especially when it doesn't come naturally to you, requires effort - but that effort is what makes it meaningful. And over time, you might even find your love languages expanding, not just in what you want, but in what you're able to give.

When your partner feels emotionally fulfilled, they are more likely to respond in kind and make an effort to learn your language, too. Even if they don't seem receptive at first, the love languages can be a useful blueprint for transforming a lacklustre relationship:

"I've seen many marriages turned around where it felt like there was no hope because the other person wouldn't even talk about the marriage," says Dr Chapman. "The husband won't come for counselling or read the book, and the wife asks, 'Where do I go from here?'. And I would often say, 'Before you give up, would you be willing to do an experiment with

me? What if we figure out your husband's primary love language and you speak it at least once a week for six months and see what happens?'. Usually, three to four months in, the husband will warm up, and before the six months are over, he's asking about her love language and speaking it. That's because there are not many people who can turn away from unconditional love that's given in a language that's meaningful to them over a period of time."

It is important to note though, that the love language framework is a tool, not a cure. It is not a fix for deep-seated issues like abuse, neglect, infidelity or fundamental incompatibility. It shouldn't be used to excuse toxic behaviour or provide an obligation to constantly perform love to earn someone's affection. It can also potentially risk turning love into a checklist or being weaponised for self-gain:

"I think that most people who read the book are, by nature, thinking more about themselves than they are their spouse," says Dr Chapman. "I've had people say, 'I've been speaking my husband's love language for three weeks now and they're not speaking mine back'. And I say, 'That's manipulation. You're speaking their language just so they will speak yours. Love needs to be unconditional - you're loving them because you want to meet their needs.'"

Can you have more than one love language?

"I think typically, there is one that will stand out above the others," says Dr Chapman. "But there are people who tell me that they took the Love Languages quiz and two of them scored equally. And I say, 'That's okay, we'll just call you bilingual - that means either one of those languages is going to speak deeply to you'. It is then the other person's job to speak them both because if they only speak the one, they're not going to touch their partner as deeply compared to if they're fluent in both."

All five of the love languages will resonate with most people on some level, so it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly which one speaks the strongest to you. You may have identified your primary love language yet feel as if there are several others that are important to you, too.

Different relationships can also highlight these different language needs. With a romantic partner, you might prioritise physical touch and quality time, but with close friends, words of affirmation and acts of service might feel more meaningful to you.

Remember, you don't need to contain yourself within one single category. Instead, having multiple love languages

“ LEARNING TO SPEAK YOUR LOVED ONE'S PREFERRED LANGUAGE REQUIRES EFFORT ”

FIGURING OUT ANOTHER'S NATIVE LANGUAGE

NOTICE HOW THEY EXPRESS LOVE

Are they always doing things to help others? Are they physically affectionate? Someone's natural tendencies can give you insight into their emotional priorities.

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT THEY MOAN ABOUT

What do they say is 'missing' in your relationship? Frustration can be a powerful clue as to what someone wants emotionally but feels they're not getting. Instead of taking complaints to heart, try to hear the deeper need behind them.

OBSERVE THEIR REACTIONS

Try expressing all five love languages over a period of time. Notice what they tend to express gratitude for, as this can tell you what speaks most to their heart.

ASK THEM OUTRIGHT

The love languages provide an opportunity for deep, honest communication. If they are willing, encourage them to take the quiz or ask them questions such as, 'What makes you feel most loved by me?' or, 'Is there something you wish I did more often?'.

can provide a more nuanced view of your emotional needs to those who love you.

Can the way you express love be different from how you wish to receive it?

"I think for most people, the language they speak naturally to others is the one they want to receive," says Dr Chapman. "However, some people will speak one language, but what they want to receive is different. A possible explanation for this is that, perhaps in childhood, they were taught there was a certain way you should express love to someone. For example, a lot of fathers will say to their sons, as they grow up, that they need to give gifts to women. And so, they do this because that was what they were taught, not because they want gifts themselves."

It's quite normal for the love you crave to be different from the one you feel most comfortable showing. It is crucial, though, that you practise asking for love in the way that most resonates with you to bridge this gap. If you convey love through giving gifts but yearn for quality time, say, 'I really need some time together this weekend - it helps me feel connected'.

Can your love language change?

