

The Importance & Value of Understanding Love Languages & Emotional Needs

by Les Vahsholtz

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I want to share with you some things I have come to realize & understand as I look back at my first marriage & my present marriage to Carole. My first marriage of 23 years was so unhappy for both of us & my 20 years plus married to Carole is the exact opposite. Over the years, Carole & I have experienced a very close marriage, filled with happiness, contentment & fulfillment. So what is the difference? I was in both marriages. Why was one so bad & the other is so good? What makes a marriage work so well for some & other marriages have nothing but struggles & unhappiness?

So why do I want to share this with you now? Perhaps you are now... thinking .. what good is it for me to know why Les & Carole's marriage is so great when mine fell apart. And I can appreciate that comment at this point. Please bear in mind that both Carole & I have suffered failed marriages .. just like you have.

But my purpose is not to make you feel worse about a failed marriage. Or to suggest that you failed in some way & that is the reason for your Divorce. No.. My purpose is to perhaps give you some insight as to what worked & did not work in your marriage ... so that as you move on you can better understand yourself & your emotional needs in your singlehood. Then you will be able to see how you can blend with someone of the opposite sex in a relationship & perhaps in a marriage that will bring fulfillment to both of you. Even if you never marry again, I think it is of definite benefit to understand ourselves, our individual emotional needs & how we, as an individual person, naturally express & receive Love.

Beginning with the first date I had with Carole, our friendship seemed to be easy, or perhaps a better word is .. comfortable. I didn't need to pretend or try to be somebody I wasn't. I felt I could be ..me ..with her & it would be OK. And it has always been & still is that way. So .. Why is that?

It is only within the past decade that I have paid any attention to what has been called ...The Love Languages. Perhaps you are familiar with the term & have read some about it. Also, a number of years ago, I came across a book titled ...His Needs Her Needs.. by Willard Harley. For me, both of these books shed some light as to why my first marriage did not work for us and why my marriage to Carole is so mutually fulfilling. I have shared this with others in our Divorce Care groups but not to the extent that I am today. Maybe the reason you are getting more is because due to my ALS, I can't talk anymore & when I write it evolves into more. Maybe it is

because this is my last Divorce care group, or maybe it's because I think your group is special & will receive more benefit from what I have to say. Actually, it is a combination of all of these & more.

If at age 25, I had known & understood what I know now about Love Languages & differing emotional needs, I would like to think that I would have never married my first wife. Nor do I think that if I had the knowledge of Love languages & emotional needs during my first marriage, that the marriage could have been saved, at least not to the point of fulfillment & happiness. Our emotional needs & hang ups were that far off. We tried for years to change things with Christian counseling, but it just could not be done. So we gave up & stayed together 8 more years until the children graduated high school & my wife could get back into the work force. Then we mutually divorced.

The fact is, we should have never gotten married. That is my purpose of sharing this with you. Probably all of you will, at some point in the future .. consider .. marrying again, or at least start dating. But remember the formula! One year of healing for every 4 years of marriage. Don't start dating too soon! Heal first, ... then you can consider dating.

But when you do consider dating, I recommend reading two books. They are ...[The 5 Love Languages](#) ... by Gary Chapman .. & , as I mentioned earlier, the book titled [..His Needs....Her Needs](#)... by Willard Harley. I believe that these books can help to assess compatibility as your dating relationship progresses.

Before I shared these books with any one in our Divorce Care sessions, I asked Pastor Jeff Meyers, who is Christ Lutheran's leader of family ministries, about these books & their authors. He immediately said they are good books with great insights. Pastor Jeff has a psychology degree so I recommend these books with confidence.

Let me read a few quotes by the authors from their books. Gary Chapman, .. author of [The 5 Love languages](#) says, ... & I quote.....

"The problem is that we have overlooked one fundamental truth: People speak different love languages. Your emotional love language & that of your spouse may be as different as Chinese from English. ... My conclusion after 30 years of marriage counseling is that there are 5 emotional love languages.

Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, ... and Physical Touch.

However, within these 5 love languages there are many dialects. The important thing is to speak the love language of your spouse. We tend to speak our primary love language and we become confused when our spouse does not understand what we are communicating. We are expressing our love, but the message does not come through because we are speaking what, ...

to them, ... is a foreign language. Therein lies the fundamental problem, ... and it is the purpose of this book ... to offer a solution". .. End quote.

