

CLASS 6

FIVE LANGAUGES OF LOVE

Love however, even from the *Shari`ah* perspective, is a complex attachment. And because we do not know how to really **show** love we end up entering relationships with a limp.

Islam adds an element of personal effort to love and provides masses of information on the **types of love**. In the Arabic language alone there are more than 70 words for love and its effects.

Marriage and family life expert Dr. Gary Chapman explains that each one of us speaks one or more of five different languages of love. The "Love Languages", he says, refer to how we perceive that we are loved by the people around us.

Chapman categorizes the five languages into:

1. Positive affirmations
2. Quality time
3. Gifts
4. Services, and
5. Touch.

He explains that every person speaks one dominant language, but also speaks one or two other languages of love at the same time. Tuning into one's spouse, and understanding their needs would be more effective when one is able to identify each person's love language. Imagine, two people who are speaking different languages to one another – say, Chinese and Swahili. Even though one of them might be saying 'I love you' in her language, the other person simply has no clue that this is a message of love. They are not communicating in the same wavelength.

1. WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

When you open your mouth to speak, you're spilling the things that are in your heart. In Islam this is a strong concept; "*every container will only pour out what is in it*". A verbal expression of love is when you say statements that clearly indicate your compassion. You go out of your way to say something kind, not a constructive criticism, and a bit more than just a *how are you?*

We all like to hear an encouraging word but some people need that "I love you" on a daily basis. Science tells us we should be saying this regularly to stay healthy. This doesn't necessarily mean that your partner has low self-esteem, or that one gender is emotionally weaker. Words of affirmation are pleasing after a difficult task, they develop our self-image and worth. Remember, such words are the easiest in a relationship and easy to help love grow.

Prophetic Words of Love

ULTIMATE FAVORITES: An authentic *hadith* describes the depth of Prophet Muhammad's love for his wife, which Muslim men need to know. Amr ibn al-'As (ra) asked the Prophet ﷺ, "Who do you love the most?" Thinking that he would be named, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ replied in unusual honesty "*Aisha!*" Any modern man who dared mention his feelings for his wife would feel like a pansy. We need to change our outlook because such love is chivalrous.

Amr (ra) rephrased his question, "Who do you love the most from amongst all the men?" This time the Prophet ﷺ replied, "*her father*". Abu Bakr as-sadiq was 'Aisha's father so Prophet Muhammad's still linked his love to his wife. He seemed to say, let the whole world know, I love my wife more than anything. And if this is his love in public, what of it in private?

MORE THAN ABU ZARA: Another authentic *hadith* from 'Aisha, Ummi Zara (the mother of Zara) describing how her husband, Abu Zara, treated her like a princess, she was his number one. Despite this bond, Ummi Zara was divorced and remarried to a richer man. While this second husband was still kind, his treatment paled when compared to Abu Zara. The Prophet ﷺ heard the tale from 'Aisha (ra) and said to her, "*I am to you, like Abu Zara is to Ummi Zara - except that I would never divorce you*". 'Aisha (ra) replied, "You are better to me (in treatment) than Abu Zara to Ummi Zara."

This prophetic case of verbally expressing love strengthens a marriage. It makes it "tight". Saying to your wife or husband, "you mean the world to me", actually means the world to *them*. The Prophet ﷺ gave his wife a sweet nickname, a *qunya*: 'Aish and frequently talked about her *taqwah* (devoutness to Allah) amongst his companions.

How To Speak Love

Actions don't always speak louder than words. Even the smallest of phrases mean a lot, "jazak'Allah", "I appreciate you", "you look amazing", "I'm proud of you". By verbalising your feelings of gratitude or concern, you create the best motivation which means your spouse will in turn reciprocate extra special love. Just for you.

Husband Talk 101

As a husband (or husband-to-be), you're going to find yourself in pressurising situations. You've spent a week on night-shifts and you come home to your wife's not-that-great microwave meal. What do you say? What DO you say?

