

Fostering Relationships

Relationships are vital to our healing of mental and spiritual health.

"The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed." – Carl Jung

Healthy Relationships

5 key behaviors/attitudes of healthy relationship Communication

- **Communication** (it's a two way street) - *the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings. This requires listening to each other effectively.*
 - **Cooperation/collaboration** - *the process of working together to the same end.*
 - **Compromise** - *an agreement or a settlement of a dispute that is reached by each side making concessions.*
 - **Caring/Love** - *displaying kindness and concern for others. Expression of love.*
 - **Trust (BRAVING)** - *firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something.*
 - **Flexibility** of self to change and practice communication skills - in a dyadic relationship – each must ask: if the relationship is healthy overall Is there something I need to change in myself to improve the relationship?

Skills and concepts associated with 5 keys of Relationships (See handouts)

- EAR technique (see below)
- Fair fighting rules/rules of respect
- Setting and Maintaining Boundaries
- Assertiveness
- "I" versus "You" messages
- 5 love languages
- Resentment
- Forgiveness
- Apologies/ABC's of responsibility
- Unhealthy vs healthy relationships

EAR technique (We Actively Hear with EAR) How We Listen

The EAR technique is an anagram that stands for:

- **Empathy** - *the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.*
- **Acceptance** - *the action or process of being received as adequate or suitable, typically to be admitted into a group.*
- **Respect** - *due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others.*

"BRAVING"- The Anatomy of Trust

Brene Brown

The following acronym BRAVING describes the core components of trust. By breaking trust down in this way we are better equipped to articulate and address specific areas where we are feeling betrayed or mistrustful in our relationship to self and others.

"B"- BOUNDARIES: I will say no when I feel I need to and I am willing to respect and accept your "no" when you are employing your boundaries. We hold boundaries for others and expect them held for ourselves.

"R"- RELIABILITY: I can only trust you if you do what you say you are going to do over and over again. This means (at work or play) staying aware of your competencies and limitations so that you don't over-promise and can deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities. Your actions mean more than your words. Trust is built over time with small acts.

"A"- ACCOUNTABILITY: I can only trust you if when you make a mistake, you are willing to own it, apologize, and make amends. I can only trust and respect you if when I make a mistake, you are willing to let me own it, apologize, and you will offer true forgiveness.

"V"- VAULT: You don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share. I need to know that my confidences are kept and that you are not sharing information with me about other people that should be confidential." Relationships built on gossip about others are not trusting they are based on "common enemy intimacy.

"I"- INTEGRITY: Choosing courage over comfort. Choosing what is right over fun, fast, or easy. And practicing your values not just professing your values.

"N"- NON-JUDGEMENT: You and I can both struggle and feel comfortable asking for help. We can freely share holes in our knowledge and skills without fear of judgment. If we judge ourselves for needing and accepting help, we may also be judging others who we help.

"G"- GENEROSITY: Our relationship is a trusting relationship if you can assume the most generous thing about my words, intentions, and behaviors. I will do the same. When in doubt we seek to understand and be curious before we judge.

Trust of others begins with self-trust. If you can't count on yourself you can't ask other people to give you what you don't have.

Fair Fighting Rules

Before you begin, ask yourself why you feel upset.

Are you angry because your partner left the mustard on the counter? Or are you angry because you feel like you're doing an uneven share of the housework, and this is just one more piece of evidence? Take time to think about your own feelings before starting an argument.

Discuss one topic at a time.

Don't let "You left dishes in the sink" turn into "You watch too much TV." Discussions that get off-topic are more likely to get heated, and less likely to solve the original problem. Choose one topic and stick to it.

No degrading language.

Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure your partner feels just as bad. Doing so leads to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.

Express your feelings with words.

"I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls." "I feel scared when you yell." Structure your sentences as "I" statements ("I feel emotion when event") to express how you feel while taking responsibility for your emotions. However, starting with "I" does not give a license to ignore the other fair fighting rules.

Take turns speaking.

Give your full attention while your partner speaks. Avoid making corrections or thinking about what you want to say. Your only job is to understand their point of view, even if you disagree. If you find it difficult to not interrupt, try setting a timer allowing 1-2 minutes for each person to speak without interruption.

No stonewalling.

