






The 5 Professional Languages of Appreciation

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Burnout is an occupational phenomenon among healthcare workers in all specialties, including anesthesiology, which is contributing to an exodus from medicine.¹⁻³ The business literature demonstrates that workplace recognition and appreciation are critical to employee retention, satisfaction, and productivity.⁴ Workplace recognition fosters a positive culture which is critical to employee engagement, a sense of purpose, and ultimately job satisfaction. It can be challenging to find a time, place, and appropriate avenue to show appreciation in the workplace given the siloed, fast-paced nature of healthcare. Yet, fostering a culture of personal value and appreciation is imperative to sustaining the greater healthcare workforce. Healthcare burnout is specifically associated with a lack of recognition or appreciation by the healthcare organization for the burdensome workload.^{5,6}

Chapman and White describe one successful model of gratitude implemented in the corporate workforce as the 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace: Words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, giving tangible gifts, and appropriate physical touch.⁷

Language	Definition	Professional Example
Words of Affirmation 	Communicating a positive message to another person. It is the written or verbal affirmation of positive characteristics or accomplishments.	Be specific. Picking out something about someone’s performance that was exceptional and giving words of affirmation makes the praise meaningful. It can be demonstrated as verbal communication or through an evaluation process which may impact career advancement.
Quality Time 	Giving your most precious resource, your time, to show the person they are valued. This can be through focused attention, quality conversation, shared experiences or working together on a task.	Listen more. It can be as simple as a cup of coffee outside of the hospital with a colleague giving them your undivided time and attention or a systems approach establishing a coaching program for individuals, groups, or teams.
Acts of Service 	Helping a colleague powerfully demonstrates your appreciation for them. This is best achieved after discovering the specific act of service and how they want the task done.	Do something. Physically take on a task from them. Show you recognize them and their hard work and value they bring to the team – through doing something – even if it’s a small act! It may be shown in the clinical or administrative arena.
Giving Tangible Gifts 	Choosing a gift that you know they would appreciate showing that you are getting to know them and you took the time and effort to think about what they would enjoy – making a small gift, regardless of the cost, make a huge impact.	Thoughtful gifts. It’s not about the cost of the gift. It may be in the form of recognition awards at an institutional or national level. These awards may be in a variety of domains such as clinical service (performance), humanistic (behaviors and values) or dedication (years of service) - diligence, innovation, and safety
Appropriate Physical Touch 	Physical touch may be an appropriate expression of appreciation, especially when celebrating an award, reaching a momentous step or stage, or completing a difficult project. However, the action itself is highly individualized.	Small contact. This can potentially be problematic in the workplace, however, to accomplish correctly. A small pat on the back with words of affirmation or a hand on the shoulder. A fist bump or a two-handed handshake. This will be highly dependent on the culture of your workplace.

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