

The Five Love Languages of Teenagers: The Secret to Loving Teens Effectively

Gary Chapman

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The Love Language series of books has been around for a long time. Many of us have read *The Five Love Languages* and had our eyes opened to better ways to communicate love to our spouses. Chapman's basic argument is that love is felt by the recipient the most effectively when it is communicated in that person's love language. While people respond positively to each of the love languages (and Chapman argues that we need to speak all five), each of us responds more favorably to one or two. These are different for every person in our family but in order to keep our child feeling loved during the critical teenage years when there is so much inherent conflict, it is important that we learn to recognize and speak our child's primary love language. *The Five Love Languages of Teens* focuses specifically on discovering your teen's love language and learning to speak that language to a person whose moods and feelings are in constant flux. As challenging as this is, any hope we have of guiding our teens to make good choices and learn to be confident and independent adults is rooted in a strong parent/child relationship. Teens need to feel loved by their parents.

Chapman outlines five basic love languages: Words of Affirmation, Physical Touch, Quality Time, Acts of Service and Gifts. According to the book, each of us has a love language that speaks primarily to us and makes us feel most loved. In each chapter, Chapman details what each love language looks like, how to use it effectively and the danger of withholding or misusing our child's primary love language. For example, teens for whom **Words of Affirmation** are most critical in making them feel loved, are likely to be more hurt by verbal insults or sarcasm. For teens who crave **Quality Time** to feel most loved, speaking the love language of gifts with expensive phones or designer jeans, while generous on the part of the parents, does not necessarily make them feel loved. Often, there is a disconnect between the love language we are most comfortable speaking and the one our teen needs to hear. Chapman addresses this disconnect and provides specific ways to reach out to teens in each of the love languages, as well as ways to determine which is our own teen's primary love language.

Some may already be versed in the Love Languages and have figured out what their children's primary love languages are. However, the teen years are tricky as frontal lobes go under construction and social pressures and insecurities abound. The subtleties of how and when teens want love expressed have changed. For example, if your child's love language is physical touch, they may be a kid who constantly wants to be cuddled and snuggled. These kids are probably the ones who loved to play with our hair, sit in our laps and hold our hands. Chances are, as teenagers, these will no longer be acceptable forms of physical touch. However, if physical touch is still their primary love language, they may still need hugs in private, high fives in public and the occasional shoulder rub.

I highly recommend all of Chapman's Love Languages books. Although Chapman is a Christian counselor and teacher and some of his views reflect this background, I believe the five love languages transcend religion, culture and age. If you want to hear more about *The Five Love Languages of Teens* and how to effectively fill your teen's love bucket, please come to **Issaquah Middle School on Tuesday April 23rd at 7pm** in the library to hear marriage and family therapist **Aimee Heffernan** speak on this topic.