



## Trashmagination Podcast #8 – Saying “I Love You” Through Creative Reuse

Welcome to Trashmagination, a podcast about reimagining trash. I’m Carla Brown.

It’s Valentine’s Day this week, and that reminded me of a book called *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. This book says that there are lots of ways to show you love someone, but if you pay attention, you will likely notice that they will have a primary love language. This means if you express your love using their primary love language, chances are they will receive it best – it will mean the most to them.

You can take a quiz to figure out your love language at [5lovelanguages.com](http://5lovelanguages.com). It’s helpful to know your own love language, and it is also helpful to figure out the love languages of the people who you love. Because if you give love through the filter of your own language, and you don’t consider their language, you may be confused about why they don’t seem to receive your message.

Here are the five love languages:

- Acts of Service
- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Physical Touch
- Receiving Gifts

My primary love language is Acts of Service, which means **actions speak louder than words**.

*I feel loved when the people do things that show they are listening and help me further my projects.*

Luckily, I think my family and many friends have figured this out, and one way that they often do Acts of Service is through Trashmagination. So in a way, Trashmagination becomes a circle of energy, where I come up with ideas, and the people around me show me love in supporting those ideas, so that makes me want to come up with more ideas.

Here are some ways my family says “I Love You” related to Trashmagination:

Their most impactful Act of Service is that **they show interest in my Trashmagination projects**. When I say, “I’m now collecting juice pouches because I’m going to sew them into hats – and the way I’m doing that is by cleaning them at the sink and hanging them over here to dry on this little wooden tree structure” – they don’t say “Hats from juice pouches? No one will want to wear that!” or they don’t say “That tree structure takes up too much space on the counter!” And when I sew the hat, they all try it on and let me take pictures of them and act interested.

It’s one thing to show interest – it’s another to **come to an event and help hundreds of people** to do a Trashmagination craft. More than once, my husband and daughter have done that. They smile and they are super kind to people, even though they are both introverts and would rather not be talking to a bunch of strangers. The most recent time was at a Japanese festival. After the festival, my husband even got a terrible cold from interacting with all those new germs. My friend Lisa and her daughter Aya also helped, along with people I had just met!

Speaking of events, I want to mention Maker Faires. These are festivals that take place all over the world. They are coordinated by Make Magazine and you can see a list of all the Maker Faires at [makerfaire.com](http://makerfaire.com). There are hundreds of these events and this year my town of Reston, Virginia will host its fourth Maker Faire.

Trashmagination had a table at the first two where we did lots of interactive creative reuse activities. The first year, we cut butterfly shapes from plastic milk jugs which the kids colored and made into ornaments. We also drilled holes in plastic caps with the kids strung on cord to make cap-erpillars. To make enough supplies for the Faire, I gathered plastic milk jugs from my neighbors recycling bins and washed them. My mom showed her love towards the project by helping to cut out hundreds of butterflies.

These events are 6 hours long not including set-up, and I could not have done it without my husband and my friends Luisa, Marna and Karen. I met these women through work or other friends – and we were not even actively working together on a daily basis when they volunteered. It made me feel really supported or loved to know that people who I don't often see still support Trashmagination and are willing to give their time for an intense volunteering experience.

This year the Faire is Sunday March 19, and if you purchase your tickets before February 17, the price is only \$9 for adults and \$1 for kids under 18. This is a huge faire that takes over a whole high school and middle school which are next door to each other. Even though thousands of people attend, it doesn't feel too crowded. There are big rooms like gyms with hundreds of people in them, and smaller rooms where there might be only 10 people in them. Our whole family loves to attend.

I apologize to the people who have wanted Trashmagination to have a table at the Maker Faire again – it just takes a lot of preparation and now that I'm self-employed, I need to keep my schedule more flexible to take in client work. But hopefully you are getting some of your Trashmagination fix from this podcast.

At the second Maker Faire, I was looking for an interactive activity that did not involve cutting out thousands of butterflies from milk jugs. My husband came up with the idea of **making a giant loom where people could weave trash** into a tapestry. He didn't come up with that idea out of the blue - I had taken a group to meet the weaver Susan Barrett Merrill in Maine where we did that activity. Bob volunteered to build that type of loom, which is called a Story Loom, which is specifically designed for community events or schools or public spaces. Now that is an **impressive example of an Act of Service related to Trashmagination**. He must love me or something.

