Communication Languages

We all know that the way we speak to each other and the words we use have great power. Not only do the words we speak to others have great power, the words we speak to ourselves have great power as this famous writing from one of the main Buddhists texts articulates so well.

“The thought manifests the word;
The word manifests the deed;
The deed develops into habit;
And habit hardens into character;
So watch the thought and its ways with care,
And let them spring forth from love
Born out of compassion for all beings.
As the shadow follows the body,
as we think, so we become.”
--The Dhammapad

The language we use shapes our character, and the language we use in relationship shapes the character of the relationship. In relationships, the language we use is not only experienced in the words we use but also in our actions. Thirty years ago, Dr Gary Chapman wrote a best selling book titled The 5 Love Languages. The love languages apply not only to our romantic relationships, but also to all of our relationships, personal and professional.

Words of Affirmation - Actions don’t always speak louder than words. If this is your love language, unsolicited compliments mean the world to you. Hearing the words, “I love you,” is important— hearing the reasons behind that love sends your spirits skyward. Insults can leave you shattered and are not easily forgotten.

Quality Time - In the vernacular of Quality Time, nothing says, “I love you,” like full, undivided attention. Being there for this type of person is critical, but really being there—with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and tasks on standby—makes your significant other feel truly special and loved. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

Receiving Gifts - This love language is not materialism; the receiver of gifts thrives on the love, thoughtfulness, and effort behind the gift. If you speak this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are known, you are cared for, and you are prized above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to you. A missed birthday, anniversary, or a hasty, thoughtless gift would be disastrous—so would the absence of everyday gestures.

Acts of Service - Vacuuming the floors and cooking meals can really be an expression of love. Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an “Acts of Service” person will speak volumes. The words he or she most wants to hear: “Let me do that for you.” Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for them tell speakers of this language their feelings don’t matter.

Physical Touch - This language isn’t all about sex. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm, shoulder, or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, care, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.