



Pup-speak

Wise words from the best of friends

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At the time of this writing, there are nearly 300 critter lessons that list my name in the by-line. Lord willing, there will be plenty more to follow. I have a genuine passion for the subject of human connection skills, and I relish every opportunity to share valuable lessons I've learned through the course of my personal journey.

The critter lessons are based upon painstaking research. You would be surprised at the time spent combing through online libraries for centuries-old sources to glean just the right anecdote, or, pouring through peer-reviewed academic articles for suitable facts to punctuate a particular lesson. The more I learn about the majesty of creation, the more awe I have for the Creator.

One critter, though, requires no such research. One critter is so common, so well-known, so everyday familiar, it needs no introduction whatsoever. I am, of course, referring to the ever-popular *Dolichotis patagonum*, otherwise known as the Patagonian mara.

Just kidding.

I really mean the dog. You know—that fully domesticated, live-in-your-home, stain-your-heirloom-Persian-rug, four-legged variety of loveable furball. Biologists know it as *Canis lupus familiaris*, but we

don't need no sshhtinkin' scientific name to define the dog. We have our own definition:

dog (*noun*) 1. a special creature whose time in your heart will far outlast its days on earth. 2. love manifested with four paws. 3. a creature you wish you could text with. 4. the primary reason leftover food always goes missing.

Definition or no definition, when it comes to pets, dogs rule! This isn't my opinion. (Okay, okay, it *is* my opinion, but it also happens to be fact.) According to research, 57% of consumers around the world own pets.¹ The largest percentage of them—a full 33% of all pet owners—own dogs (2nd place goes to cats at 23%).¹

Apparently, man and dog have been best friends for quite some time, because even Greek mythology includes references to pet dogs. In one story, Zeus gives a dog to Europa as a gift.² This dog, Laelaps (LAY-laps), is a very special dog in that he *always* catches his prey.² After the requisite mythological drama, Laelaps is sent to hunt the Teumessian fox, which, as it happens, can never be *caught*.² The dog is destined to forever chase the fox, while the fox is destined to forever elude the dog. In order to resolve the paradox, Zeus turns both critters to stone, and then to constellations.² Laelaps becomes the constellation Canis Major, and the fox becomes Canis Minor (Greater Dog and Lesser Dog, respectively).²

And you can still them there today. In fact, one of the two, Canis Major, boasts the brightest star in the nighttime sky, Sirius.³ You may know it by its common name, "The Dog Star."³ The Dog Star is unique not only in terms of brightness, but also in terms of visibility, for it is visible from every part of the Earth's surface.³ Just to the northwest of Canis Major is the constellation Orion, "The Hunter." For this reason, the Dog Star is sometimes referred to as "Orion's Dog"—the hunter's forever faithful hunting companion.³

On a personal note... here are the canine stars in my home:



The “loyalty” of the Dog Star made it a reliable reference point for ancient navigators.⁴ As such, it’s no surprise the star figured prominently in many ancient civilizations.⁴ What *is* surprising is how many disconnected civilizations—with no connection whatsoever—associated the star with canines.⁵ Ancient Chaldeans knew Sirius as the “Dog Star that Leads.”⁵ Assyrians called it the “Dog of the Sun.”⁵ And various American Indian tribes referred to the star as “Moon Dog,” “Wolf Star,” and the “Dog-star Guardian of the Path of Souls,”⁵

**Set your course by the stars, not by the lights of
every passing ship. —Omar Bradley**

The brightest star has a long history of similar names. Not so for the vocal sounds produced by canines. Humans use a wide range of words to represent dog sounds.⁶ In English, we represent dog sounds with ruff-ruff, woof-woof, and arf-arf (or in the case of children’s books, bow-wow).⁶ Other cultures, however, employ different words. The Nigerian word for a dog sound is wai-wai.⁶ In Finland, the word is vuuh-vuh, whereas in Bali, you say, kong-kong.⁶ The Dutch have three words depending on the size of the dog: woef-woef for average size; waf-waf for small; and kef-kef for very small.⁶

We humans have all sorts of words to describe dog communication. It kinda makes you wonder what the dog thinks about the fine points of wai-wai versus waf-waf. Christopher Morley (1890-1957), once wrote, “No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as much as the dog does.” But did you know dogs have their own special brand of genius conversation? At least according to the American Kennel Club, they do.

