

## **The Currencies of Love**

Last week I wrote about the ways in which we can show love. I described the five ways of showing love as giving freedom, encouragement, affection, respect, and influence. People show love in different ways and trade in these different currencies. A wife may show love primarily through affection and influence. In other words, she may express her love by showing positive affection toward her partner and by seeking to influence him in positive ways. For example, she may greet him at the end of the day with a kiss or show of affection and she may influence him by reminding him of things he wanted to do.

He, on the other hand, may show love through freedom and respect. In other words his display of love will include his giving his wife the freedom to be the person she wants to be and he may respect her by doing the things she has asked him to do. For example, he might encourage her to keep up her involvement in the choir because he sees how much she enjoys it. He may also respond positively to her requests that he attend to little things around the house. You see here that the couple show love in different ways. Problems can arise when you are getting love in a currency you do not need. For example, a husband may show his love by “putting the pay check on the table at the end of the week”. It is displayed in terms of loyalty. She, however, might prefer if he was more interested in her life and to show love in terms of affection and interest. It is therefore easy to see how people in relationships can feel unloved despite the other person’s attempts to do so.

This week I want to focus on the different ways that we can receive love. Love involves not just giving but also receiving. Responding is as important as acting. However, this aspect to love is often forgotten. To show love does not mean that you are just good to your partner it also means that you respond well to them. For this reason, many people in relationships say that they know that their husband (or wife) loves them but that there is something missing. The piece that is missing is how their partner responds to them. However, you can feel guilty about this because you know that he is doing the right things. You do not feel quite justified in being unhappy or critical. This may help.

As there are five ways you can show love, there are five ways you can respond to the other person’s displays of love to you. These are: enjoying their separateness, self-disclosing what you feel, being open to their affection, trusting and accepting the other person, and being willing to accept their influence.

Enjoying their SEPARATENESS is being able to enjoy their individuality. It is the opposite of being clingy or smothering. When you enjoy your partner’s individuality you get pleasure out of seeing them do their own thing. You are also not needy so you do not interfere with their separate identity by putting your needs on them. For example, you respond to his freedom by affirming it. You encourage his hobbies, interests, or relationships. He feels you love his separateness rather than resenting it. In this way you also give the gift of your own separateness. In knowing that you are not smothering, clingy, or demanding he sees your own independence which affirms his. Healthy relationships encourage such separateness.

SELF-DISCLOSING what you feel is another way of responding and receiving your partner. It is not enough to show love, to be loyal, or to do the right things. You must also reveal your feelings. You respond to him or her by trying to be honest, by sharing your self-doubt, and by revealing your inner life. You try to share the secret life of your thoughts, feelings, worries, anxieties, and dreams. Being silent, withdrawn, and secretive is not good enough no matter how loyal and principled you may be.

The third way of responding is by being responsive to your partner's approaches and efforts. In this way you are an OPEN person who accepts what your partner gives to you with a generous heart. His or her clumsy and awkward displays of care or affection are appreciated by you, are received by you, and are responded to in a genuine way. Openness literally means having an open door through which the other person can enter without fear of rejection or criticism. It is the ultimate way you can receive love. Just as you respond positively when your three year old gives you a crayon drawing of her love for you, you can show the same appreciation with your older children or partner when they do something. You do not criticise the efforts but appreciate the gestures, no matter how poor their emotional 'drawing' may be.

The fourth way of responding is with TRUST. Trust assumes that you rely on, believe, and accept whatever your partner offers. You show trust by accepting what they have to say, by respecting what they have to say, and by assuming that their intentions and motives are good. Trust of course is risky but it is deeply meaningful to know that someone trusts you deeply. It means that you can see behind their mistakes, errors, and human foibles to the person within. When you respond to your beloved with trust you show a form of love that is reactive more than active and is thus responsive love.

The fifth way of reacting or responding is by accepting your partner's INFLUENCE. This can be a tricky one at times, but it means that you are influenced by their suggestions, advice, requests, or even instructions. In a relationship where people do not accept influence from each other there are constant arguments about who has the right to tell the other person what to do. However, when couples accept influence then little bits of advice or instructions are taken in good faith. If you are open to influence when your husband suggests to you that you might buy some item when doing the groceries you will cheerfully say "No problem". If you are not open to influence you will query his right or motive in asking you by saying something like "What's your problem? Is there something wrong with the way I shop now?" You know the scene!

Receiving love is a separate art to giving it.