To make the loom, Bob took the wood to our community center wood shop. We have some saws and other wood working tools which we use to fix things around the house, but not enough to make such a big item. It only cost \$7 per day and it was great because all the sawdust stayed at the community center and Bob also got help from a very kind wood shop supervisor who helped him to figure out the trickier aspects of the loom. Bob's loom is very beautiful and impressive. I have used it for many events and also for projects at home.

The next Act of Service by my family related to Trashmagination is about an event called a **Trashion Fashion show**. So many organizations put on fashion shows where the outfits are designed from trash. We heard about a show coming to the Washington DC area, and I knew I wanted to participate. I got the idea of weaving plastic bags into a dress. My daughter Nora and my mom got into this project with me. They helped me figure out how to weave the bags into circles on my Story Loom. They helped cut the bags and weave them. Then Nora asked if I could make her a dress as well so we could be in the Trashion Fashion show together. So I made 2 dresses. A few days before the show, we both got the flu, and I was so worried that we would not recover in time since we had worked on the dresses for months. But I just managed to pull it together and off we went. Not only did we strut our stuff in the show, but we also made drums from trash cans and we put on a little drumming show to kick off the show.

The next Acts of Service by my family related to Trashmagination were the times **we took apart huge objects in order to better recycle them**. We have taken apart a defunct treadmill, a mattress and a box spring. These were big projects. For the treadmill, we all worked together to unscrew any screws we could see. Most of the treadmill was metal and by separating it from the plastic, most of it could be recycled. For the mattress and box spring, I did the messy work of

removing the covers and padding. My husband helped take apart the metal coils so we could fit it in the car for the metal recycling.

Another major Act of Service by my family was the day I brought home the parts of a floor loom without any instructions, and they helped me put it together. It was a big Act of Service when my weaving teacher believed in me, barely knowing me, and gave me my loom for free. And it was a further Act of Service when my husband helped me put it together – which we only figured out by matching the places where the wood had rubbed together. And then it took us a further six months of tinkering to figure out how to get the tension right in the moving pieces. And I think it is a daily Act of Service that I get to have the loom in my living room, where I am reminded every time I walk downstairs that I have a loom, and I am actively making beautiful weaving projects whenever I need a boost. A lot of people would say a loom should not be in the living room, but to me it's like having a piano or a piece of art in your living room. A living room should say, "I'm living my best life." So I'm grateful my family has an open mind about where we put my loom.

There is another way my family encourages me with Trashmagination, which relates to **spending money on tools**. I am an "under-buyer" – this is a term coined by one of my favorite authors Gretchen Rubin [[http://gretchenrubin.com/happiness\\_project/2009/04/quiz-are-you-an-overbuyer-or-an-underbuyer/](http://gretchenrubin.com/happiness_project/2009/04/quiz-are-you-an-overbuyer-or-an-underbuyer/)]. She describes an under-buyer as someone who procrastinates on purchasing items, so we are often feel surrounded with things that are shabby, don't really work, or aren't exactly suitable. We pick things up at the store and then we say, "I'll get this next time." And while being an under-buyer has benefits of saving money most of the time, the big challenge is that sometimes life would be a lot better if I had the right tool. So my husband encourages me to invest in the right tools, and that has made many projects more fun. It has also caused me to invent new ideas because I had the right tools.

These are the biggest Acts of Service by my friends and family related to Trashmagination. I would very likely not tackle many creative reuse ideas if my family did not show positive energy towards my projects. I am grateful that the biggest Valentine that I receive each and every day is when my family encourages me to follow my vision.

I encourage you to think about the people who you love and what is their Love Language. Maybe you can even convince them to take the quiz so you know for sure. And then do your best to show your love for them in their language. You may find it takes you on adventures as a couple or a family or a friend. I am confident it will only enhance your life.

Until next time – May you see your trash as just another source of art in your life.