Not all dogs communicate the same way. In fact, some breeds don’t bark at all. Shiba Inus, for instance, “scream,” while Rottweilers “purr,” and African Basenjis “yodel.”⁷ And all those videos you see with Siberian Huskies “talking” to their owners—well—apparently, they’re true.⁷

My dog is half pit bull, half poodle. Not much of a watchdog, but a vicious gossip. —Craig Shoemaker

Most dogs have five distinct vocalizations: the BARK, the WHINE, the GROWL, the HOWL, and the SIGH (aka GROAN). Collectively, these five sounds express a variety of meanings.⁷

The BARK

Some dogs bark a lot while others bark very little.⁷ Some sound almost toy-like with their high-pitched yips and yaps, while other dogs intimidate with deep, low-pitched barks. The BARK is best understood when you consider the context.

- If you just returned from a trip to the store, and your dog greets you barking and wagging her tail, you know it’s a happy bark.
- If the dog next door runs back and forth along the fence, barking and snarling if you get close, it’s probably warning you away from his territory.⁷
- There’s a knock at your door. The dog goes bonkers. Is the pooch well-socialized? Does it like people? If so, her bark is probably

expressing excitement. On the other hand, if she isn't a fan of strangers, she might be communicating disapproval, irritation, or even anger.⁷

Live. Laugh. Bark.

The WHINE

The WHINE is less assertive than the BARK, but like the BARK, a WHINE can represent multiple meanings, so it too must be considered in context.⁷

- Whining at the door? There's a good chance Fi-Fi needs to go outside for a bio-break.
- Is Milo whining while you eat? He's probably begging you to share your meal.
- Whining (along with panting) might mean the poor dog's in pain.⁷
- Food, water, attention, daily walk—there's a good chance Bell's whining is her version of "gimme, gimme."⁷

The GROWL

We don't need much context to interpret a growl. It's either a dire warning ("Stay back!", "leave me alone", etc.) or it's a show of playful faux aggression ("Pull on my toy all you want. I ain't lettin' go!").⁷



The SIGH

Have you ever had "just one of those days," and when you get home, you make a beeline to the couch and plop down with an audible "Ah-hhh"? It just somehow feels better when you let out that contented sigh of relief.

Dogs are the same way. One of our toy Australian shepherds, Chelsea, does it all the time. She'll circle around in the living room

looking for just the right spot to nap. Having found a suitable place, she collapses, belly to the floor, all four legs fully extended to front and back, plops her chin onto her front paws, and lets out an audible contented “Ahhhh.” A minute after that, she’s fast asleep.

A sigh can also denote disappointment.⁷ This too applies to dogs just as it does with people. For example, if your pup lets you know she wants to go for a walk, but you ignore her, she may express disappointment with a sigh.

The Howl

Dogs howl for several reasons, all of which are pretty straightforward. They howl to sound the alarm for danger, or in response to certain high-pitched sounds (sirens, etc.), or to make contact with other dogs (e.g., elsewhere in the neighborhood).^{7a} Baying is a type of howling some dogs emit while chasing prey.^{7a}

When it comes to vocalizing, people can be real dogs. We may not bark at strangers, but we do sometimes bark out orders. We may not growl to warn, but we might growl before that first cup of morning coffee. We may not whine to be fed, but some folks do whine to complain. Not many of us howl at the moon, but we certainly howl in laughter. And when it comes to sighing in relief . . . well, like I said . . . people are a lot like dogs.

Okay, I take it back. People aren’t *really* like dogs; not exactly anyway. We do share one striking similarity, though. And this one similarity is the basis of our lesson. It’s a powerful lesson. It’ll change your life if you take it to heart. You may be surprised to find out that it doesn’t have very much to do with prospecting. It does, however, have *everything* to do with human connection. And in our profession, that counts for a lot.

Dogs have five modes by which they communicate their needs. People are very similar in that we have five ways by which we communicate love. This concept is the basis for the lesson at hand. Gary Chapman refers to the concept as “The Five Love Languages.” Now, we don’t normally think of love as a critical component of Network Marketing, however, *appreciation* is of paramount importance in our profession. Everyone wants to feel appreciated. Some people even *crave* it. Prospects, customers, downline, upline—the more effectively you express appreciation, the more success you enjoy. The same is true of life in general, even outside of business.

The Main Idea

The idea behind The Five Love Languages is both simple and profound. There are five ways in which we express love (and appreciation). Most people have a strong preference for one of the five. This doesn’t mean they ignore or avoid the others. It simply means that one of the five is more natural for them. This is their *primary* love language.

