

You've read the book—now go deeper!

This interactive guide includes study questions and exercises for you, for your spouse, and for group discussion. Learn to speak each of the five love languages with your children so you can better fill their love tanks.

For more information or to discover your love language, visit www.5LoveLanguages.com.

NOTES:

Love is the Foundation

- **1.** Of all the times you have felt love for or expressed love to your child, have there been occasions when that expression of love was conditional—that is, based on something she or he did, rather than who she or he is? Do you ever express love "just because"?
- **2.** What are some things you could do over the next week to fill up that tank? What takes away from it?
- **3.** How did your parents fill or not fill your emotional love tank? What can you learn from your childhood experience as you seek to love your own child?
- **4.** Page 24 offers some reminders that can help you adjust what to expect of your child. What is the best way to respond when your child's behavior disappoints you?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Invite the group to share times when their love toward their children has come across as conditional. What do you do in those times you may not "like" your child very much? How can we learn to love our kids unconditionally—and act that out?

Physical Touch

NOTES:

(LOVE LANGUAGE #1)

1. We	ere your	parents p	hysical	ly affed	ctionate,	or not s	30
mucł	n? What	effect doe	es this h	nave o	n you too	day?	

- **2.** Based on what you've learned in this chapter, do you provide enough touch to your children in appropriate circumstances? Why or why not? How could you improve?
- **3.** Where are the boundaries where physical touch might be harmful or excessive for each child?
- **4.** Discuss ways to get involved in "low-key," age-appropriate forms of physical touch, in addition to the normal hugs and kisses your children need. Identify opportunities to put these other forms of touching into practice.
- **5.** Over the next week increase your physical touch with your children, but make it age-appropriate as well as what fits each child's unique personality. Determine the effects of this and their response.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: How can you tell if one of your kids has physical touch as their love language? How do you respond, especially if it isn't your primary language? Invite group members to share their own childhood experiences with regard to physical touch, positive or negative. What can you learn from these experiences?

NOTES:

Words of Affirmation

(LOVE LANGUAGE #2)

- **1.** Think about positive and negative words from your childhood. What impact did they have, both at the time and over the long term?
- **2.** Have you seen a similar impact in your own kids from words spoken by you or your spouse? What are ways you can change the tune, moving from negative and angry words to positive and lovingly corrective ones?
- **3.** We often assume our children understand our love, even if we don't always express it. But children are very literal and may need to hear an explicit expression of love from us. Over the next week, every time you feel love, express it as directly as possible to your children. At the end of the week, ask them if they better understand your love for them.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Invite each group member to talk about whether they are comfortable giving—and receiving—affirming words. If some admit discomfort, discuss where this discomfort might come from and how we may overcome it to communicate meaningfully with those we love.

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Quality Time

(LOVE LANGUAGE #3)

- 1. How much quality time—that is, time spent with your child beyond meeting their essential needs—have you given each of your children during the past week? What kind of quality time does each of your children desire? Ask each of them what they enjoy most with you and why it is meaningful.
- **2.** The "tyranny of the urgent" is a serious problem in our (and sometimes our kids') schedules. Look back over the past month. What got in the way of spending quality time with your children?
- **3.** How might you take daily or weekly chores or responsibilities on the part of your child and turn them into shared learning experiences? How could you make the most of "car time" or bedtime?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Much of our best parenting takes place in quality-time encounters with our kids. Share some special memories of intimacy, learning, and sheer enjoyment from these times. Also, invite the group to tell stories of special times spent with their own parents.

NOTES:

Gifts

(LOVE LANGUAGE #4)

- **1.** Think of a gift you received, either as an adult or a child, that really meant a lot to you. Why did it mean so much? What does this tell you about yourself?
- **2.** Think back carefully to a gift you've given with mixed motives (be honest). Has there ever been a hint of payback, bribery, or even materialism or personal vanity?
- **3.** Examine the toys you have bought for your children recently, or recreational and entertainment items you gave to your teens. What were the upsides and downsides of each?
- **4.** Within the next month, give a gift to your children that is not tied to a special occasion. Note their responses—and what those responses tell you about their attitudes toward gifts.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Discuss ways in which we can deal with materialism among our kids. What do our own examples say to them? How can we teach our children to be generous?

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Acts of Service

(LOVE LANGUAGE #5)

- **1.** Do your children ever see you serving someone else beyond the family?
- **2.** Take inventory of everything you do for your child. Is it too much? Would your child be better off if you taught him or her some of these things?
- **3.** How do your kids respond when you ask them to perform some act of service? What needs work in this area?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Discuss whether you as parents tend to "do too much" for your kids. What are some of the things that get in the way of an attitude of service? How can we teach or encourage our children to serve others within the family? What are examples of appropriate acts of service for our children?

