

Forget-Me-Not Spotlight

Keeping Love Alive as Memories Fade:

The 5 Love Languages® and the Alzheimer's Journey

By Deborah Barr, MA, Edward G. Shaw, MD and Gary Chapman, PhD

A review by Shannon Nosbisch, co-founder of Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness

“Almost everyone will agree that the deepest emotional need we have is the need to love and be loved”, is the statement that stood out to me when I read this book. Even when it seems that a loved one does not respond to your expression of love, more than likely they do have the emotional feeling of love from you. This book can help you continue expressing your love in ways your loved one can feel.

In the first chapter, Dr. Edward Shaw talks about his and his wife, Rebecca's, story. Rebecca was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's at the age of 53. Dr. Shaw discusses their life living with Alzheimer's and the challenges and difficulties they encounter. He also discusses the difficulties he faces to keep their love alive as Alzheimer's disease eroded her memory and what he does to show his love to her. Dr. Shaw now does dementia counseling, which inspired the central message of this book.

Gary Chapman authored the book called *The 5 Love Languages®: The Secret to Love That Lasts*, along with editions for men, singles and parents. In this book, he is now helping spouses, children and families learn how to give love to their loved one that can no longer show their love back.

The Five Love Languages are:

Words of Affirmation: compliments, written or verbal; words of appreciation

Quality Time: full, undivided attention; sharing thoughts, feelings, desires and experiences

Gifts (or Receiving Gifts): any purchased, handmade or found tangible gift to let someone know you care

Acts of Service: doing helpful things for another person

Physical touch: deliberate touch that requires your full attention to deliver – hug, kiss, back rub, foot massage; or incidental touch – sitting close or touching their shoulder

Each of us has one of the 5 Love Languages. In Chapter 2, there is a diagnostic quiz to determine which of the Love Languages you or your spouse are. With a person living with Alzheimer's, their love language may be different than before. It may be difficult to find out which of the 5 love languages they now are. Gary Chapman goes through all 5 love languages and gives examples of what you can do in each stage of Alzheimer's disease and what you should not do. He also discusses how to "facilitate love" or facilitate the person with dementia to be able to give their love. The authors give examples of situations a caregiver or spouse may have and how they can deal with them with love.

There are stories from others who are dealing with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in Chapter 6. A focus group made up of eight veteran dementia care partners is the subject of Chapter 7. Their conversations yielded many valuable, heartfelt insights into the caregiving experience. There are excerpted portions on different topics.

Caring for a loved one living with Alzheimer's is very difficult, often made more difficult because the person with dementia cannot show appreciation for loving expressions, or cannot show their love to their loved one. But, the emotional life of a person living with dementia is alive and well. We just have to understand that and keep showing our love to them.