People tend to express love and appreciation to others in the way they like to receive it. If you take notice how a person expresses love, there’s a good chance that is their personal primary love language. This is important because if you know a person’s love language, you can make a conscious effort to love and/or appreciate them in their own primary love language. And *that*, my friend, is something that’ll move mountains.

Years ago, Tammy and I qualified in a promotion sponsored by our upline. The reward was an invitation to a weekend marriage retreat hosted by the same upline. It was a fabulous experience. Copies of Chapman’s book, *The Five Love Languages* were given out as “party favors.” I can’t say enough about the blessings Tammy and I received as a result of reading that book. The stuff we learned from that book is so

profound I feel compelled to summarize the content in a critter lesson. And here it is, courtesy of Man's Best Friend, the dog. What follows is a brief synopsis of the five love languages. Each language is described in terms of both romance (spousal love) and business (team appreciation).

Love Language #1: Physical Touch

This is, perhaps, the simplest love/appreciation language because it doesn't involve words.⁸ In the context of love languages, PHYSICAL TOUCH includes things like hugging, kissing, holding hands, sexual intimacy, massages, etc.⁹ A good, hard face slap . . . probably not so much.

Skin-to-skin contact triggers the release of certain "feel good" hormones.⁹ Among them is Oxytocin. This is the same hormone released when a mother cuddles her newborn child.⁹ Oxytocin is known as the "bonding hormone."⁹ And make no mistake, the bonding hormone is just as potent with adults as it is with babies.

If you say the words, "I love you" to a person whose love language is PHYSICAL TOUCH, they might take you at your word, however, when you *touch* them, they *feel* the full depth of your love. Your touch fulfills a need in a way that words never could.

Yourself

Your primary love/appreciation language is most likely PHYSICAL TOUCH, if . . .

- Receiving spontaneous unsolicited kisses (on the lips, forehead, or elsewhere, *wink, wink*), causes you to feel loved.⁹
- Holding hands, resting your heads on each other's shoulders, and other physical gestures are among your favorite aspects of a relationship.⁹
- You find yourself touching your partner unconsciously (gently caressing the back of their neck, running fingers through hair, etc.)

- It would feel strange to sit next to your partner and *not* touch them in some way.⁹
- It feels especially meaningful when your partner displays affection in public (e.g., holding hands, arm around your back).⁹

Demonstrating to others

If your partner's primary love language is PHYSICAL TOUCH, they sense the depth of your love when you . . .

- Kiss them often⁹
- Hug them with both arms and use your entire body to embrace them for a moment longer than necessary.⁹
- Give them unsolicited back rubs.⁹
- Make a point to hold hands when you're out in public⁹
- Hold their hand or rub their arm gently during serious conversations.⁹
- Rub their shoulders when they're stressed⁹
- When you're apart, send a text telling them you're looking forward to holding them.⁹
- Plenty of other ideas come to mind, but I promised to keep this article G-Rated.

In business

PHYSICAL TOUCH is unique among the love languages. While all five have the capacity to affect others in meaningful ways, physical touch is the only one that makes literal contact. Now, getting all touchie-feelie with the one you love is one thing, but I wouldn't recommend trying it with your downline. Or upline for that matter. It probably wouldn't work out too well with your prospects either. Obvious cautions aside, there are some things you can do to accommodate team members who are wired for PHYSICAL TOUCH.

Shaking hands for example is always in vogue. A future book will focus on how to employ your hands in order to enhance your human

connections.¹⁰ In the meantime, here's a little something I learned from an Eagle Scout: when you shake hands, do so with your *left* hand. This will likely catch the other person slightly off guard. Explain that you shake with your left hand because it's closer to your heart, which makes the gesture more meaningful.

A friendly pat on the back is also fine, as are hugs—of a sort. Limit your hugs to side-by-side “shoulder squeezes.” Note: if the other person is of the opposite gender, take care to avoid prolonged contact regardless of the form it takes.

**The reason a dog has so many friends is that
he wags his tail instead of his tongue.**

Love Language #2: Words of Affirmation

Words are powerful. They take seconds to say, yet they leave indelible marks upon the person to whom we say them. The second love language, WORDS OF AFFIRMATION, is based on words that affirm, uplift, support, edify, and/or empathize in a positive manner.¹¹ Words of affirmation can be spoken or written.

Yourself

Your primary love/appreciation language is most likely WORDS OF AFFIRMATION, if . . .

- You *love* to hear your partner say, “I love you.”¹¹
- Your heart swells when someone says to you:
 - I’m proud of you because ____.¹¹
 - You look amazing in that outfit.¹¹
 - I never could have it done it without you.¹¹
- I love how you make me laugh.