"Why can't you ever cook a decent meal, didn't your mother teach you anything?"

Although you're tired and you expected a delicious meal lovingly made, your choice of words show you're a rude, critical and unthoughtful man. You don't know how her day's been at work, home, with the children. Control what you're saying and flip your criticism to get what you want (below).

"I miss the biryani you make, my love".

Remind your wife of the good she does for you and watch how it ignites a greater response the next time you meet. Couple the compliment with a physical touch. Generously punctuate requests with sweet words.

Wife Talk 101

Women are a little more complicated and can expect our men to naturally know what we're thinking. Nonetheless, the rules are the same. Speak good, or stay silent! Don't complain, refrain and turn your criticism into an opportunity. For example, you're husband's rarely at home... You could say:

"Why are you always with your friends! Don't you love me?"

By using that annoying word 'always' you side-sweep months and years of your husband's dedication. Instead of getting his attention you push him further away. This feels like an attack, an insult

"I miss when you spend time with me. It's been a while, let's go out!"

Open by saying you love him! Act like the martyr, say you can't do without him. Show the positive side of how you miss him and why you want him home - because HE brings something wonderful to YOU. Give him an opportunity to create a path of peace.

2. QUALITY TIME

Quality time is more than mere proximity. It's about focusing all your energy on your partner. A husband watching sports while talking to his wife is NOT quality time. In the vernacular of quality time, nothing says, "*I love you, like really being there*" — with the TV off, fork and knife down, and all chores and children on standby. Distractions, postponed dates, or the failure to listen can be especially hurtful.

Quality conversation is also very important for healthy relationships. It involves sharing experiences, thoughts and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context. A good partner will not only listen, but offer advice and respond to assure their partner that they are *really* listening. Husbands and wives don't expect their partners to solve their problems. Sometimes they just need a sympathetic listener.

Quality activities are a very important ingredient to quality time. Spending physical time together, sharing hobbies and events that you love to do together, bring a couple closer, and, in the years to come, fill up a memory bank, *insha-Allah*, God willing.

Note: An important aspect of quality conversation is "self-revelation". You need to be in tune with your inner emotions and feelings to be able to share quality conversation and quality time with your husband/wife.

What Would Prophet Muhammad ﷺ Do?

VISIT THEM: Prophet Muhammad ﷺ visited each wife every single day, spending quality time with them after the `asr prayer (afternoon). Today, *tsk*, we're too busy, and we only have the one wife, husband...

TALK TO THEM: A particular *hadith* briefly mentions the Prophet's habit of talking with `Aisha (ra) after the night prayer or the Sunnah prayer of Fajr. Their talking was in private, nobody else listened in (Allah kept it private). But that was also quality time.

RUN WITH THEM: In a famous incident, the Prophet ﷺ told his companions to go ahead on a trip as he stayed behind to race `Aisha (she won!) In the narration of the race, details are hidden, but obviously we see his intention to spend time with her; picking a point to start from, running together, laughing and winning. Here is the Prophet with the world's greatest mission, taking time out to "play" with his wife in a race in the desert. When was the last time we did that?

HANG OUT WITH THEM: `Aisha (ra) was once at home while an artistic sword fighting/wrestling event happened outside homes. Men were surrounded showing prowess, there was noise, there was an exciting atmosphere. The Prophet ﷺ came home and asked `Aisha, "would you like to see it?" `Aisha said she stood a little behind the Prophet ﷺ, watching close together as "my touch touched his cheek". Resisting to move, `Aisha also said,

"I stood there for as long as I could until I got tired, to show (see how much) the Prophet of God loved me".

He ﷺ didn't move, she moved first. Quality time in action.

Shari`ah (Islamic law) requires the husband to spend time with his wife. Allah dictates that husbands, especially in polygamous marriages, spend equal amounts of money and TIME with their wives.