Now consider a quote by Willard Harley from his book His Needs..... Her Needs.

"Often the failure of men & women to meet each other's emotional needs is simply due to ignorance of each other's needs & not selfish unwillingness to be considerate".

... Harley goes on to say...

"Over the years, I have repeatedly asked the question, What could your spouse do for you that would make you the happiest? I have been able to classify most of their responses into ten emotional needs Admiration, ... affection, conversation, ... domestic support, ... family commitment, financial support, honesty & openness, physical attractiveness, recreational companionship, ...and sexual fulfillment. Of these ten emotional needs, the five listed as most important by men were usually the five least important for women .. & vice versa. No wonder husbands & wives have so much difficulty meeting each other's needs! They are willing to do for each other what they appreciate the most, ... but it turns out that their efforts are misdirected because what they appreciate most, their spouses appreciate least!

Fulfilling those needs does not mean you have to painfully grit your teeth, making the best of something you hate. It means preparing yourself to meet needs you may not appreciate yourself. By learning to understand your spouse as a totally different person than you, you can begin to become an expert in meeting all of that person's emotional needs."

The husband & wife who commit themselves to meet each other's needs will lay a foundation for lifelong happiness in a marriage that is deeper & more satisfying than they ever dreamed possible". .. End quote.

What I understand author Harley as saying is when couples look at the 10 emotional needs & rank them in order of importance to them individually, each must understand how their spouse ranks these needs in importance, & then seek to meet those needs for their spouse. Obviously, the closer their top 5 match, the easier it will be for them to make a fulfilling marriage. When the top 5 emotional needs are met on both sides, the tensions can more easily be resolved since they are not being influenced by continuous disappointment of unmet needs.

I once heard Chip Ingram (who has also written on this subject) say ... & I quote.... "No one's emotional tank can run on empty forever". ... End quote.

This is how I believe some ... and I emphasize ... some... affairs can happen in a marriage. Emotional needs go continuously unmet for one or both spouses ... and then someone from the outside starts servicing those unmet needs ... and slowly over time, bad things can happen.

And likewise I perceive Gary Chapman, author of The 5 Love languages as saying,"the more you understand what the primary love language of your spouse is & use that language to express your love, the more your spouse will feel your love. We all have the natural tendency to show our love to our spouse in terms of our own primary love language. If it makes me feel loved, it should make my spouse feel loved! Right? ... But if the love languages are different, that may not happen".

An example I have heard Gary Chapman make, was about a minister who had read Gary's book & later told Gary that he had been married for 17 years without understanding that we have love languages. He found that His love language was "words of affirmation" & his wife's was "receiving gifts". For 17 years he would daily tell her words of affirmation & she would continuously buy him stuff he didn't really want. How easy it was for them to fix once they knew & understood.

Carole & I have similar love languages. It centers around Touch, .. quality time together & .. words of affirmation with Touch as a very strong primary. So if you see us in church you will notice that our bodies are touching a lot. We sleep that way too. A lot is said in our touches & we like to be around each other. You can find out what your primary love languages are by answering the questions at the end of Gary Chapman's book. How you rank your answers will reveal your primary & secondary love language.

Also, Carole & I list the same top 5 emotional needs. Not necessarily in the same order! But the same 5 are most important to us. That is, in my opinion, why our relationship from the very start was & still is Easy & comfortable.

But I also realize that we are very blessed. Statistics show that most couples don't match up quite as well ... & more understanding needs to be applied. I believe that these two books, .. The 5 Love Languages & ... His Needs Her Needs can help to enrich or even save a marriage. Or, better yet ... if these books are read by both spouses & taken to heart ... problems in a marriage can be minimized or maybe even eliminated. But .. **both** and I emphasize ... **both**..... both spouses have to be willing to work at it.

I hope that these words will help you avoid getting into another relationship leading to a marriage that will end in another divorce. That is one of the main purposes of our Divorce Care..... to help you avoid another divorce & become a stronger Christ centered person.

God's Blessings to you all, Les Vahsholtz