

Love Cups and Love Languages



Send him mail.

"One Improved Unit" is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OIU-only RSS feed available [here](#).

A concept that my wife and I were introduced to about 4 years ago has continued to both prove useful and elusive. I say elusive because we often forget this concept; I say useful because when we remember it, hearts are healed and our relationships prosper. What started as a concept between us as spouses has rightly expanded into our relationships with our children. But I wasn't joking about it being elusive. In fact, at times it's useful as spouses, but elusive as parents. (You'll see what I mean.) This concept is called the "love cup."

Love Cups?

Our introduction to the love cup was delivered by Gary Chapman, author of the book *The Five Love Languages*. Basically, everyone has an invisible love cup. When we feel loved and secure in our relationships, our love cup is full, possibly even over-flowing. When we don't feel loved or secure, our love cup is empty, maybe even broken. With a full love cup, people are upbeat, handle stress better, have a "life is good" feeling all the time, and are generally "on cloud 9." When their love cup is empty, people are irritable, depressed, stressed, and feel all around rotten and no good. I, for one, have experienced both a full and an empty love cup. How does one get their love cup filled?

According to Dr. Chapman, we all have a primary "love language". He explains them in his book. He may or may not be technically correct in all aspects, but my wife and I still managed to help each other find our own love languages. As we speak each other's language our cups are filled (mine is "physical touch" and hers is "quality time", he also talks about having secondary languages or splitting your primary language). Sometimes they are filled slowly, sometimes quickly depending on the circumstances, but as the right love language is constantly and consistently spoken, we've found our relationship to be the best experience we've ever had. Our love for each other overflows and we both want to please each other and become better spouses. It's truly amazing and we've learned through experience the value of the love cup. Enter our children.

Children's Love Cups

When we first learned of the love cup and love languages, our daughter was not yet born and our son was only 3. We focused on us as a couple. We never considered the idea of the love cup and love languages as applying to the parent-child relationship. As we read the literature on peaceful parenting, however, we found once again the concept of the love cup. (And Dr. Chapman has a book on his love languages and children.)

As elusive as the love cup is between my wife and I, it's been more so between us and our children. But that's got to change. Our children have their own love cups and we as parents must constantly and consistently fill them if we are to maintain a close and healthy relationship. We forget this all the time, and I am ashamed of that. As much focus as I've put on self-control and approaching our children with respect, a concept as simple and easy as the "love cup" should be on the forefront of my mind every time I'm with my kids. It should also be on my mind every time I'm with my wife. Unfortunately, however, it's been absent lately, and our relationships have suffered these last few days.

Final Thoughts

All I can do is try harder. Writing this column helps me to focus and reflect on the last few days. It forces me to look deeply at both the person I am and the person I want to be. My wife and children are the most important people in my life. They deserve to have their love cups overflowing every hour of every day. That's my job as husband and father. As I've told my wife, if my kids are "misbehaving," that means something's missing, and it's our job to find it. I'm fairly confident that their love cup is just... empty.