How To Get It Wrong

Women complain more that their husbands don't spend time with them, feeling neglected. He seems to care about everything else. She is not hearing the language of love called TIME! A husband doesn't always understand his wife's accusation, saying, "But I'm living with you?!" Men will look at their watches to calculate his mere 3 hours with friends compared to 50 hours spent with the wife. Yet women are asking for *quality, scheduled time with me*. Together. Set aside time for a conversation, *halal* entertainment etc. Choose different times to get-together or make a daily routine after work. Pick a yearly date for a weekend holiday.

Differences

- **Men:** When your wife asks for time, she's asking for your focused presence. Show you're present by looking at her, listening. When your wife wants to speak to you (uh-oh) be honest if don't want to. Say, "I'm busy, come back in half an hour". Don't pretend to listen because that shows you don't care. Generally, women come with problems to talk for sympathy, not always wanting a solution.
- **Women:** Sisters, make special time for your husbands too. Ask, "What would YOU like us to do together?" and do that! When you go to your husband with a problem, understand how to talk to him. He may not be in the mood, he may give you cold advice. Understand when he's emotionally available and don't pressure him into being your girlfriend.

3. RECEIVING GIFTS

A gift is not necessarily purchased. Some people respond well to visual symbols of love, and the love is shown in the physical act of giving. Just hand it over, a flower, a seashell from a walk on the beach, or an email. Be thoughtful, be intuitive and spontaneous.

These gifts don't need to be every day, or even every week, although they could be. They don't need to cost a lot of money (unless it's for your husband). Gifts can be free, they need to be frequent and they can be given without a purpose — meaning that buying a kitchen appliance is not a gift of love (unless she/he really did ask for it), but finding a particular childhood book your partner loved, is. The giving itself should show you're thinking about your wife/husband.

Fortunately, this love language is one of the easiest to learn. Ask what your partner likes receiving and make a note of their preferences. You need to understand that you are not investing your "purchases" in gifts, but in deepening your relationship.

Don't mistake this love language for materialism; your partner will thrive on the thoughtfulness and effort behind the gift. As they say, it is indeed the thought that counts. If you "speak" this language, the perfect gift or gesture shows that you are caring, and you are prizing your spouse above whatever was sacrificed to bring the gift to them

Why The Prophet ﷺ Gave Gifts

Giving gifts is a part of our religion, Islam. A noted *hadith* in imam Bukhari's book of Manners, number 594, is where the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said,

"Ta haaddu, ta haabbu: give gifts to one another, you will love one another."

This hadith is typically about giving presents to your brother in faith, but it's not exempt from the context of marriage. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ often gave foreign dignitaries gifts and shared food and such with his companions. If we are meant to give gifts to strengthen our community bond, our husbands, our wives, are much, much more deserving.

Most Muslims will know of `Aisha's (ra) incident where she lost her necklace in the desert, and stayed behind a travelling caravan, which lead to an unjust, scandalous accusation. What most of don't know is that the incident gave way to revelation for the flexible *tayammum*, *wudhu* without water. And the necklace itself was not expensive, it was made from stone, but `Aisha (ra) said, *"It was given to me by the Prophet of Allah"*. She panicked that she lost it because of its sentimental value.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave gifts to his first wife Khadijah's whole family, her sister, even after she passed away. Whenever he had a meat available he would cut and distribute it to Khadijah's neighbours and friends. `Aisha (ra) was jealous of Khadijah (ra) though they never met, because the Prophet's love for Khadijah was manifested in so many ways.

What He or She Really, Really Wants

- **Dear women:** Realise that **men like quality gifts** over quantity. What does this mean? It means men generally prefer those gifts you saved up for; you bought something expensive, a fancy watch, new trainers, a video game (I have no idea). This takes time and is worth the wait to gift your husband on a special occasion making a big deal "this is just for you!" Don't take out loans though, use your own judgement for affordability and time.
- **Dear men:** Understand that **women prefer many gifts**, even if the cost is small. You may be saving up years for a bleedin' gorgeous jewellery piece but you don't need to spend *that much* on one present. It's healthier for the marriage that you give your wife frequent love tokens, so budget wisely for a monthly gift.

