

Languages of love and connection

The love languages are a means by which couples can not only show each other love and affection, but also heal conflict and work towards a means of connecting better. Learn below how you and your partner function best. When you each know the other's love language, expressing affection and doing things together using the love language that works best for you both, then you'll find that your beloved will better appreciate your attempts at being loving.

Recognise that the best relationships are those in which couples pro-actively work on adding quality to their connecting patterns. Relating laziness, complacency and taking each other for granted is not part of their relating styles. Patterns of distancing from each other, nervously walking on hot coals, or reacting with hurt or frustration are symptoms of a relationship in which each no longer feels loved and appreciated by the other. Such patterns develop slowly, and do so in concert with a dwindling feeling of being loved and acknowledged.

These love languages are best used:

1. Randomly and often every day, not just on a 'good' day. In this way, they become a norm, not an exception.
2. Based on your own love for the other, not based on 'equal' loving. Lots of repeated and excessive loving often wins the day.
3. When the other needs a reminder that they are lovable and that you love them, such as after an argument, when they are feeling down, or when they are struggling with guilt or shame.

The gift of time and attention

Giving the other your time requires the willingness to prioritize time with your partner. Women who have a tendency towards the anxious insecure attachment style are the most likely to find this works well for them, and men who are the avoidant insecure attachment style are the least likely to offer love in this way. Therefore, as a general rule, men will benefit their relationships by offering the gift of time to their female partners. (See more about these 'attachment styles' formed during childhood at [conflict-styles.html](http://www.conflict-styles.html).)

The gift of time can be offered through conversation, listening to how a person is feeling, holding hands whilst watching a movie or going for a walk, or just hanging out together. What matters, is that the partner is the priority, and nothing else intrudes. Don't do as I once did and listen to something important my wife had to say whilst I opened the mail. That will not work. This gift of love will require your full and undivided attention.

Ideas to build on:

1. **Setting time aside to check in each day.** First thing in the morning and last thing at night for 15-20 minutes work well.
2. **Giving time for the other when they are stressed.** This may mean parking your agendas and prioritizing supporting the other (eg listening) whilst they process stresses they are facing.
3. **Walks together chatting** about and updating everyday events in your lives.
4. **Taking time out for brief trips away together**, say one day in the weekend. Holidays together are excellent too of course, but frequent repetition is essential.

5. **Having a bath together, maybe followed by a mutual massage** is a great way to enjoy quality connection time as one couple I worked with recommended.
6. **Partaking of a hobby or interest together** where you can share and communicate, such as biking, playing a social sport (eg tennis, badminton, tenpin bowling, jogging), eating out, or even watching movies you both like.

The gift of completed tasks

Some people love just doing things for others. Those with an avoidant insecure attachment style are particularly good at this, because their task focused approach to life enables them to see what needs to be done, and appreciate the benefits of having everything sorted. People with this way of showing appreciation, more often men, may not recognise that despite the benefits their efforts bring their partners, those same partners see task completion as just what has to be done, rather than as a special gift of love. Thus, the task focused, busy rushing-around-the-house person may notice that their best efforts to impress have little impact. They may also notice that their partner doesn't do as many tasks in return, hardly surprising if task completion doesn't feel to them like gift giving or important. Therefore, check that the tasks you are doing are perceived as benefits.

Ideas to build on:

1. **Attend to tasks that would benefit your partner and which he would struggle to do himself.** Eg those that save him time, provide needs he won't meet himself. Setting the fire, doing the dishes, cooking the dinner, taking out the rubbish, growing vegetables, or cleaning the spouting can all be done to support one's partner, but can all be easily overlooked as acts of service or devotion to one's mate.
2. **Focus on tasks together that have agreed benefits for both parties.** Eg house renovations, addressing the agreed needs of the children, saving to pay for projects both have an investment in.
3. **Reliably attending to daily tasks/roles that both have agreed upon.** Couples need to contribute their 50% to domestic chores, but these can be quite different tasks. What is important is to complete your 50%, leaving the other to feel supported and valued by your contribution.

The gift of physical touch

Many men and most women like the gift of touch, best expressed through hugs, kisses, back rubs, stroking one's hair, holding hands all the way to foreplay and sexual connection. It is not uncommon for some, especially women, to seek sexual connection so as to quench this thirst for closeness and emotional intimacy. What matters is that this touch conveys affection. So it is best done slowly, sensitively and caringly. Such connection enables feelings of tenderness and connection to be shown to, and felt by, one's partner. Regular touching is a hallmark of most successful relationships, because it is a love language that resonates for many people. It is also a very easy and often quick way to connect and express affection, and tends to successfully convey an immediate message of love and affection.

