

*Parenting Tools:*

**- Love Languages -**



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## **Parenting Tools: *Love Languages***

Since children are beginning to test their levels of independence and may become more private, there may not be as many opportunities to connect with your child like there have been in the past. Therefore, it is important that you show your child love in the way that he or she feels most loved.

We talk about love a lot. We often say things like, “I love ice cream,” or, “I love to read,” but what is love, biblical love? It’s so much more than we can fathom. It’s sacrificial love. It’s not about us. It’s always about someone else. Love began with God. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” God expressed that love by sending His Son to die on the cross for our sins. We all know the verse, John 3:16, which says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We are also familiar with the verses in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, which describes the supernatural love that we are called to have for one another: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

It is important for us to model this biblical love. Our children need us to love them this way.

In Gary Chapman’s book *The Five Love Languages*, Chapman suggests that there are five main ways, or “languages,” in which we show love and receive love. Below is a description of each of the

five love languages along with examples of specific ways you can show love to your children:

1. **Words of Affirmation:** In this language, people need to hear compliments to be “stroked” by the words of others.
2. **Quality Time:** People who hear love by Quality Time know they are loved when people spend time with them—by listening, walking, talking, and/or going on trips.
3. **Physical Touch:** People who hear love in this way need to be touched; they receive love in hugs, back rubs, and by sitting close together.
4. **Receiving Gifts:** People who receive love in this language need to receive thoughtful and personal gifts; the gifts need not be expensive.
5. **Acts of Service:** With this love language, people hear love through others giving them acts of service such as making the bed, cleaning the bathroom, or doing a chore that they dislike.

Although we may appreciate all the love languages, there is usually one or two that are the main languages in which we receive love. Try “speaking” these languages to your children and see which ones they respond to best. Also, watch how they show love to others, as this is usually a clue to their main love language. For example, if your child is constantly doing little things for others, it is safe to try to use the Acts of Service language. If you have a child who wants to come jump in your lap and cuddle, Physical Touch is likely his or her principle love language. Be observant and pay attention to how your child best responds to love.

Ideas for speaking your child’s love language:

- If your child has Words of Affirmation as his primary love language, criticism cuts deep. If you need to correct him or her, be specific as to what you want him or her to change, but make sure you include positive and loving words. Compliment your children often; find opportunities to say positive things to them and about them to others.
- For those children who hear love through Quality Time, there is no other alternative to spending time together. Go on a walk, to the gym, or on a car ride. When she asks you to take her somewhere or come see something she has been working on, make the effort to fully engage.
- Children who receive love through Physical Touch will appreciate cuddle time. You might do this while telling a story, singing songs together, or just sitting close and watching a movie or playing a game. Boys who appreciate physical touch will enjoy a little wrestling match. When they get a little older, the same physical approaches may not work or may be uncomfortable. However, an occasional hug, a touch on the shoulder or arm, or a pat on the back will be appropriate.
- If your child receives love through Receiving Gifts, consider writing the occasional card, leaving a balloon bouquet at a school locker, or putting a treat in your child’s school backpack. Make sure you express your love verbally or in writing along with the gift. Though gifts can be overdone and thus become meaningless, occasional and personal gifts will create good loving experiences for your child who receives love through gifts.
- Children who have Acts of Service as a love language will best appreciate you doing little things for them. If your child dislikes doing the dishes, get up and do the dishes, and tell your child that

you love him or her while you do them. If your son or daughter has a special interest, learn more about it so you can participate with him or her. Anything that is a sacrifice of time on your part will be a loving message.

Finding and learning to speak love in your children's primary love language will go a long way to helping them feel that you love them and that they are a priority in your life. Learn what makes your child feel loved, and then watch your relationship with him or her grow as you practice that specific love language.