Sometimes, the easiest way to respond to an argument is to retreat into your shell and refuse to speak. This is called stonewalling. You might feel better temporarily, but the original issue will remain unresolved and your partner will feel more upset. If you absolutely cannot go on, tell your partner you need to take a time-out. Agree to resume the discussion later.

No yelling.

Yelling does not help anyone see your point of view. Instead, it sends the message that only your words matter. Even if yelling intimidates your partner into giving up, the underlying problem only grows worse.

Take a time-out if things get too heated.

In a perfect world, we would all follow these rules 100% of the time... but it just doesn't work like that. If an argument starts to become personal or heated, take a time-out. Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has cooled down.

Attempt to come to a compromise or an understanding.

There isn't always a perfect answer to an argument. Life is too messy for that. Do your best to come to a compromise (this means some give and take from both sides). If you can't come to a compromise, simply taking the time to understand your partner's perspective can help soothe negative feelings.

Assertive Communication



Assertive Communication: A communication style in which a person stands up for their own needs and wants, while also taking into consideration the needs and wants of others, without behaving passively or aggressively.

Traits of Assertive Communicators

- Clearly state needs and wants
- Eye contact
- Listens to others without interruption
- Appropriate speaking volume
- Steady tone of voice
- Confident body language

Assertiveness Tips

Respect yourself. Your needs, wants, and rights are as important as anyone else's. It's fine to express what you want, so long as you are respectful toward the rights of others.

Express your thoughts and feelings calmly. Giving the silent treatment, yelling, threatening, and shaming are all great examples of what not to do. Take responsibility for your emotions, and express them in a calm and factual manner. Try starting sentences with "I feel..."

Plan what you're going to say. Know your wants and needs, and how you can express them, before entering a conversation. Come up with specific sentences and words you can use.

Say "no" when you need to. You can't make everyone happy all the time. When you need to say "no", do so clearly, without lying about the reasons. Offer to help find another solution.

Examples of Assertive Communication

"I've been feeling frustrated about doing most of the chores around the house. I understand that you're busy, but I need help. How can we make this work?"

The speaker clearly states his feelings about the situation and asks for help.

"I won't be able to take you to the airport on Friday. I've had a long week, and I want to rest."

The speaker expresses their own needs and wants by clearly stating "no."

"I'm having a hard time sleeping when your music is on. What if you use headphones, or I can help you move the speakers to another room."

The speaker clearly states their needs while also considering the needs and wants of the other person.

Setting Boundaries



Personal boundaries are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

Know Your Boundaries

Boundaries should be based on your values, or the things that are important to you. For example, if you value spending time with family, set firm boundaries about working late.

Your boundaries are yours, and yours alone. Many of your boundaries might align with those who are close to you, but others will be unique.

Know your boundaries *before* entering a situation. This will make it less likely you’ll do something you’re not comfortable with.

What to Say

You always have the right to say “no”. When doing so, express yourself clearly and without ambiguity so there is no doubt about what you want.

“I’m not comfortable with this”

“Please don’t do that”

“Not at this time”

“I can’t do that for you”

“This doesn’t work for me”

“I’ve decided not to”

“This is not acceptable”

“I’m drawing the line at ____”

“I don’t want to do that”

What to Do

Use Confident Body Language

Face the other person, make eye contact, and use a steady tone of voice at an appropriate volume (not too quiet, and not too loud).

Be Respectful

Avoid yelling, using put-downs, or giving the silent treatment. It’s okay to be firm, but your message will be better received if you are respectful.

Plan Ahead

Think about what you want to say, and how you will say it, before entering a difficult discussion. This can help you feel more confident about your position.

Compromise

When appropriate, listen and consider the needs of the other person. You never *have* to compromise, but give-and-take is part of any healthy relationship.



Steven Stosny, Ph.D.
Anger in the Age of Entitlement

Chains of Resentment

Can you name the chains you drag through life?

By Steven Stosny, Ph.D.



The road to bad sex, divorce, alienated children, aggressive driving, business failure, community disintegration, and violence begins with resentment.

Resentment is the persistent feeling that you're being treated unfairly - not getting due respect, appreciation, affection, help, apology, consideration, praise, or reward. It keeps you locked in a devalued state, wherein it is extremely difficult to improve or appreciate or to connect positively with people in general. It carries fantasies of retribution, which stimulate small doses of adrenalin and cortisol for temporary increase in energy and confidence.