Don't Misunderstand Her

Note: Genetics adds to the language of gift giving too as Muslim men misunderstand their wife's reaction. Brothers, when your wife says, "*Oh, you shouldn't have! Why did you spend that much?!*" don't take it literally. She's not one of your guys, your friends. A Muslim woman's heart speaks differently and is more often too shy to say her true emotions. She's really jumping for joy on the inside. It's awkward for women to truly express their full *shukr*, thanks with every gift. Sisters, your husband just gave you a sparkly present he saved up for and is expecting you to melt.

4. ACTS OF SERVICE

Sometimes simple chores around the house can be an undeniable expression of love. Things like laundry and taking out the trash require some form of planning, time, effort, and energy. However, it's very important to understand what acts of service your wife or husband will most appreciate.

Such physical chores require a balanced dynamic. Without any judgement whatsoever, it's a fairly accepted custom that women tend to take on more of the housework, while men's work is more external. These are expected duties, but not rules. So, semi-regularly, each partner needs to step out of the stereotypes.

Acts of service require both partners to humble themselves into doing some chores and services that aren't usually expected from their gender. However, it's not about right and wrong, it's about taking some burdens off your partner, because you love them.

The Prophet's Contribution

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, did not expect to be waited on and nor should we. Nor was Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ever violent or critical of his wives. He would mend his own clothes and fix his own shoes. It wasn't that `Aisha was ignoring these things, but once in a while, the Prophet ﷺ would do it himself. He demonstrated another language of love. It was not demeaning or undignified, he just shifted the roles by taking something from `Aisha's domain.

Today, you'll find household tasks erupting in cultural collisions. Some will argue men were not raised to clean up or cook, and women never left the house for work.

For our elders, women and men's roles were rarely swapped. In your marriage, you need to discuss boundaries, use your skills to help the other and occasionally shift roles. Who washes the dish, who fixes the lights? Get out of your comfort zone and get into the space of your spouse.

How To Service Your Marriage

Can vacuuming the floors really be an expression of love? Absolutely! Anything you do to ease the burden of responsibilities weighing on an "Acts of Service" person will speak volumes. The words your partner wants to hear are: *"Let me do that for you."* Laziness, broken commitments, and making more work for your wife or husband says that their feelings don't matter. (Men, you know who you are).

Things that help:

- Offering to wash the dishes
- Washing the car
- Fixing a broken light, getting a new lamp soon
- Volunteering to buy the groceries
- Paying the bills punctually
- Taking the children out
- Making dinner with brought groceries
- Offering help for organising events

For Muslims, it's important to do these acts out of love and not obligation. *Connect the act to Allah*, see it as a means to earn His grace, making *tasbeeh* meanwhile and showing your partner that you're doing it to *help them*.

A person who does chores and helps out around the house out of guilt or fear speaks a language of resentment. *I perform these acts out of the kindness of your heart*. These little sacrifices will mean the world to your partner, and accumulate as good deeds to Allah.

Differences

It is engrained in a husband's *fitra* (human nature) to maintain his wife. Allah's command for provision and protection is stronger on men (Qur'an, 4:34). Their financial obligations are a "gift of love". When a man shares his money, pays rent, buys groceries, pays the bills, it's a huge sign showing he cares. And women need to realise that *okay*, so he's not washing dishes every week, but 50-60% of his income is spent on her. Yes, your husband SHOULD do those things, but do you see his maintenance towards the house, food and so on? That is his love. Say *Alhamdulillah*.

This is what Prophet Muhammad ﷺ warned us against, being ungrateful. Women will easily say to their husbands, "You never help out, I never see any help from you," even though he's been taking care of her for years. See that maintenance he's brings? That's the language of livelihood! You both have to find fleeting moments between life's chores to build love.