Ideas to build on:

1. **Randomly given hugs, kisses, and cuddles are easy to share** and provide immediate connection, even when you are busy.
2. **Back and neck massages are more effort**, but qualify as a practical gift, a task, as well as securing physical connection. In this regard, they span this category and the task category.
3. **Sensual massages after a shower, spa, bath or swim** also span the touch, task and gift categories. Be sure to agree whether sex could follow or not, so that there is no fear of unexpected pressure to go that extra step. Lots of oil, warmth and pleasant aromas and music add to the experience.
4. **Sex is perhaps the top offering of physical touch**, but many couples struggle to succeed with this. The pressure on men to perform, or feelings of anxiety, exhaustion, shyness or boredom on the part of either party can sabotage quality sexual connecting. Even just naked connection, without sex, can offer quality physical touch.
5. **Sensual stroking and massage allows a couple to begin with sensuality and lead on to sexuality**. This is often the way a therapist would suggest a couple struggling with sexual connection begin to enjoy connecting physically, sidestepping the anxiety associated with 'performance'.
6. **Relaxing physically connected**, such as holding hands during a movie, or resting with one person's head resting on their partner's torso, are easy to do often, and work well for those desiring kinaesthetically connection.

The gift of verbal appreciation

All people love to be told how great they are, and how their presence or actions make a positive difference. Those with an anxious insecure attachment style are particularly amenable to this sort of feedback, and sometimes a partner who is not wired in this way may make the mistake of thinking that constant affirmation and verbal back-patting (maybe several times a day) is over the top and needy. However, a person who likes words of affection, support or appreciation simply feels more connected to their partner when these comments are shared. Such a person tends also to feel easily hurt by unhelpful comments, because their sensitivity runs to both positive and negative verbal exchanges.

Ideas to build on:

1. **Expressions of the love you have for your partner such as "I love you", I love about you"**, all go down well with this person. For them, such verbal exchanges are a window into the heart of their beloved.
2. **Compliments about accomplishments and appearance** such as "I love your ...(new top, hair cut, snazzy jacket)", "I appreciate ... (the dinner you cooked me, the effort you made to help me)" are ways of bringing attention to the way you are feeling about your beloved.

The gift of visual appeal

It is common knowledge that women like being given a bunch of beautiful flowers. However, it is the beauty of appearance that is so tantalising for many of us. Because westerners are so visual in the way their society operates (such as reading, writing, watching films and TV, enjoying viewing the appearance of everything from other people to works of art), most of us like experiencing visual beauty. Many women dress well so as to visually feel good about themselves, and also to impress the men in their lives. Some men will do likewise. Most of us

enjoy anything that is pleasurable to look at. So to be given something of beauty, or to even give ourselves nicely dressed up to our partners, will often appeal.

Ideas to build on:

1. **A card with thoughtful comments on it is perhaps the most common gift of visual appeal.** If the words are well chosen, you will also be on target to impress the person who likes gifts of verbal appreciation.
2. **Cards, flowers, or something small left on or under the pillow or in the letterbox can be a lovely surprise.** These are particularly apt after a special event has occurred, or randomly offered as a way to connect and remind your beloved of your love. This sort of gift is easy and inexpensive, and may work well after an argument as a token of the love that you still feel.
3. **Many women like to look attractive for their men, and go to some trouble to do so.** Men, however, can make the mistake of not realising that this is what is they are doing, in addition to their desire to 'look good'.

The gift of gifts

Some people, especially those with an anxious insecure attachment style, love gifts. It demonstrates an interest, thoughtfulness, caring and appreciation – everything so precious to those who have a strong desire to connect, and who like being reminded of the quality of that connection. These gifts do not have to be expensive or in any way 'big ticket items'. The value of the gift lies in the thoughtfulness involved, the fact that your beloved has been mindful of you, or you of him/her, and that you've gone to some trouble to go out of your way for your beloved. Sometimes the gift will link to another of these languages of love and connection. For example, a bunch of flowers will work well for those who are strongly visual, a massage treat will be treasured by those who are strongly kinaesthetic and love touch, a beautiful CD will be special for those who are strongly auditory, and love the quality of beautiful sounds.

It is the surprise element of gifts, and the random meaninglessness of them which is so appealing. Learning that someone has had treasured thoughts about you without you knowing so is appealing to most of us.

Ideas to build on:

1. **A bunch of flowers is the classic in this department.** Strongly visual and also olfactory, this gift is best when it is appreciated that some trouble has been gone to in the acquisition of the gift. Even a lovely bunch of flowers picked from the roadside can have appeal.
2. **The gifts associated with anniversaries, such as a purchased material item, are common in this department.** However, such gifts do not work well for everybody unless they are valued by the recipient because they are of practical value, or have an aesthetic quality that matches the recipient's artistic or creative preferences.
3. **Eating out.** This can have the advantage that a meal no longer has to be cooked at home, that being cared for by another's cooking is in itself a gift, and if the right venue is chosen can also offer an opportunity to be in a place of quality ambience (eg music), uplifting people, quality visual effects.

4. **Holidays, especially surprise holidays**, are valuable because most people enjoy a change of environment. However, again, in order to be of value, this gift will only work if the type of environment is sought after by the recipient. Beaches, mountains, lakes, forests, towns or cities all have their own appeal, but this varies hugely from person to person.
5. **Short holidays, may be just a few hours in duration, can be worthwhile because of the change of pace they offer**, and also because like holidays, they offer the gift of your time and attention.
6. **A special unexpected delicacy never goes astray**. My wife is very good at making healthy smoothies, baking a cake or cookies. Food is a particularly good gift for many men who appreciate such random offerings. Food also fits into the gift of a task being completed, something withdrawing men who are task centered will often appreciate.