Resentment rarely goes away on its own, simply because it doesn't produce enough adrenalin for the amphetamine/crash effect of stronger forms of anger. While exhaustion limits the duration of rage, you can stay resentful for years on end. Without the exhaustion factor, the retaliatory fantasies of resentment persist long enough to become habituated. Thus resentment is more of a mood than an emotional state, and the behaviors it motivates are more habit than choice, with disastrous effects on health and wellbeing.

The habitual nature of resentment means that it is never specific to one behavior - nobody resents just one thing - and that its content is rarely forgotten. Instead, each new incident of perceived unfairness automatically links onto previous ones, eventually forging a heavy chain.

The chain of resentment always extends into the distant past. In advanced stages it goes into the future. That's when you hear things like, "It's going all right now, but she'll find some way to screw up the weekend," or, "It's fine at the moment, but the 'real him' will come out, just wait."

The Chain of Resentment is Self-linking

The tremendous effort required to drag the chain of resentment through life makes us hyper-vigilant for possible ego offenses, lest they "sneak up" on us. In other words, the chain of resentment makes us look for things to resent. This creates frequent sour moods and an atmosphere wherein no offense is too trivial or too unrealistic to be added as yet another link on the chain. We'll find things to resent in the news, traffic patterns, a dearth of parking places, the temperature of drinking water, and in other people's tastes, thoughts, opinions, mannerisms, and feelings.

A member of a court-ordered class I once taught had a colorful way of describing the effects of resentment. He said that dragging the chain of resentment through life is like carrying around a bag of horse manure. (Okay, he did not say "manure.") You want to smear the bag of horse do-do in the face of the person you resent. So you carry it around, waiting for the opportunity, and carry it around, and carry it around, and carry it around.

And who stinks?

ABC's of Taking Responsibility

A – Admit you made a mistake (Avoid self-blame)

When you admit you made a mistake you make a genuine, heart-felt apology using the tips indicated on the Apology tips. Clearly state the specific mistake and how it affects the other person.

B – Be willing to take whatever consequences arise from the wrong-doing

Consequences come in many forms and sometimes accepting the consequences can rebuild any trust that was broken or can be a motivation to not do something again. Be willing to accept consequences of your mistakes – some will be natural while others may be imposed by someone. This of course requires a fair assessment of the consequences. Any type of abuse (physical, mental, emotional abuse) should not be a consequence of wrong doing.

C – Commit to not do it again

Commit in your mind to not continue doing the wrong behavior. Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of not doing the wrong behavior anymore.

11 Most Effective Exercises for Letting Go of Resentment

3 tools you need:

- Courage
- Compassion
- Patience

Steps to letting go:

- Name the people toward whom you feel resentment
- Identify the causes or events behind your resentments
- Describe your emotions/feelings and reasons for feeling that way
- Describe how resentment is affecting your life
- Use writing exercises to work through your resentment
- Use meditation app or other skills to change your mind and body while doing these steps
- Write out affirmations that help you release your feelings
- Step into the other persons shoes
- Break up with your resentment
- Write a letter to the other person

Forgiveness

Information Sheet



Forgiveness is a process where someone who has been wronged chooses to let go of their resentment, and treat the wrongdoer with compassion.

Deepening Understanding of Forgiveness

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or condoning the wrongdoing, granting legal mercy, or reconciling a relationship. You can forgive a person while in no way believing that their actions were acceptable or justified.

On the other hand, simply saying the words "I forgive you", or accepting an apology, is not forgiveness. In fact, forgiveness can occur without ever speaking to the wrongdoer. Forgiveness is an emotional change that occurs within the person who has been wronged.

What forgiveness is:

The decision to overcome pain that was inflicted by another person.

Letting go of anger, resentment, shame, and other emotions associated with an injustice, even though they are reasonable feelings.

Treating the offender with compassion, even though they are not entitled to it.

What forgiveness isn't:

Reconciliation (repairing or returning to a relationship).

Forgetting the injustice.

Condoning or excusing the offender's behavior.

Granting legal mercy to the offender.

"Letting go", but wishing for revenge.

The Four Phases of Forgiveness

- 1 The Uncovering Phase.** During the first phase of forgiveness, you will improve your understanding of the injustice, and how it has impacted your life.
- 2 The Decision Phase.** During the second phase, you will gain a deeper understanding of what forgiveness is, and make the decision to choose or reject forgiveness as an option.
- 3 The Work Phase.** During the third phase, you will start to understand the offender in a new way, which will allow positive feelings toward the offender and yourself.
- 4 The Deepening Phase.** During the final phase of forgiveness, you will further decrease the negative emotions associated with the injustice. You may find meaning in the experiences, and recognize ways in which you have grown as a result.

