

Relationship Hacks: Simple Fixes for Common Issues (Part 2)

In last month's issue, I wrote about Dr. Gary Chapman's *5 Love Languages* and how beneficial it is to a relationship to know your partners Love Language (as well as your own). Knowing what really makes someone feel loved and cared for is the secret to happy relationships. In this month's issue, I'm going to share with you some simple ways (i.e. Hacks) to "speak" your partner's *Love Language*.

Hacks for the 5 Love Languages

Many people struggle with "speaking" their partners love language when it is different from their own. For example, a couple may come in to therapy and the husband states, "I don't feel like she's still in love with me." His wife will respond with, "That's nuts! I am constantly telling you that I love you." I may ask, "What makes you think she doesn't love you?" His response, "She's never physically affectionate with me, and pushes me away when I try to touch her." Her response, "Well I'm just not touchy-feely, but I *tell* you all the time! And you never tell me you love me—I'm the one who should be upset." This is an example of his Love Language being Physical Touch, and hers being Words of Affirmation. She's showing him love by telling him and he's showing her love by trying to be affectionate...and neither are feeling loved, despite the other's efforts. My job becomes helping them learn how to speak the other's Love Language.

Words of Affirmation

My favorite hack for this Love Language will require a trip to your local Arts & Crafts store (bear with me). Find the Scrapbooking section of the store and purchase a "Scrap Pack" of Cardstock. This will be a bag of scrap cardstock that comes in various shapes, sizes, colors and patterns. Once you have this, take it home and write as many loving and affirming notes as you can think of, that are heartfelt and honest. If you need a little guidance, Google "words of affirmation" and tailor them to your partner. Some examples would be:

- You bring out the best in me.
- You are so amazing! I really appreciate all that you do.
- I really admire your inner strength.
- I'm so grateful to have you in my life.
- Thank you for always _____ for me. It is so thoughtful and caring.

Now that you have all of these wonderful notes written, hide them in places all over the house where they will find them. The idea is that they will randomly find these wonderful notes from you that are unsolicited. And because they are all written on different types of paper, each one will be a unique note. I suggest hiding them in handbags, wallets, coats, drawers, pockets of pants, glove box in the car and

anywhere that you know they will *eventually* find them. You should still work on verbally offering words of affirmation, but this “hack” will help supplement the times when you forget.

Quality Time

If you struggle with this one, the best “hack” is to schedule it into your regular routine. I recommend a weekly date night. You can both decide which day of the week works best and take turns planning the date. Other ideas include playing a game together that fosters closeness. For example, the Couples Ungame; which contains 140 cards that have questions on them that open up a dialog about thoughts, feelings, beliefs and values.

Trouble with time management? There’s an app for that! The Llama App is a Location Aware Mobile App. One user explained how he uses this app to help keep his fiancé notified when he’s running late from work, and when he is on his way home. Both of which help her to feel that he values his time with her. Sacwtd on Redditor shared, *“I setup a script that fires if the time is after 6:40 (I usually leave work by 6:15), if I am still connected to the cell tower at work, and if I can still see the wifi network. This script sends a text that says, 'I'm going to be working late tonight', and dings to let me know it sent. It's been working fantastic. I just recently added a new one that fires if the time is after 5:00pm, and I have just left the work cell tower area, that sends a 'I am on my way home' message.”*

Receiving Gifts

One way to ensure that you’re giving someone a gift they’ll like is if they have a wish list. You’d be surprised at how many stores are doing this! Your partner can create a wish list and leave at the store, so anytime you like, you can pick them up something you know they’ll like. If their favorite store does not have this option, Amazon.com does.

In addition to gifts from a wish list, it’s important to remember the little things. Their favorite candy, treat, beverage, etc. **The hack?** Buy several of them at a time and hide your stash. Then, when they’ve had a tough day or you just want to leave them a little surprise, you can grab their favorite treat out of your stash and leave it for them to enjoy. One man would leave his wife a cola and some chocolate when she was having a tough day. She would find it waiting for her when she got out of the shower (and for quite some time, she thought he ran to the store to get it for her).

If she loves flowers, the hack is amazingly easy. Most floral delivery websites will let you schedule flower deliveries for YEARS in advance! You can go online, right now, and schedule flowers to be delivered to her on every special occasion for the next several years. I do suggest you still put a reminder on the calendar in your phone—she’ll still want you to remember the occasion. I also suggest scheduling some “Just Because” deliveries, that are for no particular reason. Again, you’ll want to set a reminder for yourself in your own calendar that you’ve done this, so you’re not BOTH surprised. 😊 Many companies have the option to send you an email when the delivery has been sent; which may also be a helpful reminder.

Acts of Service

Anything that helps to take the burden off of someone falls into this love language. At the very least, offering to do all of the dishes and clean up after dinner would be a nice “gift” for them. Some of the obvious, easy things are doing the laundry, dishes, vacuuming the floors, bringing the pet to get groomed,

etc. The biggest complaint I get from people is that they work long hours and don't have a lot of spare time to do these things for their spouse. If that is the case, a simple hack for this language is to hire a cleaning service to come in and clean the house, or a dog groomer that makes house calls. There are, however, some people who really want the act of service to come directly from their partner to really feel cared for. If this is the case, I suggest talking with your partner about what would be most helpful or appreciated. Create a list of ideas and keep it somewhere just for yourself. When you find that you have spare time, randomly do something from the list.

If you're tech savvy, I suggest the Apps *Wunderlist* and/or *Grocery Smart*. Both allow you to keep a list of things that are needed for the house (Bonus: *Wunderlist* allows you to keep multiple lists of various things for both work and home). You can sync your phones with the App so you're always up-to-date on exactly what is needed at home. Using this App helps you to pick up something on your way home; which will score you big points with someone whose love language is Acts of Service.

Physical Touch

For those who have a low desire or need for touch, it can be difficult for them to meet the needs of a partner who doesn't feel loved without it. The easiest hack for this language is to sit close and cuddle while you're watching television together—be sure to give gentle caresses from time to time. While hugging and kissing hello or goodbye, slow down, take your time and make the moment last longer. Hug them snugly with both arms and your full body against theirs. In addition to hugging, kissing, holding hands and thoughtful touches throughout the day, there are several creative ways to increase the amount of physical touch in your relationship. If you already have a weekly "date night" (and I highly recommend that all couples do!) than simply add giving each other a massage to the evening's activities. You can take turns with who is the giver and who is the receiver. You might also consider dates that are hands-on, like going dancing or holding hands while taking a hike through a beautiful area.

It sounds cliché, but creating a "coupon book" filled with homemade coupons for various physical interactions can be a fun way to add more touch to your relationship. The coupon ideas can range from the more common: back scratches, foot rubs, back massages or taking a hot bath together; to more sensual activities that take place in the bedroom.

If you're really in a pinch, buy them a gift certificate to get a manicure & pedicure or a full body massage. It won't be the same as receiving touch from you, but at least you are acknowledging their need for touch when you aren't able to give them as much as they'd like.

Using the Love Languages, millions of couples have learned how to change the way they express their feelings to bring more love and joy into their relationships. With a bit of creativity and continued effort, you can learn quick and easy ways to better meet their needs. I hope you've found these Relationship Hacks useful as you work on improving communication, and increasing the love and connection in your relationship.

Have a relationship hack you'd like to share? Please feel free to email me! ☺

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