"I think our primary love language stays with us long-term, like most personality traits," says Dr Chapman. "However, I think there are seasons of life and circumstances where another love language may jump to the top. For example, for a mother of two preschool children, acts of service may not be her primary language, but during those years, they will probably be more important because she's overwhelmed and has so much to do. Or say, your spouse gets off the phone, having received news that their brother just died. Physical touch may not be their primary language, but for you to embrace them and let them cry may be the most powerful thing you can do in that moment to communicate to them that you love them."

Your preferred love language can evolve over time. What was important to you as an impressionable young adult might not be as important to you in your silver years. Experiences with partners, friends and family members can also influence the kinds of love we crave. If you have been in a relationship where one love language was lacking, you might find yourself valuing that language much more than you did previously.

"That's why I encourage couples to ask each other every three weeks or so, 'On a scale of zero to ten, how full is your love tank?'," says Dr Chapman. "If someone says less than ten, I encourage >>



the other to ask, 'What can I do today that would be most meaningful to you?.'

Children and the love languages

The beauty of *The 5 Love Languages*® is that it can be applied to most human relationships. The love languages framework is ultimately about building and maintaining meaningful connections, and this kind of emotional nourishment is vital not only in romantic love but also in the other relational ties that shape our lives. This could be no more apparent than when it comes to raising children.

"There are so many children who grow up feeling not loved, even though their parents do love them," says Dr Chapman. "The problem is [the parents] don't understand that their child has a primary love language and if they don't speak that language, they are not as effectively meeting their child's emotional need for love."

Discovering your child's love language is less about asking directly and more about observing patterns and preferences. Dr Chapman believes that by the time a child is four years old, you can discover their primary love language just by observing their behaviour. "My son's language is physical touch," he says. "When he was that age, I would come home from work and he would run to the door, grab my legs and climb on me. My daughter never did that. When she was that age, she would say, 'Daddy, come to my room. I want to show you something'. She wanted quality time and my undivided attention."

Along with watching how your child expresses love to you and noticing the

things they ask for most, pay attention to what excites them most. Are they happiest when they're opening a small surprise, they're being cuddled, they're being praised or you're spending time together? Another option is to offer them choices and see which they pick. Present different options like reading a story together, a hug or working on a task together. Their choices may reveal their inclination.

For children who thrive on words of affirmation, encouragement and specific praise can boost their confidence. Children who love physical touch may find comfort and security in holding hands or snuggling on the sofa. Those who value quality time may light up when you play together. A child whose language is receiving gifts doesn't necessarily need big presents, but small, thoughtful tokens like a note in their lunchbox can feel meaningful.

Finally, if a child connects most through acts of service, they might appreciate it when you help them with a tricky project or prepare them a favourite snack.

A child's love language can shift over time as they mature, and so you should adjust how you demonstrate your love to them accordingly. It is also important to be aware of emotional dynamics when first applying the love languages to your relationship with a child. "When it comes to stepchildren or an adopted child, sometimes people read the book and think because that kid's language is physical touch, they can just go and hug them, but that usually results in the kid stiffening up," says Dr Chapman. "They need to work their way up with a high five or a little tap on the shoulder first, and as they get to know you better and feel more comfortable with you, then eventually you get to hug them."

WHEN LOVE LANGUAGES MISALIGN

It's common to have a different love language from your significant other. The key is to learn each other's language and make an effort to regularly speak it. Love is a skill as much as it is a feeling. Just like learning any language, it takes patience, practice and intentionality.

The following steps will help you to overcome any differences and to start developing a shared vocabulary:

MAKE A CHEAT SHEET OF EACH OTHER'S NEEDS

Create a list of practical ways to express your loved one's language. It keeps things concrete and helps turn good intentions into meaningful actions.

HELP THEM TO UNDERSTAND YOUR LANGUAGE

People aren't mind-readers. Instead of waiting for them to guess, gently teach them what works for you. For example, you could say to them: 'I love how you always help around the house; it means a lot' or, 'Just so you know, I feel closest to you when you say kind things to me'.

AVOID KEEPING SCORE

You're not always going to get your love language spoken exactly how you like - and that's okay. A healthy compromise might be agreeing to set aside 30 minutes of distraction-free time each day (for the 'quality time' partner), followed by a cuddle on the couch (for the 'physical touch' partner). It's about weaving both your needs into the relationship - not tallying up points.



By observing and responding to your child's preferred love language, you not only make them feel seen and valued but you also model healthy ways of giving and receiving love, laying a foundation for strong relationships throughout their lives.