[MENU](#)

Health

[\(/health\)](/health)

Forgiveness: Your Health Depends on It

[Aging and Relationships \(/health/wellness-and-prevention/aging-and-relationships\)](/health/wellness-and-prevention/aging-and-relationships)[Women's Health: Mind and Mood \(/health/wellness-and-prevention/womens-health-mind-and-mood\)](/health/wellness-and-prevention/womens-health-mind-and-mood)

Whether it's a simple spat with your spouse or long-held resentment toward a family member or friend, unresolved conflict can go deeper than you may realize—it may be affecting your physical health. The good news: Studies have found that the act of forgiveness can reap huge rewards for your health, lowering the risk of heart attack; improving cholesterol levels and sleep; and reducing pain, [blood pressure](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/adult/cardiovascular_diseases/high_blood_pressurehypertension) (http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/adult/cardiovascular_diseases/high_blood_pressurehypertension), and levels of anxiety, depression and stress. And research points to an increase in the forgiveness-health connection as you age.

"There is an enormous physical burden to being hurt and disappointed," says [Karen Swartz, M.D.](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/profiles/results/directory/profile/0006521/karen-swartz) (<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/profiles/results/directory/profile/0006521/karen-swartz>), director of the Mood Disorders Adult Consultation Clinic at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Chronic anger puts you into a fight-or-flight mode, which results in numerous changes in heart rate, blood pressure and [immune response](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy_aging/healthy_connections/forgiveness-your-health-depends-on-it#definitions_block) (https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy_aging/healthy_connections/forgiveness-your-health-depends-on-it#definitions_block). Those changes, then, increase the risk of depression, heart disease and [diabetes](#), among other conditions. Forgiveness, however, calms stress levels, leading to improved health.

Can You Learn to Be More Forgiving?

Forgiveness is not just about saying the words. "It is an active process in which you make a conscious decision to let go of negative feelings whether the person deserves it or not," Swartz says. As you release the anger, resentment and hostility, you begin to feel empathy, compassion and sometimes even affection for the person who wronged you.

FORGIVENESS: THE GIFT WE GIVE OURSELVES

Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.

—Mark Twain

Holding on to anger and resentment can be a very painful, and potentially harmful, process. As Stephen Hayes, one of the founders of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy said, “Unforgiveness is like being on a giant hook. Next to you on the hook is the person who has hurt you. The hook is extremely painful. Wherever you go, so does the hook and so does the offender. The only way you can get off the hook is if you allow the offender off first. The cost of not allowing the offender off the hook is, perhaps, a lifetime of unhappiness.”

Just as hostility is noted to have many negative effects,[1] forgiveness is shown to bring many benefits to the forgiver. Some of beneficial effects include the following:[2-12]

- Improved mental health
- Improved well-being
- Reduced negative emotions
- Improved satisfaction with life
- Fewer physical ailments
- Reduced fatigue
- Better sleep quality
- Reduced vulnerability to chronic pain
- Less stress
- Lowered levels of disordered eating behavior

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

“Forgiveness can be defined as a freely made choice to give up revenge, resentment, or harsh judgments toward a person who caused a hurt, and to strive to respond with generosity, compassion, and kindness toward that person.”[13]

When we think of forgiveness, what comes to mind most often is about forgiving an offender. However, there are other forms of forgiveness as well:

- We may struggle to forgive ourselves.
- We may find ourselves needing to ask someone else for forgiveness.
- We may need to accept a request for forgiveness.
- We may find ourselves needing to find forgiveness related to existential concerns. An example of this would be the need to forgive the world for the suffering that is present in it, or to forgive God for not preventing a death.

In forgiveness work, a person must come to recognize that suffering is not directed at us alone; rather, it is part of human experience.

