

The 5 A's of Intimacy: Creating "The Holding Environment" by David Richo

17

Attention, Acceptance, Appreciation, Affection & Allowing

Intimacy is the ability to give and receive these five A's. Humans, like all primates, need these five A's to survive and flourish when we are young, and as an adult they determine our ability to create healthy, satisfying relationships. As children we needed 100% of our need fulfillment from our primary caregivers. As adults we ideally only receive about 25% from our primary intimate relationship and the other 75% from ourselves, our friends, family, and spiritual practice.

When deeply understood and applied, these five simple concepts form the basis of mature love. They help us to move away from judgment, fear, and blame to a position of openness, compassion, and realism about life and relationships. By giving and receiving these five A's, relationships become deeper and more meaningful, and they become a ground for personal transformation.

1. "Attention" to the present moment; observing, listening, and noticing all the feelings at play in our relationships.
2. "Acceptance" of ourselves and others just as we are.
3. "Appreciation" of all our gifts, our limits, our longings, and our poignant human predicament.
4. "Affection" shown through holding and touching in respectful ways.
5. "Allowing" life and love to be just as they are, with all their ecstasy and ache, without trying to take control.

- Ask yourself, "To what degree do I go into relationships to get something that I missed out on as a child or to both give and receive in a balanced way?"
- Take time to notice what behaviors you may engage in that are unconscious attempts to compensate for these needs not having been met adequately as a child.
- Do the griefwork necessary to mourn your needs not being met as a child and the ways this deficiency has adversely affected your ability to create intimacy.
- Learn to be aware of these needs and to ask directly for them to be met.

Most people think of love as a feeling, but love is not so much a feeling as a way of being present. One does not so much "find love" as become a more loving and realistic person. The 5 A's play a key role in our relationships throughout life.