Love Languages (pub. 14 August, 2012)

For the short term or long term success of a relationship, one has to meet the other persons’ needs. You gotta make your partner happy. You have to give them what they want. When you do it right, you enjoy a wonderfully reciprocal relationship. Each is doing for the other. And now you are dancing, swaying to the music of life.

 To say it another way, if you want to get what you want, you have to first give your partner what they want.

 But too often we’re selfish, we want what we want when we want it. We have expectations; we look to our partner to do for us. We say things like, “You never say you love me” or “you never seem interested in me” or “why can’t you spend time with me.” We start from the selfish position of asking to get our needs met instead of giving what our partner needs. Both people end up feeling like this relationship is a one way street. And we wonder why frustration is all we find.

 Gary Chapman, in his book, The 5 Love Languages describes the problem that we all fall into; we love the way we expect to be loved. If hearing “I love you” feels good to me, then I’m naturally going to speak this to those I love. If time together feels like love then I will want to spend time with my partner.

 Allow me to briefly describe these love languages

 “Words of Affirmation” is one way some people feel loved. Compliments and acknowledgement really warm the heart of these people. A kind word will speak volumes. Insults cut deep for those who look for affirmation from their partner.

 “Quality Time” is as plain as it sounds. These lovers need undivided attention where the relationship is central to whatever else may be going on. Set aside time, special events, or intentionally doing nothing but doing it together feels like love to these attention sensitive people. Broken dates or distractions feel like distance and communicates lack of care.

 “Receiving gifts” is the love language where one partner needs to know they are remembered. A gift says ‘I love you.’ And this is not a superficial exercise of spending money but instead thoughtful consideration of who they are, with the gift meaningfully matching the person. Missed opportunities here will be remembered for years.

 “Acts of Service” says I love you with a clean kitchen or a load of laundry. People who feel love with acts of service are busy serving others. When they return home they are completely warmed by thoughtful partner who fed the kids or balanced the checkbook.

 “Physical Touch” is about the whole package, not just sex. These lovers feel love when they are caressed, hugged, patted, snuggled or spooned. Ignoring touch feels like abandonment, a cool, aching desert of isolation.

 The challenge is to identify our partners love language and do for them what feels love to them. Out of this list, you may already have an idea of what your partner looks for,or feels loved by. The two of you can go to 5lovelanguages.com and take a test to identify your own love language. And then you can go to it, giving the other what they need and thus getting what you want, a loving, happy partner.