Forgiveness is a challenging area for most people, and confusion often exists about what it entails. The following are important points to keep in mind about forgiveness:

- Forgiveness does *not* require us to reconcile with the offender and have continued contact. There are times when it is in our best interest to stay away from the offender.
- Forgiveness is a process that can take time; it is not just a decision we make quickly. To forgive generally requires some emotional and mental energy on our part. (Refer to "The Stages of Forgiveness" below.)
- To forgive means that we have to fully accept what actually happened, how we were hurt, how our lives were affected by the offense, and even how we have changed as a result.
- When we do not forgive, we continue to give the offense and the offender power over us. To forgive is to become free to move forward.
- We need never forget what happened. In spite of our continued memory of the event, we nevertheless forgive and live life in the present.
- Forgiveness does *not* relieve offenders of their responsibility. If it is necessary to pursue justice, we can still take the action that is needed, such as pressing legal charges, filing complaints, or otherwise appropriately addressing concerns.

DECIDING TO FREE OURSELVES FROM PAIN: CHOOSING FORGIVENESS

No one can make this decision for us. We must be ready to reclaim the parts of our life that were affected. We may need assistance to do this, depending on such factors as who perpetrated the offense (oneself, a family member, a stranger, etc.) and the amount of suffering or loss involved. We might benefit from using a journal to write down our thoughts or to work through the process. Depending on the situation, it might also be helpful to talk with a trusted friend, clergy member, or therapist. Mobilize whatever resources will support you in this before continuing. If you find that you are becoming distressed, stop the activity and consider obtaining professional assistance.

THE STAGES OF FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness researchers Enright and Fitzgibbons provided four stages of forgiveness:[13]

- **Uncovering.** This stage is about gathering information about how the offense has hurt us, changed us, or cost us. Often this includes reflection on how it has preoccupied us mentally or emotionally.
- **Decision.** Once we understand how not forgiving has cost us and what forgiveness is, we can decide to commit to the process.

- **Work.** This stage is challenging. We work to gain a deeper understanding of the offender, our self, and the relationship, as applicable. During this stage, we begin to experience more empathy and compassion for our self and for the perpetrator.
- **Deepening.** Finding meaning in the suffering might include becoming more connected to others or recognizing that suffering is universal.

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you

—Lewis B. Smedes

WHEN YOU ARE COMFORTABLE EXPLORING A GRIEVANCE, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

- Are there events or situations in which you feel that you have been wronged and which continue to bother you?
- How did the event(s) change you? Did it change how you view your world, yourself, and others?
- What emotions are still present? Anger? Guilt? Shame? Hurt? Others?
- What has holding on to this cost you in terms of time, relationships, energy, happiness, etc.? Has it affected your health? Your sleep?
- How often does the event come to mind? How often do you dwell on it?
- What particular benefits might come to you if you were able to emotionally forgive the offense and/or the offender?
- Do you feel ready to do the work of forgiveness in order to free yourself from the past? Can you decide that forgiveness is for you and not the offender? If yes, continue with the following questions:
 - What is left to express to the offender or about what happened to you? Write it down, express it through creative means such as drawing, or talk it out. You can also write a letter to the offender, outlining what is unexpressed. There is no need to send it out unless that is important to you.
 - Have you needed forgiveness yourself from another person at some time? What was that experience like, and how did you feel? Recognize that everyone has been both the forgiven and the forgiver at some point.
 - Is some of what you experienced through the offense actually impersonal (not really about you) but rather related to the suffering that is experienced by others on this planet?
 - If you put yourself in the other person's place, it can create empathy. You may ask, what led them to do what they did? *This empathy, however, does not mean that their behavior is condoned.*
- What can you learn from this experience? How can this connect you more with others? How can more of your energy go into what you value? (Refer to the "Values" tool.)
- Appreciate that the process may take time or additional resources. Refer to the Forgiveness Resources section at the end of this handout.

Forgiveness is an absolute necessity for continued human existence...

—Bishop Desmond Tutu

RESOURCES

BOOKS

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- Enright RD. *The Forgiving Life: A Pathway to Overcoming Resentment and Creating a Legacy of Love*. Washington, DC: APA Life Tools; 2012.
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- Luskin, F. *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness*. New York: Harper Collins; 2002.
- Smedes LB. *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve*. San Francisco: Harper and Row; 1984.
- Worthington E. *Five Steps to Forgiveness: The Art and Science of Forgiving*. New York: Crown Publishers; 2003.

