

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

PERSONAL COUNSELING CENTER

Relationship Workshop: Love Languages

Hey Everyone,

I hope you are all doing well, enjoying the sunshine and more importantly not getting sun burned. The Governor has now lifted the stay at home order for the most part so I hope you are taking advantage of connecting with others in person again (while minding social distancing). Unfortunately we can't get our hair cuts yet which for me means I am nearing my high school length of hair....it's not a good look.

I wanted to touch on the protests happening in our world in response to the killing of George Floyd and the system that enables these senseless acts of violence to happen against minorities in this country. Watching the George Floyd video as well as the coverage of the violence happening against peaceful protestors is very emotionally overwhelming. Please be mindful of how often you are consuming this kind of content and please please take care of yourself. I, as a straight white guy, really can't possibly even begin to understand what it is like to be part of a minority group in this country. I often tell my clients I have more privilege than I know what to do with. A person I admire greatly once told me "What is the point of having privilege if you don't use it to help others who don't?" To that end, I wanted to extend a hand to anyone reading this that may need help. I would love to listen, talk to, support, be present, and help you process anything that is going on in your head. I don't pretend to have answers but what I want more than anything is to give you a safe space where you can be open and we can work through how you are being impacted by all of this. Please let me know if I can help.

This week's topic is Love Languages. I hope that last week's newsletter laid some groundwork for communication within a relationship and this week we are going to talk about using those skills and applying it to my favorite relationship concept. I make it a point to teach all my couple clients this approach to relationships and haven't ever experienced a situation where it wasn't helpful. Love Languages are important not only for intimate relationships, but for friendships and parent-child relationships as well.

The theory of Love Languages was developed by Dr. Gary Chapman. He poses that we all show and experience love in five distinct ways: physical touch, words of affirmation, quality time, gift giving, and acts of service. Everyone has a primary love language and a secondary love language. The ultimate goal is to feel comfort in expressing and receiving love in all the different languages. We will go into each of them individually and talk about how they look in a relationship. The theory also poses that we

all have a metaphorical “love tank” or bucket that fills with love. When this bucket is full, we are happy, feel loved, and want to show those we care about love in return (in their love language). When this bucket is low, it is harder for us to show love to others and we also struggle with feeling that our partner/friend/parent, doesn’t love us. A good way to tell the level of your “love tank” is to think how close or connected do you feel to your partner? If you feel very connected with them and feel very loved then your bucket is likely full. However if you feel unloved or perhaps even have some negative feelings toward your friend then that could mean your tank is running low. Constant maintenance is needed to ensure that all parties are feeling loved. It is important to check in with our partners and ask, “How is your tank doing?”. “Are you feeling loved?” Regular check-ins will help insure both of you are feeling connected to the other.

The Five Love Languages

Physical Touch: As the name implies the physical touch love language is when people show love by touching one another. This can include sex in intimate relationships, but it doesn’t exclusively mean sex. In fact, anecdotally I have found that sex is only a small part to physical touch. People with this love language feel love when their partner hugs them, kisses them, holds their hand, spooning, cuddling. Any kind of physical contact will help fill a person’s love tank. For friendships this can look like hugs, high fives (tough with social distancing but still...) and non-romantic cuddling. In my experience most men are either primary or secondary physical touch people but that doesn’t mean women can’t also be physical touch.

Words of affirmation: People who are words of affirmation people love to hear you say “I love you” or “I appreciate you”. These people feel loved when they are told by their partner how they are valued. It can be challenging at times to show this love language if you are not a words of affirmation person. I have had clients feel that they are being disingenuous if they tell their partner they are sexy everyday. They were worried that saying it too often would take some of the meaning out of what they were saying. Words of affirmation people love to be told how you feel and why you love them. Trust that they will let you know if you are “over doing it”. Good ways to show these people love is to just tell them that you appreciate them and why. Compliment your friends. Tell your kids how awesome they are. Any positive verbal praise makes them feel loved and connected.

Quality Time: The Quality Time Love Language means spending uninterrupted one on one time with them. These people feel connected when their partner spends time with them talking about their day or about life. Quality time is interrupted when the TV is on or you check your phone so be mindful. Dedicate 10-15 minutes to just talking with your partner everyday and it will fill their bucket.

Acts of Service: Cleaning the whole house so your partner doesn’t have to is a great example of acts of service. This Love Language involves you doing things with or for your partner so they don’t have to do it themselves. Cook dinner AND clean up the kitchen so your partner doesn’t have to, offer to grab the notes for your friend in class so they don’t have to make the trip. Acts of service people feel loved when their partner completes tasks for them. Walk the dog, do the grocery shopping, weed the garden, all these things will make your partner feel closer to you.

Gift Giving: It isn't the monetary value of the gift, it is the thought that went into picking it out that matters. For gift giving people something as small as buying their favorite candy bar when you go grocery shopping means a lot. Bring them food, buy them flowers just because, bring them back a souvenir from a trip you went on. Gift giving people feel more connected to you because of the time you took to think about them and buy them something meaningful.

It is important to have multiple ongoing conversation about love languages. Talk with your friend, child, or partner what they like and what they don't like. What do you do that makes them appreciate you and love you? What can they do to make you feel loved? [Here](#) is a link to take the Love Language test and understand what your primary and secondary love languages are. If you are in an intimate relationship, I encourage you do this with your partner and then talk about your results. There are also multiple versions of the Love Languages book for men, women, and parents [Here](#). If you would prefer this information in video form here is a short YouTube video [summary](#). A different article talking about how using the Love Languages can "[Break Up Proof your Relationship](#)".

Your homework this week is to take the Love Language test, figure out what kind of Love Language person you are and then communicate that to your partner or friend. Talk about ways to strengthen your connection.

Take Care of Yourself and Wash Your Hands,

Andy