



What's Your (Ally) Language of Love?

Find a way that works for you

by Alison Jones Webb

Maybe you've heard about the five languages of love. Introduced in the 2015 book, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*, by marriage counselor Gary Chapman, they're the primary ways that we give and receive love.

Chapman developed these five "languages" based on how people express and receive romantic love: saying supportive things, doing helpful things, giving and receiving gifts, spending meaningful time together, and physical touch. I think they can also work to express our ally love.

A recovery ally provides meaningful non-judgemental support, empathy, and encouragement to people in recovery. We can do this using the five love languages in the following ways:

• Say supportive things.

Offering encouragement to people in recovery and their families not only supports them, but also helps others understand the importance of empathy, respect, and compassion. You can reach even more people by reposting

positive messages about recovery when you see them on Facebook and Instagram. Consider using person-first language—"a person with addiction" or "a person with substance use disorder"—and be ready to accept responsibility when you make a mistake or say something that ends up being stigmatizing.

Recognize that research constantly updates our knowledge and influences our attitudes, so if recommended language usage changes, be open to changing your language. If you don't know the "right" terminology in a particular situation, it's always a good idea to ask the people you're with, "What's the best way for me to talk about this?"

• Do helpful things.

Before you look for ways to be of service in the recovery community, take some time to explore your attitudes toward recovery. What is your definition? Is it consistent with what people in recovery say? What experiences have you had with people in recovery? Does knowing they are in recovery change the way you think about them? What have you learned from

them about recovery? Where could you learn more about recovery in your community?

Then, reach out to people in recovery and ask what they think is the most supportive thing you can do. You might be surprised at the answers. Many people in recovery that I've talked to say, "learn about recovery and help reduce stigma."

• Give gifts.

Your gifts are your talents, personal and professional networks, financial resources, and political connections. Use your contacts with the media to change the way addiction issues are reported. Help raise funds for recovery support services in your town. Create work opportunities for people in recovery. Convince decision makers in local and state organizations and agencies of the importance of keeping recovery at the center of their work. Write a reference letter in support of a person in recovery. The possibilities are limitless.

• Spend meaningful time.

Start by learning about the many pathways of recovery, including

12-step programs, SMART recovery, and faith and spirituality.

Make it a priority to show up for important recovery events and to celebrate milestones of the people you love. Spend time in conversations about recovery with your colleagues and neighbors, creating a safe space for people to ask questions and learn about recovery. Attend every recovery related event in your community. Invite your colleagues and neighbors to go, too. Your presence goes a long way toward changing local norms about recovery.

• **Reach out and touch someone.**

Some people like physical touch and others don't. If you're the "huggy" type, be sure and ask first. There are other ways to reach out and touch someone, though. Connecting people in recovery with volunteer opportunities is one way. Find out about the recovery support services in your town, such as recovery community centers, and make a visit.

Ask what types of volunteer tasks people in recovery might like and then make connections in the community. For example, humane societies can find dog walkers; clothing closets can find people to help sort and price used clothing; food pantries can find people to help lift boxes, fill shelves, and serve meals. The list goes on and on.

I encourage you to spend some time thinking about your language of (ally) love, and then find the best ways to give it and share the process with a friend ... who may be wondering how they can support the recovery community!



Alison Jones Webb is a public health professional who has worked in the field of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery in Maine for over 15 years.



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**Recovery is a process.
There are many pathways to recovery.
Recovery overcomes shame and stigma.
Supporting recovery is a community responsibility.**

ARE YOU A PEER RECOVERY COACH?

Portland Recovery Community Center is hosting an online workshop to show you how to become a certified peer recovery coach with the state of Maine. Whether you've just completed Recovery Coach Academy, or are actively coaching, this event is for you!

**SAVE THE DATE:
NOVEMBER 10, 2021**

This virtual session will outline the process to become a Certified Peer Recovery Coach and include sessions on self-care for recovery coaching and ethics. To learn more, visit our website at portlandrecovery.org, and scan the QR code to register!

Healthy Acadia 2021 | MAINE PEER RECOVERY COACH CERTIFICATION PROGRAM | Portland Recovery Community Center