MOVIES

- *The Power of Forgiveness*. Journey Films; 2008.
- *Journey Toward Forgiveness*. A documentary originally for ABC TV.
- *Forgiveness: A Time to Love and a Time to Hate*; 2011. A documentary for PBS and available on PBS.org

WEBSITES

- [Forgiveness Worksheets and Handouts](#) (with worksheets, handouts, etc.).
- [International Forgiveness Institute](#) from Dr. Robert Enright and associates
- [Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance](#) from Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance
- [Project Forgive](#)

FORGIVENESS MEDITATIONS

- Kornfield J. *The Beginners Guide to Forgiveness: How to Free Your Heart and Awaken Compassion*. Sounds True (recording with forgiveness meditations); 2002.
- Brach, T. Free guided meditation on forgiveness on her [website](#).

AUTHORS

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9. Akhtar S, Barlow J. Forgiveness therapy for the promotion of mental well-being: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Trauma Violence Abus*. 2018;19(1):107-122.
10. Toussaint LL, Shields GS, Slavich GM. Forgiveness, stress, and health: a 5-week dynamic parallel process study. *Ann Behav Med*. 2016;50(5):727-735.
11. Peterson SJ, Van Tongeren DR, Womack SD, Hook JN, Davis DE, Griffin BJ. The benefits of self-forgiveness on mental health: evidence from correlational and experimental research. *J Posit Psychol*. 2017;12(2):159-168.
12. Davis DE, Ho MY, Griffin BJ, et al. Forgiving the self and physical and mental health correlates: a meta-analytic review. *J Couns Psychol*. 2015;62(2):329-335.
13. Enright R, Freedman S, Rique J. Psychology of interpersonal forgiveness. In: Enright RD, North J, eds. *Exploring Forgiveness*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press; 1998.

APOLOGIZING

- Use words that convey that you understand the other person's hurt feelings, and can appreciate why they may feel angry.
- Be as specific as you can about the mistake, and as clear as you can about your responsibility.
- Recognize why and how much the person was injured by your words or actions.
- Allow the person time to think about your apology.
- Clearly request forgiveness but don't expect or demand it.
- Convey appreciation for the role the person plays in your life and why the apology is so important.
- Don't use qualifiers *if* or *but* in your apology since it sounds as though you are justifying your actions.

I'm sorry if I was rude...

I'm sorry but...

- Write your apology down and rehearse it over a few times.
- Communicating vulnerability in an apology can help the other person to hear the apology as genuine.

Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages Assessment

Words of Affirmation ♥ Quality Time ♥ Receiving Gifts ♥ Acts of Service ♥ Physical Touch

Which of these is your primary love language? The following profile will help you know for sure. Then you and your partner can discuss your respective love languages and use this information to improve your relationship! The profile consists of 30 pairs of statements. You can only pick one statement in each pair of statements, and then, in the right hand column, circle the letter that matches up with the statement you choose. Pick the statement that sounds *most* appealing of the two. Once you've finished making your selections, go back and count the number of times you circled each individual letter. List the results in the appropriate spaces at the end of the profile. Your primary love language is the one that receives the most points!

1	Receiving love notes from my partner makes me feel good. I love my partner's hugs.	A E
2	I like to be alone with my partner. I feel loved when my partner does a chore around the house for me.	B D
3	Receiving special gifts from my partner makes me happy. I enjoy taking long trips with my partner.	C B
4	I feel loved when my partner helps with my homework. I like it when my partner touches me.	D E
5	I feel loved when my partner puts his/her arms around me. I know my partner loves me when he/she surprises me with gifts.	E C
6	I like going most anywhere with my partner. I love to hold my partner's hand.	B E
7	I value the gifts my partner gives me. I love to hear my partner say he/she loves me.	C A
8	I like for my partner to sit close to me. I like when my partner tells me I look good.	E A
9	Spending time with my partner makes me happy. Even the smallest gift from my partner is important to me.	B C
10	I feel loved when my partner tells me that he/she is proud of me. When my partner helps me clean my room, I know they love me.	A D
11	No matter what we do, I love doing things with my partner. Supportive comments from my partner make me feel good.	B A
12	Little things my partner does for me mean more to me than things he/she say. I love to hug my partner.	D E
13	My partner's praises mean a lot to me. It means a lot to me when my partner gives me gifts I really like.	A C
14	Just being around my partner makes me feel good. I love it when my partner gives me a massage.	B E
15	My partner's positive reactions to my accomplishments are so encouraging. It means a lot to me when my partner helps me with something that I know he/she hates.	A D
16	I never get tired of my partner's kisses. I love that my partner shows real interest in the things I like I do.	E B
17	I can count on my partner to help me with my projects. I still get excited when opening a gift from my partner.	D C

