

How Many Languages Can You Speak?

Kouman ou ye?
Wie gehts dir so?
Come stai?
어떻게 지내세요?
Paano ka?

Unless you are familiar with one or all of the languages written above, you may have no clue what the question is, which is the same message, translated in five different languages. I am a firm believer of Gary Chapman's concept of Love Languages when it comes to child-rearing. According to Chapman we all need to feel loved by five elements: (1) Physical Touch, (2) Words of Affirmation, (3) Quality Time, (4) Acts of Giving, and (5) Acts of Service.

The difficult task is when you cannot interpret what your child is expressing at a particular moment. What is it that he or she needs? It's similar to the confusion that started this article. What am I trying to ask you? To finally translate the question, it is asking, "How are you?" in Haitian Creole, German, Italian, Korean, and Filipino.

Mastering your child's love languages takes prayer, time, patience, and intellect. It is even more important to gain understanding when you have multiple children. Here's a prime example. I know my boys' love languages in order. My younger one has physical touch at the top of his list. He constantly needs hugs. However, my older one wants more quality time. So, he doesn't need the physical affection as much. Rather, he wants you to give undivided attention to him when he is doing something. It used to hurt my feelings when I tried to hug him and he would pull away. But I had to understand, that it was only for a brief moment. On another given day, there are times when he comes to sit on my lap or ask for hugs constantly. At that time, I am willing to stop whatever I am doing, because he is clearly expressing his need for love in a different manner. He now wants physical touch.

There are several tips I want to share about being multi-lingual as a parent.

1. Love your children the way they need to be loved, and not the way you want to love them. That may sound harsh, but it is not. For instance, don't shower your child with gifts, if he or she wants hugs. Don't yell at your child for doing something wrong, if he or she wants to hear words of affirmation. Find something to compliment your child about. Don't constantly tell your child you are busy, if he or she says, "Look, mommy!" The best way to love your child is to follow his or her lead. Your child's love language is likely evident by how your child expresses love to you. Children are often skilled in communicating their desires.

2. Don't compare your children's languages. They are multi-lingual as well, and may not speak the same language at the same time with their sibling.

I would do my older son an injustice if I said, "Your brother wants a hug! Why don't you?" Sowing seeds of competition will often lead to jealousy and even hostility between them. Therefore, it is my job to speak two different languages at the same time, and master both languages at once.

3. A full emotional tank causes responsiveness, cooperation, and happiness.

A lot of children lack security, not because they want to, but because love may not be a firm foundation established early on in their lives. Of course, there are exceptions to this statement. Many children have a strong foundation in love, but may still become wayward. However, as parents, we must ask God to grant us wisdom to build our relationships with our children on love, and for our children to receive the love and grow in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Here is my acronym:

L – Learning

O – Observing

V – Validating

E - Empowering

Respectfully submitted by: Vicky E. Lynch