



**RAISING
MULTIPLES**

a MOST Community

We know the enormous financial and emotional strains that come with the early years (especially) of having a multiple birth can be hard on a marriage.

Most couples manage to get through the adjustments, but there are often a few bumps along

the way. Many of our families have found the following article, originally published in MOST's *Supertwins* magazine, helpful. We hope it helps you, too.

Love Languages of Marriage

By Scott Keith, father of quadruplets

We'd like to share something that has made a huge difference in our marriage: love languages. Love languages refer to the different ways of communicating love to another person so that they feel loved. While this seems simple on the surface, it suddenly becomes more complicated when we realize that one person feels loved when you bring them roses and another feels loved when you take out the garbage. The real question is this: Does the way I express love make my spouse feel loved?

About eight years ago, my wife and I met with a separated couple whose marriage was failing because neither felt loved by the other. The husband showed love by providing for his family (Acts of Service) and looked for practical help as a sign of love in return. Meanwhile, the wife offered words of encouragement (Words of Affirmation) and received relative silence in return. They were speaking different love languages and both felt resentful that the other had not responded the way they expected. Can you relate to this?

There are many ways to say "I love you." But it is important to find the way that your spouse hears and responds; otherwise you risk the message not being heard.

[The Five Love Languages](#), by Dr. Gary Chapman, offers help. Dr. Chapman identifies five common ways people show love and expect love in return. They are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Gifts, Acts of Service and Physical Touch.

I will cover each of these in this article, but encourage everyone to buy a copy of the book. The book has much more detail and an assessment that will help you determine the love language(s) that you and your spouse use and respond best to.

Words of Affirmation

Verbally encouraging, affirming and honoring your spouse is important for many reasons. For some people, words of affirmation are a vital part of feeling loved. You can verbally appreciate

something a spouse has done, acknowledge a character strength, or simply say "I love you" on a regular basis. The only guideline is that it be genuine and sincere affirmation that means something to you.

Words of affirmation sound something like this: "I appreciate how you handled that situation with the children. I didn't know what we were going to do, so it was a relief when you were able to find a solution" or "Thank you for taking the trash to the dump. It means a lot to me that I don't have to worry about it." Keep it positive and honest.

Does your spouse need words of affirmation? For each of the next seven days, find something about your spouse that you appreciate and communicate it. Make an effort to verbally tell him/her how much you love them. See what happens.

Quality Time

Quality time means giving your spouse your undivided attention and talking about more than just the weather. This is another area that needs to be practiced regularly by every couple. For some people quality time is the most important part of feeling loved by their spouse.

For families with multiples, this is probably the hardest love language to speak because it requires planning and often a reorganization of priorities. It is so easy to fall into the rut of letting the needs of your children starve your relationship with your spouse. What is perhaps less obvious is that children need mom and dad to have a good relationship. To feel safe, they need to feel that mom and dad love each other. The way you care for your marriage is actually a critical part of how well you take care of your children.

What keeps parents from having quality time?

I. The "just-one-more-thing" syndrome. The children don't want to go to bed, so they come up with "one more thing" that needs to be done before they can settle down. Refills on water cups, lost teddy bears and misplaced security blankets--it keeps going until mom and dad have been completely robbed of their quality time together.

My wife came up with a cure, which I call "I-Have-One-More-Thing-Also." Now as a child turns to go back upstairs after making a request, my wife says, "Oh, Daniel!? By the way, since you are down here, I noticed some Legos on the floor. Can you put those away?" Suddenly we had children thinking twice about how much they really wanted that "one more thing."

A few weeks after starting "Operation I-Have-One-More-Thing- Also", I was stopped by a whisper as I walked down the upstairs hall, "Psst, hey dad, can you get me some water?" I responded, "Why don't you get it yourself?" The whisperer replied, "Because if leave my room I might get a chore."

II. The family bed. I am not in favor of the practice of allowing children to sleep in the parents' bed for a variety of reasons. One reason is because it robs parents of their alone time. Setting clear boundaries on where your children sleep will help protect your marriage.

III. I can't leave the children at home with someone else. The truth is you can. While your children may not like the idea of mom and dad leaving for a date or needing some alone time, it is healthy for them to get used to the idea. Deep down children want to know that mom and dad love each other. Date nights, alone-time and trips away are opportunities to communicate this priority to your children. Don't make the mistake of neglecting your marriage to always be with your children.