18	I love for my partner to compliment my appearance. I love that my partner listens to me and respects my ideas.	A B
19	I can't help but touch my partner when he/she is close by. My partner sometimes runs errands for me, and I appreciate that.	E D
20	My partner deserves an award for all the things he/she does to help me. I'm sometimes amazed at how thoughtful my partner's gifts to me are.	D C
21	I love having my partner's undivided attention. I love that my partner helps clean my house.	B D
22	I look forward to seeing what my partner gives me for my birthday. I never get tired of hearing my partner tell me that I am important to him/her.	C A
23	My partner lets me know he/she loves me by giving me gifts. My partner shows his/her love by helping me without having to ask.	C D
24	My partner doesn't interrupt me when I am talking, and I like that. I never get tired of receiving gifts from my partner.	B C
25	My partner is good about asking how he/she can help when I am tired. It doesn't matter where we go, I just like going places with my partner.	D B
26	I love cuddling with my partner. E I love surprise gifts from my partner.	E C
27	My partner's encouraging words give me confidence. I love to watch movies with my partner.	A B
28	I couldn't ask for any better gifts than the ones my partner gives me. I love it that my partner can't keep their hands off me.	C E
29	It means a lot to me when my partner helps me despite being busy. It makes me feel really good when my partner tells me that they appreciate me.	D A
30	I love hugging and kissing my partner after we've been apart for a while. I love hearing my partner tell me that they miss me.	E A

A: _____ B: _____ C: _____ D: _____ E: _____

A = Words of Affirmation

B = Quality Time

C = Receiving Gifts

D = Acts of Service

E = Physical Touch

Your primary love language is the one that received the highest score. You are "bilingual" and have two primary love languages if your point totals are equal for any two love languages. If your second highest scoring love language is close in score but not equal to your primary love language, then this simply means that both expressions of love are important to you. The highest possible score for any one love language is 12.

Well what does this all mean and how can this be beneficial to my relationship?

Your partner may express love in certain ways and it is helpful to understand this about him/her. In the same way, it will be helpful for your partner to know your love language and express his/her affection for you in ways that you interpret as love. The payoff to speaking each other's love language is a greater sense of connection. This translates in to better communication, increased understanding, and ultimately, improved romance!

After taking this assessment, how can I apply it to my relationship?

The first step is having your partner take the assessment as well. Once you find out what their primary love language is, follow the following steps:

A. If your partner scored high in Words of Affirmation...

1. Express your love emotionally by using words that "build up," such as verbal compliments and words of appreciation. The object of love is not getting something you want but doing something for the well-being of the one your love. It is a fact, however, that when we receive affirming words we are far more likely to be motivated to reciprocate.
2. Use words of encouragement. Encouragement requires empathy and seeing the world from your partner's perspective. We must first learn what is important to our partner!
3. Use words of kindness. If we are to develop an intimate relationship, we need to know each other's desires. If we wish to love each other, we need to know what the other person wants.

B. If your partner scored high in Quality Time...

1. Practice togetherness. A central aspect of quality time is togetherness. I do not mean proximity... Togetherness has to do with focused attention!
2. Practice quality conversation. This means maintaining eye contact while your partner is talking, don't listen to your partner and do something else at the same time, listen for feelings, observe body language, and refuse to interrupt.

C. If your partner scored high in Receiving Gifts...

1. Give the gift of "self." Physical presence in the time of crisis is the most powerful gift you can give if your partner's primary love language is receiving gifts.
2. Discover the value of "hand made originals." It is not the amount of money spent, but the thought involved!

D. If your partner scored high in Acts of Service...

1. Remember: requests give direction to love, but demands stop the flow of love.
2. What we do for each other during the beginning of a relationship should be done throughout the relationship's entirety!

E. If your partner scored high in Physical Touch...

1. Physical touch is a very powerful way for communicating love. Holding hands, kissing, embracing, and giving a massage, and sexual intercourse are all ways of communicating emotional love to one's partner. All of these things make a partner feel secure in your love.
2. Remember: nothing is more important than embracing your partner during times of crisis!