5. PHYSICAL TOUCH

This language isn't all about the bedroom. A person whose primary language is Physical Touch is, not surprisingly, very touchy. Hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and thoughtful touches on the arm or face—they can all be ways to show excitement, concern, joy, and love. Physical presence and accessibility are crucial, while neglect or abuse can be unforgivable and destructive.

Many people feel loved the most when they receive physical contact from their spouse. Physical touch can make or break the relationship. *While sexual intercourse (in marriage) makes a person feel secure and loved, it's only a dialect of physical connection.* There are two contexts for 'touch', the sexual and non-sexual.

The Non-Sexual Touch

Observe people around you. They shake hands, high-five, reach out, tickle, pinch. Why? Because for that moment, there's a warmth and a physical connection which reaches beyond words

Many parts of the body are extremely sensitive to stimulation. Yet, some touches like groping, shoves, and pulling, are irritating and uncomfortable for your partner. Take the time to learn the touch your husband/wife likes. They can be big acts, such as back massages or a long embrace, or little acts such as touches on the cheek or a hand on the shoulder.

It is important to discover how your partner responds, not only physically but also *psychologically* to these touches. That is how you will make the most of this love language.

The Prophet's Hands

Whenever the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ arrived at his house one of the first things he did before entering home was to brush his teeth with a *miswak*. This was standard behaviour, checking his appearance, maintaining hygiene, and then sitting close to `Aisha (ra) to kiss her. And not just a peck on the cheek either, reports narrate that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would suck `Aisha's tongue: a passionate kiss.

From the *seerah*, there was an exchange of fluid (known to be medically healthy) and in modern terms this would be a '*French kiss*'. Why did the Prophet ﷺ do this? He demonstrated the language of touch through a close proximity to show that no matter what his day was burdened with, his love was unyielding.

See, in the world of science, hormones boost the touch sensation given to one another. When a man 'makes a pass' at his wife, she will reciprocate. There is a flirtation involved that makes up some communication in marriage. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would lean on 'Aisha (ra). Nothing else was going to happen, but his head was in her lap. It's a form of romance, wanting to be caressed and touched.

Modern psychologists say that hugging is a tool of transformation.

"Hugging brings people closer to each other. If your relationship with somebody is not working, try hugging him 20 times a day and there will be a significant difference." - R. Chandran, therapist (Mumbai, India)

Women's Bodies

When it comes to sexuality, *women do not appreciate being touched only for sex*. Besides being 'ready', in an appropriate place and time, women crave the sensation of hands and hugs and other things. Every married person needs to *master the "Art of Non-Sexual Touching"*. In the same way food nourishes the body, a woman who is not fed physically will feel neglected and not have the energy to give anything back.

Men's Bodies

Conversely, *men want more 'come to me' gestures from their wives*, more physical contact. Otherwise men feel deprived sexually and they question, "Doesn't she love me?" But a woman shows her love through so many other ways which aren't being seen and heard. Both men and women should be recognising their partners screaming with these signs of "I love you". So pay attention to them.

All marriages will experience crises. In these cases, physical touch is very important. A hug can communicate an immense amount of love for that person and helps to release tension without masses of discussion. A person whose primary love language is physical touch would much rather have you hold them and be silent than offer any advice.

Wives and husbands, you need examine your marriage and ask what is HE/SHE doing to show they love me? *Always assume there IS love there*. Ask yourself what do I want to hear? And what am I showing that they can't see? Exchange ideas with one another and do not expect perfection. You won't have a perfect spouse, because you're not perfect!

A simple rule in marriage is not to *give and take* but **give and give**. After 20 years of giving, trying to be the ideal for another through the love languages will keep that spark ignited. Intimacy cannot be created without love so if you're marriage has its problems, but you both love one another, you're on the right path.