How does this work practically? Well, starting when our children were 5-months-old we took date nights and weekends away from them. Once they were old enough to understand, we explained that we needed alone time to take care of our marriage so we could be a better mom and dad. When we leave we arrange for the children to be with someone they are familiar with and we communicate clearly when we will return. Making time for quality time is not just part of keeping your marriage in good condition--it is part of your children learning to grow up.

So, did they get the message? Here is how our 7-year-old quadruplets responded today as I write this article. QUESTION: "Why do mom and dad spend time alone and go out on dates?" Sarah and Andrew say, "Because you love each other." Thomas says, "Because you want to spend time together." And Daniel, with a big smile, says, "Because you love each other and like to spend time together."

Alone time with your spouse may not always be easy, but it communicates something very important to your children. It communicates that they don't need to worry about mom and dad's relationship. Even if they witness some stressful moments, they know mom and dad love each other because they like spending time together. Actions speak loudly.

Does your marriage need more quality time? Perhaps you need to find a babysitter, family member or trusted friend to stay with the children for a weekend. Plan a surprise weekend for your spouse if he or she is spontaneous, or include them in the planning if they like to always know what is happening. But, however you do it, get out with your spouse and spend time together. Plan at least one date night a month or more.

Gift Giving

I have to admit that gift-giving is probably my weakest love language.

My wife is a gift-giver and I am not. I grew up in a household where my mom felt flowers were a waste of money and my dad rarely brought home gifts from a business trip. But my wife's father always returned home with a gift for her and that became the way she felt loved growing up. Imagine how she felt when her husband started returning home empty handed from frequent business trips.

Keep in mind that if your spouse is not a gift-giver, they are not deliberately short-changing you. The whole concept of gift-giving may be a bit foreign to them. It often involves decisions that non-gift-givers are not used to making. Gift-giving is a skill.

Gift-givers mostly just want to know that you thought of them. A card with a silly message may be what they need. Other times you may want to surprise them with something more extravagant, such as a professional massage that they would not get for themselves. This shows the gift-giver that they are treasured.

If you have married a gift-giver and need help, my recommendation is to start small. I'm not going to give out all my secrets because my wife is reading this article, but here is an example: When we go to the bookstore, I always try to be the one to check out so I can make sure a few of those chocolate truffles end up in the bag for my wife to find later. She knows I was thinking of her because I don't eat chocolate.

For the women out there, please understand that many men are missing the shopping gene. Some of us may even be allergic to it. Give us obvious hints of what you wish you had! We don't read minds and suffer enough in malls without having to go there without a clue.

Do you need to brush up on your gift-giving skills? Think of ways to tell your spouse you love them with something small. Do the unexpected and put some thought behind your gifts.

Acts of Service

Some people feel especially loved when they receive help. If your spouse is one of these, actions are more important than words when it comes to feeling loved.

A good example is my own relationship with my parents. A few years ago I noticed for the first time that they express love through Acts of Service. They don't speak much, but they showed up one day at my house and cleaned my garage. I realized then that they probably also feel loved when they are served.

Now that I understand that my parents express their love through their Acts of Service, I do my best to love them in their language. I help my dad with his computer and clean the bathroom in his office building when he is out of town. I have seen signs that these acts of service have helped them feel more loved by me.

This is also true for a spouse that speaks Acts of Service. If you notice that your spouse is speaking love through Acts of Service, it is important to reciprocate by loving them in their own language.

Are you married to someone who speaks Acts of Service? What job do they dislike doing? Perhaps you could surprise them this week by doing it for them.

Physical Touch

We all need to be touched, but if your spouse needs to be hugged frequently, or likes to hug, Physical Touch may be one of their love languages.

A good place to practice Physical Touch is in plain view of the children. Children want to know that their parents' marriage is secure and some cuddling and quality time on the couch is not a bad way to send children the message that mom and dad love each other.

Obviously, some types of physical touch need to be reserved for alone time. Setting clear boundaries and protecting your alone time will improve your ability to speak the love language of Physical Touch.

Does your spouse need Physical Touch? Be proactive about giving your spouse hugs and kisses. Schedule an evening alone with your spouse.

Good marriage relationships don't magically happen; they take hard work and determination. A key component is finding out what makes your spouse feel loved and learning how to speak love in their language.

[The Five Love Languages](#) is a tool that has helped bring us closer together and strengthen our marriage. It's a book that my wife and I highly recommend.