A: _____ B: _____ C: _____ D: _____ E: _____

A = Words of Affirmation

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Love Languages

Love languages are the ways people show and receive love. When you and your partner use different languages, it can be difficult to communicate your feelings. By learning your partner's love language—and helping them learn yours—you will be better able to share positive feelings.



Acts of Service

- completing chores
- caring for children
- working to provide for the family
- other tasks that benefit the couple



Gifts

- giving a present
- buying flowers
- creating something for your partner (e.g. artwork)
- other thoughtful surprises



Physical Touch

- holding hands
- spending intimate time together
- cuddling
- other affectionate touching



Quality Time

- sharing a meal
- having a nice conversation
- going on a date
- being present with your partner



Words of Affirmation

- stating your feelings (e.g. "I love you")
- giving encouragement
- giving compliments
- sharing positive thoughts

How Healthy Is My Relationship?

Following are two lists, one of healthy relationship characteristics and one of unhealthy characteristics. Many relationships have a combination of both. The point of this exercise is to figure out what things in your relationship are healthy or unhealthy, so you can gain appreciation for the best things and decide what you want to change. Read both lists and check the statements that are true about your relationship.

I am evaluating my relationship with: _____

Is It Healthy?

- Have fun together more often than not
- Each enjoy spending time separately, with your own friends, as well as with each other's friends
- Always feel safe with each other
- Trust each other
- Are faithful to each other if you have made this commitment
- Support each other's individual goals in life, like getting a job or going to college
- Respect each other's opinions, even when they are different
- Solve conflicts without putting each other down, cursing at each other or making threats
- Both accept responsibility for your actions
- Both apologize when you are wrong
- Have equal decision-making power about what you do in your relationship
- Each control your own money
- Are proud to be with each other
- Encourage each other's interests - like sports & other activities
- Have some privacy - your letters, diary, personal phone calls are respected as your own
- Have close friends and family who like the other person and are happy about your relationship
- Never feel like you're being pressured for sex
- Communicate about sex, if your relationship is sexual
- Allow each other "space" when you need it
- Always treat each other with respect

Is It Unhealthy?

- Gets extremely jealous or accuses the other of cheating
- Puts the other down by calling names, cursing or making the other feel bad about him or herself
- Yells at and treats the other like a child
- Doesn't take the other person, or things that are important to him/her seriously
- Doesn't listen when the other talks
- Embarrasses or humiliates the other
- Frequently criticizes the other's friends or family
- Pressures the other for sex, or makes sex hurt or feel humiliating
- Has ever threatened to hurt the other or commit suicide if they leave
- Cheats or threatens to cheat
- Tells the other how to dress
- Has ever grabbed, pushed, hit, or physically hurt the other person
- Blames the other for your own behavior ("if you hadn't made me mad, I wouldn't have...")
- Smashes, throws or destroys things
- Goes back on promises
- Tries to keep the other from having a job or furthering his/her education
- Makes all the decisions about what the two of you do
- Tries to make the other feel crazy or plays mind games
- Acts controlling or possessive - like you own your partner
- Uses alcohol or drugs as an excuse for hurtful behavior
- Ignores or withholds affection as a way of punishing the other
- Depends completely on the other to meet social or emotional needs

This list is a way of identifying some of the healthy and unhealthy characteristics of your relationship - it does not cover every possible situation. You may want to share this list with someone in your support system, and talk about where you want to make changes in your relationship and how you can begin to do this.

Love and belonging

Love is caring about someone or something a great deal; it is an intense feeling of affection for something or someone. There are different kinds of love; the love between friends, the love of a romantic partner, the love of music or food or even the love of self. Love is a necessity in life both inwardly and outwardly. We are social creatures, requiring connection to others to feel like we truly exist. Many people in the world experience aloneness and feel alone or unloved. Some people feel this way even in a crowded mall or in a house full of family members. The world can sometimes be a cold and vicious place. When we feel unloved and unwanted it goes back to a basic need built into our hearts and minds to belong to something. Feeling alone is like being a shadow in the wilderness; unnoticed, unacknowledged, unimportant and/or unloved.

Have you ever thought though, that even the shadows have a purpose? When the sun is hot, the shadows cool you down, ever so slightly, when the light is in your eyes, the shadow is a protection from going blind. Shadows are able to determine the time. Shadows make us aware of the existence of light in our lives. Sometimes it's okay to hang out there for a while and be the shadow.

How can you love inwardly and outwardly today?

“Love the shadow”