



The Five Love Languages for Teens

By Gary Chapman

Love Language #1: Words of Affirmation

Verbal compliments, or words of appreciation, are powerful communicators of love. Both words of praise and affection are important to give to teens. Words of praise have to do with recognizing your teen's positive behaviors and accomplishments and commending her. Look for what she does right and reward her with verbal praise. There are three important factors in giving words of praise to teens: (1) sincerity, (2) praise specifics, and (3) when you can't praise results, praise efforts. Words of affection focus on the teenager herself and express positive regard for who she is as a person.



- "I really appreciate your hard effort in cleaning the floor today."
- "Do you ever look nice in that outfit! Wow!"
- "I love watching you encourage others."
- "Thanks for raking the leaves out of the backyard on Saturday. I really appreciate it."
- "That play you made in the game today was spectacular. It was so exciting; I will never forget it. I bet you feel proud."
- "I love it when you are around."
- "If I could choose any teenager in the world, I would choose you."
- "Your bubbly personality makes so many people happy."

Love Language #2: Physical Touch



Physical touch is a powerful vehicle for communicating love. Hugs, kisses, back rubs, pats, tender touches, massages, and arm wrestlings are all appropriate ways to speak the language of physical touch to teens. Implicit love touches may require little time but do require thought; and with teens the timing is key when showing love through physical touch. The appropriate time is largely determined by the teen's mood. Pay attention to the teen's body language and if she is angry, she most likely will not want to be touched. Appropriate times for touching can be when your teen has succeeded a major accomplishment, when your teen is in a good mood, and also at times when she feels as though she has failed. In most cases the appropriate place for touching is in the privacy of your own home when you and your teen are alone, not in a public place in front of her peers. Here are some more ideas:

Source: "The Five Love Languages of Teenagers" by Gary Chapman

- If your teen is under stress, gently stroke their head to relax them.
- Hug and kiss your teen every day when they go for school as long as they will let you.
- After delivering a consequence, give her a hug, reminding her that the consequence is related to her wrong choice, not her as a person.
- If you see your teen already in bed, walk in and pull their blankets up around them.
- Occasionally yell out for a “group hug” for your entire family.

Love Language #3: Quality Time



To give your teenager quality time is to give your teenager a portion of your life. Quality time means giving the teenager your undivided attention. At the moment, nothing else matters. The central aspect of quality time is togetherness. Togetherness has to do with being in touch with each other. This means that the teen is feeling that she is the focus of your attention. This does not mean that you must always have long in-depth conversations; but it does mean that the parent must intentionally seek to communicate by eye contact, words, touch, and body language that the teen is more important than the event or activity.

Quality conversation is also a part of quality time. Quality conversation is where both parent and teen are free to share their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and desires in a friendly, accepting atmosphere. Parents speak “with” their teens rather than “at” their teens. The parent focuses on drawing out and listening empathetically to what the teen is saying. The parent can ask questions, not in a badgering manner, but with a genuine desire to understand the teen’s thoughts, feelings, and desires. The guidelines for quality conversations are: (1) Maintain eye contact when your teen is talking, (2) Be free of other activity and distraction, (3) Listen for feelings, (4) Observe body language, (5) Refuse to interrupt, (6) Ask reflective questions, (7) Express understanding and empathy, (8) Ask permission to share your perspective.

Most of the best quality conversations with teens will take place in association with some activity. Some of these activities are a part of the normal flow of life—school, athletics, music, dance, drama, community, and church. When your teen understands that you attend these events because you want to see them perform, that you are interested in their pursuits, that nothing is more important to you this afternoon than attending their event, it speaks volumes to the teenager. Teenagers want their parents to be involved in their lives. Helping with homework, attending activities, driving your teens to the mall and shopping with them, all create opportunities for quality time with teens. Parental involvement says, “Your interests are important to me.”

Love Language #4: Acts of Service

Loving service is an internally motivated desire to give one’s energy to others. Loving service is a gift, not a necessity, and is done freely, not under coercion. Parents must find acts of service that are not always tied to the teen doing something the parent



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desires, (i.e.: “I drive kids to the mall who have their room cleaned.”). When we are expressing love, it is given freely and is not earned. In order not to create a dependent teenager, we can choose acts of service that teens cannot do for themselves. When they are young, you wash the clothes for them; when they are teenagers, you teach them how to wash their clothes. Here are some acts of service ideas that express love without ignoring your teen’s need for responsibility:

- Occasionally wake up a half hour earlier to make a special surprise breakfast for your teen.
- Help your teen practice for their sports team.
- Make a favorite snack when your teen is having a difficult day.
- Help your teen create flash cards for their upcoming test.
- Help your teen choose an outfit for school or a special occasion.
- When your teen is sick, set up their favorite movie or make their favorite soup.
- Choose one special area where you decide to serve your teen above and beyond normal expectations – making school lunches or making a favorite dessert on a regular basis.
- Acknowledge your teen’s uniqueness by shopping together for new paint colors for their room and helping them paint it.

Love Language #5: Gifts



Gifts are visible, tangible evidence of emotional love. A gift is not something that the teenager deserves; it is given because the parent desires to share unconditional love with the teen. Ask yourself, “What is the last genuine gift I gave my teenager?” In picking out the gift, we want to consider our teen’s interest and buy something that strikes her fancy.

An important aspect of gift giving is that it should be done with some measure of ceremony. Rather than buying the new pair of shoes for the teen and having her wear them out of the mall, take them home and wrap them in a creative manner and then present them in the presence of other family members as an expression of love for the teen. Accompany the gift with words of affirmation and physical touch and then the gift suddenly becomes a strong vehicle of emotional love. Remember creativity is more important than money when it comes to gift giving for your teen; here are some ideas:

- Hide a small gift in your teen’s coat pocket with an encouraging note attached.
- Give hints leading toward a special upcoming gift. A “countdown” of notes such as, “Only four more days until present day”, help create huge anticipation and a tremendous amount of love.
- Keep a “gift bag” of small, inexpensive gifts your teen can choose from. These gifts can include “coupons” for special privileges, like allowing three friends to stay over that weekend or choosing where the family eats the next time out.
- Start a collection of unique gift boxes and wrapping papers that can be used to package even the most simple presents.
- Create a scavenger hunt for a gift that includes a map and clues along the way to the main surprise.

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