

Know Your Child's Language

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Children experience love in a variety of ways. The five primary ways children experience love can be called love languages: physical touch, words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, and acts of service. All children need love expressed in all of the love languages, just as a child needs a balanced diet. However, a child's primary love language is the language that speaks loudest to the child. Its results are quicker and deeper than the other languages.

If you have more than one child, chances are they have different love languages. However, children under age 5 do not tend to exhibit a primary love language. They may shift from one love language to another as they develop.

Consider the following practical ways to show each love language to your child.

Physical touch

Physical touch is the easiest love language to use unconditionally because parents need no special occasion or excuse to make physical contact. Even though the contact is physical, make eye contact to help communicate your love. All children need to be touched in loving, appropriate ways, but respect your child's age needs. Try the following.

- Pick up your young child or give her a piggyback ride.
- Give your child a high five.
- Give your child a quick kiss on the head or ruffle her hair.
- Give your child a hug.
- Give your child a back rub or scratch her back.
- Give your child a pat on the back.
- Play a physical sport.
- Snuggle together and read.
- Tuck your child into bed.
- Hold hands during prayer time.

Words of affirmation

In communicating love, words are powerful. Praise for a child should be both true and justified. Affirmation can be spoken, written, or nonverbal. You may have to do so at a time that will not embarrass your child. Try the following.

- Say "good morning" and "thank you" in a pleasant voice.
- Say "I love you" anytime.
- Use a nickname.
- Compliment how your child looks.
- Always praise successes.
- Place an encouraging note in her lunch.
- Maintain a calm voice.
- Give your child a thumbs-up or high five.
- At bedtime, tell your child something specific she did well that day.

Quality time

Quality time is a parent's gift of presence. It should be focused attention. Eye contact is essential. Your child must feel your undivided attention. Listen actively to your child without interruption. Try the following.

- Ask your child an open-ended question about her day.
- Sit with your child at breakfast.
- Ask follow-up questions about what your child is telling you.
- Maintain a conversation while driving in the car.
- Look your child in the eye when talking.
- Attend special events.
- Make a special one-on-one date.
- Check homework with your child.
- Read a book together and talk about it.
- Pray together before bed.

Gifts

A true gift is not payment for services rendered; rather, it is an expression of love. Gifts may be bought, found, or made. Celebrate the ordinary! It is the thought that counts. Try the following.

- Purchase a new shampoo, soap, or even toothpaste and give it as a surprise.
- Fix a favorite breakfast at an unexpected time.
- Give your child a vase of flowers.
- Buy a special birthday or holiday gift.
- Hide a treat under your child's pillow.
- Give your child a devotion book or new Bible.
- Hide treats in every place your child goes as part of a morning or evening routine.
- Go shopping to buy a special item.

Acts of service

As your child observes your serving attitude, she will begin to pattern it herself. The primary motivation is not to please your child but to do what is best for her. Do not use acts of service to manipulate your child. Attitude is everything. Try the following.

- Pack your child's lunch.
- Make breakfast and serve your child.
- Gather your child's backpack for her.
- Iron something for your child.
- Help your child clean up a mess she has made.
- Make your child's favorite dish for supper.
- Repair something that is broken.
- Take time off from work to do something special for your child.

<http://www.lifeway.com/Article/know-your-childs-language>

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