Appreciating the 5 Languages of Emotional Love

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Years ago, I read 'The 5 Love Languages' (1) by Gary Chapman - an anthropologist, speaker, and radio personality. Chapman posits that there are five emotional love languages, five ways people speak and understand emotional love: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. Not only do people express love via one or more of these languages, but each individual also appreciates love the most when expressed towards them in their primary language. Primary language(s) (note – people can be bilingual or even multilingual) are established early in life, but all languages can be learned in order to effectively (love another) speak the other person’s love language. Each language can have different dialects.

Many books have been written about love and relationships, but this stands out with a very practical message that can be responded to and implemented right away. The instructions are interactive – complete with separate profiles for people of varied identities, as well as a list of frequently asked questions and their answers.

I would have renamed this book ‘The 5 Appreciation Currencies’ to extend its application outside home and family. What if you knew how each of your staff members - and/or your trainees - prefers to be appreciated or thanked for their work? Knowing how I like to be appreciated prepares me to set appropriate work-site policies and boundaries. If you do not like to receive gifts, you can ask your colleagues to make charitable donations in your name rather than buy you presents…

Chapman wrote this book for the general public as an extension of his counseling and speaking work. As an academic primary care physician, I saw it bearing direct relevance on patients who cannot sleep and/or are depressed due to marital difficulties – a common office scenario. I could see myself prescribing (literally) *The 5 Love Languages* to any willing reader. I felt so strongly about this that I offered a book review saying so to two journals but was turned down by both. I forgot I had a draft in my email for a long time – until after a pandemic changed things.

What did the pandemic take away from me and others that is relevant to this book? Handshakes and hugs fell out of fashion and yielded to elbow and fist bumps – which do not create the same kind of connection. What did I do when could not shake hands in the clinical or education space? Hand out business cards; stretching my hand toward a new patient or learner seemed like the right thing to do.

Did you attend the 2022 AIAMC annual meeting? Did you see, give, experience, hear or read of any of these Love Languages (or Appreciation Currencies)?

Reference

1. Chapman, G. (2010). The 5 Love Languages. Northfield Publishing, Chicago.

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