Demonstrating to others

If your partner's primary love language is WORDS OF AFFIRMATION, they sense the depth of your love when you tell them (or write to them) things like . . .

- “I love you.”
- “After all this time, I’m still crazy about you.” ¹¹
- “You are soooo my type.”
- “I really appreciate you when you ____.” ¹¹
- Write them a love poem.
- If you want to hit a “grand slam,” with this love language, share your comments in the presence of other people.

In business

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION is the easiest love language to employ in business/team environment because just about any positive comment qualifies (as long as it’s sincere). You probably ought to avoid the word “love,” so simply substitute it with “appreciate” or “appreciation.”

Babies cry for it, and grown men die for it. Recognition is something our profession does a good job of providing. Proper recognition includes WORDS OF AFFIRMATION.

You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, “Wow, you’re right! I never would’ve thought of that!” —Dave Barry

Love Language #3: Acts of Service

An act of service is defined as “the physical expression of a thoughtful gesture.” ¹² When you support someone by going out of your way to perform a selfless task you have demonstrated an act of service.

¹² In short, an act of service is when you express love by *doing*.

ACTS OF SERVICE is my wife's primary love language. She cleans the house, keeps us stocked with our favorite foods, and has home-cooked meals practically on the table every day when I get home. This may seem cliché or like a rewind back to the 1950's, but that's my Tammy. She expresses her love beautifully through acts of service.

For the record, it's not all one-sided. The boys and I help around the house. We help her with clothes, vacuuming, etc. Furthermore, Tammy isn't "allowed" to carry things or to open doors. She's a southern lady in a house filled with men. ACTS OF SERVICE is not my primary love language, but I know it is Tammy's. Therefore, as a matter of both respect *and service*, the boys and I do those things for her.

In keeping with the canine nature of the lesson, I'll point out that Tammy also makes from-scratch dog food using a breeder's secret recipe comprising over twenty different ingredients. It's a ton of work, but Tammy loves those dogs, and she demonstrates it via her primary love language, ACTS OF SERVICE. I sure do love that woman.

So does a certain trio of doggies.

Yourself

Your primary love/appreciation language is most likely ACTS OF SERVICE, if you find yourself . . .



- Picking up after loved ones with no complaint.
- Do someone else's chores when it's their turn.¹²
- Watch your spouse's favorite show with them even though you can't stand the plot.
- Serve your spouse breakfast in bed.
- Refuel their car for them

Demonstrating to others

If your partner's primary love language is ACTS OF SERVICE, they sense the depth of your love when you do things for them without being asked. This doesn't mean major things on an occasional basis, but rather a steady stream of little things, things that make their life easier, better, more comfortable.

In business

In business, you communicate ACTS OF SERVICE through servant leadership. In our profession, this means "meeting the needs of the people you lead."¹³ Consider the following scenarios.

- Your team is hosting a weekend event. You show up early to pitch in with the setup.
- You make yourself accessible and available to help with three-way calls, even when it isn't convenient for you.
- You call new team members whom you've never met, to welcome them and to avail yourself.
- Assume active roles in, or even organize, online training calls.

Actions like these demonstrate your willingness to serve. They communicate your appreciation for the team through *doing* without being asked. Such is the essence of the love language, ACTS OF SERVICE.

All his life he tried to be a good person. Many times, however, he failed. For, after all, he was only human.

He wasn't a dog. —Charles M. Schulz, "Peanuts"

Love Language #4: Quality Time

Quality time is demonstrating love by spending dedicated time with someone.¹⁴ What you do during that time isn't nearly as important as giving the other person the undivided attention they desire.

Yourself

Your primary love language is most likely **QUALITY TIME**, if . . .

- The highlight of your relationships is when you spend time together doing stuff, conversing, or just hanging out.¹⁴
- You feel lonely if you don't get enough time with your partner.¹⁴
- You feel disappointed when activities get postponed.¹⁴

Demonstrating to others

If your partner's primary love language is **QUALITY TIME**, they will sense the depth of your love when you spend intentional, meaningful time with them. Consider these ideas:

- Avoid distractions when you're together (Hint: put your phone away!).¹⁴
- Prioritize meaningful eye contact.¹⁴
- Begin and end your day together. Don't rush out the door with little or no interaction.¹⁴
- Be interested in what they're saying and feeling.¹⁴ Empathy is a powerful catalyst of bonding.
- Plan regular date nights.¹⁴

We may not have it all together, but together we have it all.

