

WHAT IS YOUR “GOOD WILL” LEVEL?
THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES
By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

Recently, we were exploring with a couple what happens when they get into conflict. One said, “when my ‘good will’ level is high then I’m open, but if not, then we butt heads.”

What a great concept, we thought. What raises your ‘good will’ level? General well-being is necessary to feel ‘good will’ for another person; ensuring that basic needs are met and you are not tired, hungry, or afraid. Beyond that there are many things you can do to increase the level of ‘good will’ between you and your partner.

We recently read a book called *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. This book presents the idea that there are five main ways that we express love to our partners. However, often we are not ‘speaking’ the same language as our partner. This leads to misunderstandings and the lowering of our ‘good will’ level.

Chapman identifies the five ways that people express and want to receive love as:

1. With **words**: These include verbal or written expressions, words of appreciation, encouragement and support.
2. With **physical touch**: This includes gentle touches on the arm or shoulder, hugging, kissing. People who speak the physical touch language need non-sexual touch as well as sexual touch.
3. With **acts of service**: This includes the variety of things we do for our partners, including meal preparation, housework, chores and providing financially for the family.
4. With **gifts**: These may be large or small; gifts that are found, made or bought. They are especially meaningful to those people who value this language if they have been picked out especially with thought about the receiver.
5. With **quality time**: This language is the hardest to define as we all have different ideas of what constitutes quality time but most often includes togetherness, quality conversation, undivided attention on each other. This can be spoken by activities like generously listening to your partner or by initiating fun, playful outings. For this language it is best if you ask your partner what represents quality time for them.

At our last couples retreats we presented the concept of the five love languages and then challenged the couples to try out all five languages throughout the weekend. We all had fun watching each other create little gifts for each other, go off and do activities like jumping on the trampoline, do yoga, go for walks together and bring each other a cup of tea.

We have one client couple where he says to her “I do so much for you” seeing all of his acts of service, making lunches, etc. as showing her that he loves her. Meanwhile,

she doesn't receive these as expressions of love but as simply things that needed doing. What she really wants is for him to spend more quality time with her.

In our own relationship, Bob's primary language of love was physical touch. He would take it personally when Marlene would not respond or sometimes even flinch when he touched her. We learned that Marlene's flinching had nothing to do with Bob; touch wasn't one of her languages. Marlene learned to touch Bob many times throughout the day, gently on his arm or shoulder as she passed. Bob learned that when Marlene said "let's have fun together" she was really wanting some quality time.

We recommend that couples become "multi-lingual" expanding their repertoire of love languages and increasing the ratio of positive to negative interactions. John Gottman researched indicators of healthy relationships and found that marriages were significantly more likely to succeed when the couple's interactions were near the magic ratio of 5 positives to one negative.

Here are some important questions you can ask yourself:

1. What is my "good will level" or in other words, what is the ratio of positives to negatives in my relationship with my partner? Toward my partner? What I receive from my partner?
2. Do I want to change the ratio of positive to negatives?
3. What is my favorite love language? In giving love? In receiving love?
4. What is my partner's love language and how often do I "speak" it?

Have fun raising your "good will level."

Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Therapy. They specialize in "2 on 2 couples coaching" and in experiential group playshops. They offer semi-annual Couples Retreats. For more information call 613-594-9248 or see www.marleneandbob.com.