Sending Messages of Love to Children in Their Own Language

Each of us likes to be loved in a little different way. It is true for adults and it is true for children. Even small children have their own ways that they like to be shown love.

We love best when we customize our message of love to the person receiving it. In fact, messages of love are effective only when the person to whom we send the message feels loved, valued, supported, or cared about. We can say, 'I love you' to our children all day long, but they will believe us only if they feel loved. To help them feel loved we must discover what is important to each person - or their love language.

We can learn the love languages of the people in our families. Knowing how to best show love does not come automatically. It takes effort. That effort will pay off with closer relationships and more understanding. Family life can actually be more fun!

There are two love languages that seem to work with everyone. They are taking time and being understanding. Taking time means doing things together that both of you enjoy. Being understanding means listening to the feelings that are important to that person. There is a special unit dedicated to each of these languages.

There are some love languages that work very differently with different people. Some people are 'tell me' types. They want to be told regularly that they are loved and valued. Some people are 'show me' types. They are not convinced by words, they want actions. Some people are 'hug me' people. They like to be held or hugged. Each of these languages of love is important enough to have a special unit dedicated to it.

Most people prefer love in some combination of languages. Some people may like a little telling, some hugging, and lots of showing. There are several ways to determine how people prefer to be loved: We can notice how they show love; we can notice what works in showing them love; we can ask them.

Love languages change. Even when you have discovered a family members' preferred way to be loved, your messages have to be adapted for their changing moods and their changing lives. A child who once loved getting a teddy bear may now prefer a T shirt. A partner who usually likes to be told may prefer to be hugged when tired or lonely. Consider languages of love as something you never stop learning. Experiment. Try new ways of showing love to the members of your family.
Don’t think of this as extra work; think of this as smarter work. As you learn to show love to family members in the way they prefer, you will feel closer and even work together better. Give it a try!

Applications:

Discovering languages of love: For each member of your family, consider the following:

Notice: How does that person usually show love toward people?

Think about: What has seemed to work at showing love toward that family member?

Ask: “What are the things people do that best help you feel loved?” or “What can I do that will best show my love for you?”

Experiment: Try sending messages of love and see what works.

You may also be interested in reading the unit, “Learning Languages of Love in Marriage.”