CHAPTER SEVEN

How to Discover Your Child's Primary Love Language

- **1.** Think of three significant times in the recent past when your child or children expressed love to you. Which love languages are represented?
- **2.** Our children ask for many things from us. Review the five love languages first and try to list as many requests as possible by specific love language category. Where do their requests tend to cluster?
- **3.** Look at the pattern of complaints or expressions of unhappiness in the circumstances of each child's life. What do they reveal is most lacking? What does the child most crave? How can you more effectively "fill the tank" in the most crucial areas?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Have you figured out your child's primary love language? What made you decide on that one? If you have older kids or teens, do they know your love language? Also, have the group discuss one another's primary love languages.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NOTES:

Discipline and the Love Languages

- **1.** There are many positive ways to discipline your child. Think back on the recent past when you have used the following methods with your child: modeling, verbal instruction, requests, teaching, and learning experiences. What happened?
- **2.** Look back on recent misbehavior from your child. Was it at least partially the result of an empty love tank, rather than willful rebellion? In what areas might your child be communicating a need for love, and how might you better fill the vacuum in the future?
- **3.** Of the five ways to shape your child's behavior, requests are the most effective. List the benefits for both of you. Now look at commands, physical manipulation, punishment, and behavior modification. Though necessary, what are the drawbacks for each child? Give specific instances when a different way probably would work better.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: When it comes to disciplining children, most parents, often without realizing it, either lean toward being too strict or too permissive. Analyze the origins of your parenting style by answering the following questions: How did my parents discipline me? What parenting books and experts have influenced me? How have I been influenced by other parents? How am I affected by the child himself or herself? (For example, a child you think of as "easy" might provoke less discipline—whether he or she needs it or not.)

Share your answers with group members and discuss the merits of these ideas. Through feedback from others, take steps to work on more effective ways to discipline your children.

CHAPTER NINE

Learning and the Love Languages

- **1.** What most motivates your child to learn? What most obstructs the learning process? Based on both of the above, how would you describe your child's overall strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning?
- **2.** How does the degree of communication you have with your child affect his or her confidence and security? How does your emphasis on grades help or hinder your child's learning? What ideas did you learn from this chapter that will help you further motivate your child in the future?
- **3.** Ask your child what skills he would like to learn. Make a list of every interest and plan how you might further it through some type of learning experience.
- **4.** In what way may you be taking too much or too little responsibility for your child's learning? How can you encourage your child while at the same time make them accountable for homework, tests, and the like?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Invite the group to share ideas on how parents can enhance their child's learning based on the child's primary love language. You may want to take notes as these ideas are shared.

CHAPTER TEN

Anger and Love

- **1.** Think of a righteous cause or issue that made you angry and motivated you to take action. How was your anger appropriate and channeled toward a positive result? How does this differ from destructive anger?
- **2.** How good are you at handling your own anger—and how does this influence how your children deal with theirs? What could you change?
- **3.** On a scale of 1 to 10, evaluate your child's integrity in the following areas: honesty, promise-keeping, and personal responsibility. How might your child's expression of anger (or lack thereof) relate to his or her behavior in these areas? How could you help?
- 4. How do you respond to your child's anger?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: If you have young children, share how you cope (or not) with "meltdowns." If you have older kids or teens, how can you keep arguments from spiraling out of control? Ask the group to share stories of successes and failures in this area.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

NOTES:

Speaking the Love Languages in Single-Parent Families

- **1.** Make a list of all the challenges of single parenting that can add stress to your relationship with your child—time pressures, financial difficulties, personal stress. How can you improve the situation?
- **2.** Now list some of the feelings your child has experienced because of a missing or distant parent: fear, anger, anxiety, denial or blame. How can you use your child's primary love language to help alleviate the pain?
- **3.** Many single-parent children succeed quite well in the long run—through hard work, dedication, and a positive attitude. Celebrate the positive things you've done over the years in coping with the difficult task of single parenting. How can you better play from your strengths? Make a resolution to improve in at least one weak area.
- **4.** Your children need role models and surrogate parents. What other extended family members or friends can help fill the void in your child's life? What suggestions from this chapter can you use to locate adults who can make a positive impact on their lives?

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Discuss how you as a single parent can be taken advantage of in your own need for love, acceptance, achievement, and so on. How might this happen with your employer, parents, friends, or even your children? What can you do to prevent this? Then let group members share ways in which speaking their child's primary love language has made a difference in their child's attitude or behavior.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NOTES:

Speaking the Love Languages in Marriage

- **1.** Based on the information in this chapter, what is your own love language? What is your spouse's? Share with each other how you might better fill each other's love tank.
- 2. Examine the ways you may have been speaking your own love language when trying to please your spouse. Make a list of specific ways that you could speak your spouse's primary love language. Practice this new language as much as possible over the next month.
- **3.** How might your areas of difficulty with your spouse revolve around conflicting love languages? Consider the impact of not understanding each other's primary love language, failing to speak it regularly, or using that language in a negative way, such as verbally criticizing when words of affirmation is your spouse's primary love language. How can both of your needs be met in a harmonious manner?
- **4.** Be honest with your spouse about times past when your love tank was less than full. Explain why this may not have been neglect but simply a misunderstanding of your needs. Describe more completely how you experience love as related to your primary love language.
- **5.** Think about your spouse's needs. Then make suggestions and let your mate react to make sure you have gotten the correct feedback as to what would make him or her feel loved. Select three ways that you will seek to meet your spouse's needs in the next week.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION: Talk with other couples about unique and creative ways of addressing your spouse's primary love language. Allow couples to share illustrations of how speaking each other's love language has made a difference in their relationship. Encourage couples to share efforts they took to learn how to speak their spouse's love language.