In business

Social events provide excellent opportunities for team bonding.¹³ Pizza parties, picnics, bowling, and team retreats allow people to mingle in relaxed, casual settings.¹³ As team members socialize, they learn

more about one another and bond naturally. This is a prime example of **QUALITY TIME**.

Love Language #5: Gift giving

This love language involves giving “visual symbols of love.” ¹⁵ People with this love language aren’t really concerned with the monetary value of a gift. They enjoy receiving gifts that are tangible, thoughtful, and meaningful. ¹⁶

GIFT GIVING happens to be my personal love language. Few things give me more pleasure than giving gifts to Tammy. My specialty is jewelry (most of which is not particularly expensive). I shop online for jewelry to match her outfits. I know her tastes, so I scour the Internet for just the right styles and colors. And, of course, these gifts aren’t complete unless they include ring, bracelet, necklace, and earrings. She never knows when I’m going to give her gifts like these. She understands my love language, so she recognizes how these gestures express the depth of my love.

Yourself

Your primary love language is most likely GIFT GIVING, if...

- You enjoy commemorating special occasions with presents. ¹⁶
- You feel that a meaningful gift is the best kind, and if it’s a surprise, all the better. ¹⁶
- Thoughtful gifts make you feel loved. ¹⁶
- You find yourself giving gifts to express love and appreciation.

Things of quality have no fear of time.

Demonstrating to others

If your partner’s primary love language is GIFT GIVING, they sense the depth of your love when you put in the effort to procure thoughtful items and present the items as gifts. Consider these ideas:

- Splurge on something really special.¹⁷
- Multiple small gifts presented over the course of several days.¹⁷
- Present them with something in which they expressed interest in in the past.¹⁷

In business

Be careful with this one among your team. Remember our business is based on duplication. Not everyone on the team has the resources to buy a bunch of gifts. One form of duplicable gift is the gift of a greeting card. You can give a card to say, “thank you,” “congratulations,” or simply to encourage. If resources are tight, you can make a nice card by hand, which, frankly, is even more meaningful (search online videos for creative ideas).

You can also give “dream brochures” as gifts. Let’s say one of your team members has a goal of earning enough to buy a Corvette Stingray. Go online and print out a full-color copy of the current factory brochure, put it in a nice binder. Then present it to the team member as gift. It will keep their “dream” front and center, and it demonstrates your appreciation for them as a member of the team. Dream-oriented gifts can take many forms, not just brochures. (e.g., Print a nice high-resolution image of a beach scene, mount it in a frame, and present it as a gift representing financial freedom.)

Get creative. People with a primary love language of GIFT GIVING value the thoughtfulness of a gift much more than its monetary value.

**This year, instead of giving gifts, I’m giving my opinions.
Be excited.**

Wrap-up

The numbers are in, and it's official: 33% of pet owners agree, as do certain mythological deities—dogs rule. They rule in our hearts and they rule in the nighttime sky. Ever faithful; always reliable; Sirius lighted the way for mariners of cultures gone-by. Modern cultures may not give a lot of thought to the Dog Star, but they certainly have a lot to say about the things that dogs say. From wai-wai to waf-waf to woof-woof, we humans like to humanize canine vocalizations. Regardless how we characterize their vocalizations though, dogs have only five. All pup-speak falls into one of five categories: BARK, WHINE, HOWL, SIGH, or GROWL.

It's true not every family includes a dog to love, however, every family member does communicate love in their own special way. And regardless of the culture involved, they do so in a language of love, of which, there are only five. PHYSICAL TOUCH, WORDS OF AFFIRMATION, ACTS OF SERVICE, QUALITY TIME, and GIVING GIFTS—the five love languages; ever faithful; always reliable.

Are your key relationships marked by growls and howls, or accented with purrs and smooches? Don't default to the former. Employ the five love languages and enjoy the latter. Carve your love in stone. Write it in the stars. Let the light of your relationships burn bright for all to see. In so doing, you provide an example, a reference, by which others can chart a course to their own deeper, more fulfilling relationships.

Don't chase around forever, eluded by the full richness of your relationships. Embrace your Greater Dog. Get serious about the five love languages.

So . . . which will you choose, snarls or snuggles? As for me, I choose the snuggles. Every time. All the time.

Sirius-ly, Dog Star, you rock!

—RM

Note: [The Critter Lessons Series](#) addresses the full spectrum of human connection skills including how to employ words in order to: *Encourage • Edify • Demonstrate appreciation • Persuade with respect and integrity.*

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