



by Shari Scalone

Lawyers are trained in the art of persuasion and legal discourse, but this skill set may not directly overlap when communicating effectively with a significant other. What is a lawyer to do as Valentine's Day approaches? Luckily, one can get into the spirit of love by reviewing the key concepts described by Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate* (1995). Chapman begins by explaining that everyone speaks his or her own "love language," the primary method of giving and receiving love. He points out 5 different categories or methods of communicating and expressing love: words of affirmation, acts of service, affection, quality time, and gifts.

1. **Words of Affirmation** - Spoken kindness, verbal expression, and openness fall under this love language.
2. **Acts of Service** - This love language summarizes the saying "Actions speak louder than words." By relieving a burden or helping with a task, one can communicate appreciation and love.
3. **Affection** - Physical touch and intimacy comprise this love language.
4. **Quality Time** - This is a primary love language for those who prefer being together with their partner

while fully present in the moment.

5. **Gifts** - Taking the time to give a gift can make one's partner feel appreciated.

Understanding one's partner's love language and acting accordingly will fill his or her "Love Tank." The "Love Tank" analogy is a great metaphor for describing how loved someone feels. In the alternative, leaving the "Love Tank" on empty will likely lead to relationship issues. Interestingly, Chapman describes that most couples do not speak the same love language, thereby making the vast majority of relationships all the more challenging.

In addition, Chapman suggests that to discover a love language, one must (1) observe the way she expresses love to others, (2) analyze what she complains about most often, and (3) perceive what she requests from her significant other. People tend to naturally give love in the way that they prefer to receive love. Chapman suggests that peoples' love languages do not change over time, but instead develop and need to be nurtured in different ways. For those interested in identifying their primary love language, please visit <http://www.5lovelanguages.com>.

Chapman's concepts serve as a useful tool in forming and maintaining a stable, loving relationship. There is significant evidence that people who participate in satisfying, long-term relationships fare better on a whole variety of measures. Such benefits include fewer doctor's visits and colds, faster healing, less depression and substance abuse, lower blood pressure, less anxiety, better stress management, and longer life.

As attorneys, it is important to separate the stress of work from bleeding into our relationships. Practicing mindfulness, paying attention to each moment, and committing to acceptance will help prevent our work lives from negatively impacting our love lives. By keeping in mind that our loved ones are not part of the adversarial process, but rather our support system, we can strengthen and nurture our closest relationships. **B**



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