The neurodivergent love languages

While *The 5 Love Languages*® offers a helpful blueprint for understanding how we give and receive love, it doesn't always accurately reflect how neurodivergent people experience relationships. Sensory sensitivities and differences in communication styles, emotional regulation and social energy can all play a major role in how love is both interpreted and expressed in those whose brains function differently from the neurotypical population.

Physical touch, for example, may be overwhelming for someone with tactile sensitivity; quality time might be draining for someone with low social energy, whereas acts of service can go unnoticed if they don't match someone's executive challenges. This doesn't mean that neurodivergent people can't engage with the traditional love languages, but they may need to be adapted.

Fortunately, an expanded, more personalised framework was proposed in 2021, which better reflects the unique needs of neurodivergent individuals. In a viral tweet, writer and disabled advocate Amythest Schaber¹ introduced the concept of the '5 Neurodivergent Love Languages', which has since been widely adopted by the neurodivergent community. They are as follows:

INFORMATION SHARING (aka INFODUMPING)

A neurodivergent form of words of affirmation

This can include divulging special interests, hyperfixations or deep dives into favourite topics with others as a form of connection. While some people might see it as rambling, for neurodivergent folks, being able to excitedly share knowledge about a topic they're passionate about at great detail and length (and have somebody listen with both patience and interest) can be a sign of deep trust and emotional intimacy.

PARALLEL PLAY

A neurodivergent form of quality time

This is spending time together side-by-side while doing different things, such as reading, gaming



“DISCOVERING YOUR CHILD'S LOVE LANGUAGE IS ABOUT OBSERVING PATTERNS”

and crafting. It's comfortable companionship without the pressure for constant interaction. For neurodivergent people, being alone 'together' can provide connection without overstimulation.

SUPPORT SWAPPING (OR SHARING SPOONS)

A neurodivergent form of acts of service

Schaber describes this as "when ND [neurodivergent] people accommodate or support each other, like if I remind a friend to hydrate, and they ask me if I've taken my meds; or a friend helps me to write an email, and later I help them with homework, and so on." Because executive dysfunction is common with many forms of neurodivergence, practical help can be much more meaningful than romantic words or gifts.

DEEP PRESSURE

A neurodivergent form of physical touch

Deep pressure- or as Schaber refers to it, "Please crush my soul back into my body" - can be soothing to neurodivergent people who are sensory seeking. Physical compression through hugs, massages or weighted blankets, for example, can help to regulate an overwhelmed nervous system.

PENGUIN PEBBLING

A neurodivergent form of receiving gifts

Certain species of penguins present pebbles to potential mates as a sign of commitment, and it is a term that has been embraced within neurodivergent circles to describe the gifting of small trinkets of affection to one another. Schaber refers to this practice as "unconventional gift giving.»



sharing things that are valuable or interesting to you, or giving someone a thing you know they are interested in.” This could be an interesting rock you’ve found on the beach, a funny video, or even a meme. It’s a sweet, tangible way of saying, ‘I saw this and thought of you’. Schaber highlights that this list is not exhaustive and that there are infinite ways to give and receive love; however, this inventory does give us a glimpse of love through the neurodivergent lens. To quote Schaber, “go forth and gift rocks and/or memes, be alone together, get squished and just do you.”

Using the love languages for self-care

We so often give love generously to others but seldom offer ourselves the same care and kindness. *The 5 Love Languages®* reminds us that love isn’t only something we exchange with others – it’s also something we can give to ourselves.

The love languages can be powerful tools for cultivating self-love. Self-care, after all, isn’t just about bubble baths and face masks; it’s about consistently showing up for yourself, emotionally, mentally and physically. It can also be an effective

way of meeting your emotional needs without relying on others to fulfil them.

Furthermore, self-care isn’t a one-size-fits-all practice either, what refreshes or restores one person may leave another feeling flat. The goal isn’t to do everything, but to find the practices that fill your emotional tank sufficiently. The following is a brief guide on how to do just that – whether that’s through bringing more of your primary love language into your daily routine, adding in more of that which feels lacking, or creating a well-rounded self-care practice of all five languages for maximum nourishment. Remember, when you care for yourself, you also expand your capacity to love others.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Speak kindly to yourself
Words hold power, and the way you talk to yourself shapes your self-esteem. If this is your primary love language, self-love may start with the words you choose to say to yourself.

