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## Matters of the Mind – Giving & Receiving

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This month's topic of Matters of the Mind is all about the mental health benefits behind the actions of giving and receiving and the love languages that characterize them.

December is a time for many that is painted by increased time with loved ones, compassion, and giving to one another. We call this “Neighboring behavior” which refers to the interactions between each other in the community. However, there are many social scientists and researchers who suggest that family, work, and community are connected and influence these other areas in our lives producing positive benefits for our mental health.

Often the word “give” indicates a material interaction, but it’s important to remember that “giving” can be related to time, effort, and energy. Often, we take the opportunity to “give” our time to a friend, neighbor, or coworker. We may do things like assist with chores or errands, buy a gift, or otherwise interact in the spirit of giving. We may have discovered that they have returned our efforts.

The social exchange theory and the desire to reciprocate influences neighbors, coworkers, and peers to provide support to each other, after having received it first. Additionally, studies have found that the act of giving can increase self-esteem and feelings of compassion. Further, these actions can reduce the stress someone experiences and increases the strength of the relationship as both parties feel positive emotions. They benefit from the advice and care that is exchanged. Meaningful actions are also strongly correlated with mental health benefits. So, what makes things meaningful? Understanding how we “give” and “receive” through love languages!

While love languages are often discussed in romantic contexts, they actually apply to all of our social relationships. The links below may provide ideas for each language you can try throughout the year with your loved ones.

- [Words of Affirmation](#) – You feel most loved or express your care through verbal expressions, praise, and positive reinforcement.
- [Quality Time](#) – Spending Quality, uninterrupted time with someone you care about.
- [Physical Touch](#) – You show love and care through physical interactions.
- [Acts of Service](#) – Doing tasks for someone else or having them done for you.
- [Receiving Gifts](#) – Giving or receiving physical items that are meaningful to show appreciation or affection.

Still not sure what yours or your student’s love languages are? [Try using this quiz](#). You’ll also find a [list of suggestions](#) for using love languages with friends and coworkers. If you’re interested in learning more about the mental health benefits of giving and receiving, you can do so [here](#) and more about speaking love languages [here](#).