Self-care ideas:

- Start your day with affirmations like: ‘I am enough’, or ‘I’m doing the best I can’.

- Write affirmations on sticky notes and place them where you’ll see them daily.
- Record voice memos of affirming messages and play them back when you’re struggling.
- Keep a gratitude journal where you list things you appreciate about yourself.
- Watch out for negative self-talk – commit to replacing inner criticism with compassion.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Nurture yourself

For those who connect through touch, self-care for you might mean pampering your body and creating rituals of comfort.

Self-care ideas:

- Try self-massage or a weighted blanket for grounding.
- Care for your skin with gentle routines that feel luxurious rather than rushed.
- Practise yoga or stretching; move your body with care.
- Schedule regular grooming appointments and treatments like haircuts, facials and massages.
- Wear only clothes that make you feel good.

QUALITY TIME

Be present with yourself

If quality time is your love language, you thrive on intentional, undistracted connection. When it comes to self-care, it is about learning to enjoy your own company and slowing down enough to connect inward.

Self-care ideas:

- Go on solo dates – museums, the cinema, dining alone or retreats.
- Enjoy hobbies in solitude like reading, painting or baking.
- Create a regular ritual just for you – Saturday morning coffee, evening walks, and so on.
- Make space to check in with your emotions, needs and dreams through regular journaling or reflection.

“LOVE ISN’T ONLY SOMETHING WE EXCHANGE WITH OTHERS – IT’S ALSO SOMETHING WE CAN GIVE TO OURSELVES”

- Practise mindfulness, fully experiencing the moment without rushing.

ACTS OF SERVICE

Show up for yourself

When acts of service resonate with you, self-love is about embracing gentle discipline and doing things that are good for you. It’s the art of showing up for yourself in practical, thoughtful ways and creating systems, routines and actions that make life easier.

Self-care ideas:

- Batch cook on the weekend, so that you have meals ready for the rest of the week.
- Tackle that task that you keep putting off, such as decluttering your home.
- Make time in your schedule to work towards personal goals.
 - Book that overdue doctor’s appointment.
 - Create a security fund.

RECEIVING GIFTS:

Give yourself tokens of love

This love language doesn’t have to equate to expensive shopping sprees or lavish holidays. Giving yourself regular treats is a powerful reminder that you are worth celebrating – not just for accomplishments, but for simply existing.

Self-care ideas:

- Buy yourself the things you love – not just practical purchases.
- Gift yourself an experience from your bucket list, such as a city break or bungee-jumping.
- Give yourself permission to use the fancy dining set or the expensive candles that you’ve put by for a special occasion.
- Subscribe to a service that sends you something joyful regularly like a book club or flower delivery.
- Invest in tools that support your growth, like a course, fitness gear or art supplies.

The legacy of The 5 Love Languages®

Since its initial publication, *The 5 Love Languages®* has become something of a cultural phenomenon, embedding itself within the vernacular of popular psychology and even being given the Oprah seal of approval. “What motivated me to write the book was the possibility that I could help other couples that I would never have the time to see in my office,” says Dr Chapman. “Little did I know then that the book would sell over 20 million copies and be published in over 50 different languages.”

Although the book has been widely influential, it has also faced its fair share of criticism. Some critics have pointed to the lack of scientific backing behind Dr Chapman’s theory, stating that his findings are based purely on his clinical observations rather than rigorous empirical

research. The book’s vast popularity has led to extensive commercialisation, with some viewing it more as a self-help gimmick rather than a robust psychological theory. Others have argued that it reduces complex emotional needs and relationship dynamics to just five categories, oversimplifying how people experience love.

Despite all this, *The 5 Love Languages®* has managed to stand the test of time. More than 30 years on and the book is still selling hundreds of thousands of copies each year. “It is obviously still meeting a need and helping people,” says Dr Chapman. “My hope is that when people read it, the lights will come on and they will realise how they’ve been missing each other emotionally.”

With Dr Chapman’s long-awaited follow-up, *The Love Language That Matters Most*, being released in early 2026, it’s clear that the author’s legacy is firmly cemented in the cultural zeitgeist. “This new book is going to be about the different dialects within the love languages,” says Dr Chapman. “For those who have read the original book, this is going to help to fine-tune things.”

After all, love isn’t just about speaking the right language – it’s about choosing to love your partner in a way that makes sense to them. ■

