

# How to Be an Adult in Relationships with Dave Richo

[00:00:00]

**Dave Richo:** May my, every choice here be about loving and such a way that I'm not in the relationship to gratify my own ego. And then the relationship to gratify the intimacy between us and to magnify it. On a daily basis. Imagine being with somebody who has that as his or her or their approach

**Yael Schonbrun:** That was Dave Richo on psychologists off the clock..

**Diana Hill:** We are four clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships work and health.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in Mile High Denver Colorado

**Diana Hill:** I'm Dr. Diana Hill practicing in seaside, Santa Barbara, California.

**Yael Schonbrun:** From coast to coast. I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston-based [00:01:00] clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of Be Mighty and The Big Book Of Act Metaphors..

**Debbie Sorensen:** We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

**Diana Hill:** Thank you for listening to psychologists off the clock.

**Jill Stoddard:** I am so excited to announce that the co-hosts of psychologists off the clock are hosting our first annual psychologists off the clock wise minds summit, how to adapt and thrive in today's challenging times. we have an amazing.

Lineup of speakers. We have Dr. Rick Hanson coming to talk about growing the good in your brain. Dr. Raphael Palayo is coming back . To answer our questions about how to sleep. We have Julie Lythcott-Haims who wrote how to be an adult. Who's coming to talk to us about empowering our kids in challenging times and JG harbinger from the art of charm podcast.

Who's going to talk to us about conversations that connect and many, many more [00:02:00] including presentations from all four of the POTC co-hosts. Our summit takes place on Friday, January 29th and Saturday, January 30th. The first 300 registrants will be able to register for free and we'll continue to release free tickets as we get donations and additional sponsors.

And after that, tickets will only be \$8 just to cover administrative fees. So we hope you will join us. We're really excited. You can check it out on our website at [offtheclockpsych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com).

**Diana Hill:** Psychologist off the clock is sponsored by online training and continuing education from Praxis continuing education. They offer multiple formats of high quality training, including a live online courses, free webinars and on-demand courses.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Praxis gets some of the best names in the field. People who do really amazing trainings and you can do them so easily from home right now. I know I've really enjoyed some of the trainings that I've done in the past, and there's some great ones on the lineup coming [00:03:00] up.

**Diana Hill:** Yeah, just looking at it, the lineup. Well, you can always do act immersion with Steve Hayes. That's fantastic. If you want to take a deep dive into an acceptance commitment therapy, but I was also really excited to see. Jonathan Kanter Robyn Gobin and Daniel Rosen are doing a course from ally to anti-racist, which is a six week course using the contextual behavioral model of racism to cultivate personal and professional anti-racist action

I was also excited to see Dennis Tirch and Laura Silberstein. Doing a foundations of compassion focused therapy course for those that want to learn more about CFT.

**Debbie Sorensen:** you'll see some of our old podcasts guests that we've had on the show doing Praxis training. So check it out and you'll want to go through our website [off the clock, psych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com) to register because you can get a \$25 off discount code for life training events.

**Yael Schonbrun:** This is Yael here with Debbie to introduce an episode on relationships with prolific author, Dave Richo. There's actually a backstory to how we got connected, which is that a listener, requested us having [00:04:00] him on. And then it turned out that my editor was also Dave Richo's editor.

So the fates aligned and brought us together and it was. It was really such an honor to have him on his writing is really deep, and you really just kind of go into the heart of what relationships mean and how to do them in healthy, mindful ways. And our conversation touched on lots of different topics, but I wanted with Debbie here to focus our.

Conversation on five A's that are core to healthy relationships, and those are being attentive, being accepting, being appreciative, being affectionate, and allowing, and that when we're mindful that we're more likely to get into a mindset where we can offer those things and that we can more skillfully request those things from our partner.

But when I thought a lot about during the pandemic and throughout my time being a working parent who wants to have a healthy relationship, but has very little time and energy at the end of the day to devote to it is how to be creative in meeting the needs of those five A's. I mean, everyone [00:05:00] has maxed out.

I'm maxed out my partner's maxed out. So Debbie, I thought you and I might share some of our real life hacks to both offering and trying to get some of those five A's met.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'd want to just first validate that it's hard, right? Like I think that it's interesting. Cause even in. Fairly good marriages, emotionally mature people still struggle. I think sometimes with, within relationships to both give their partner these things, but also to ask for their own needs in an effective way.

And so, you know, when you say hacks, I think. There's times when I have, I think, done things that I'm proud of and that have been effective. And then there's other times not so much where literally it's a practice, what you preach thing as a therapist where I will spend the day and I'll talk to clients about assertive communication and go through some skills and then I'll go home and may or may not actually use the myself.

And so just to validate that it's hard, but I think [00:06:00] from a philosophical place, one of the key things I think is that. It's really helpful sometimes to let go of this need to control our partner or other people in relationships. I think sometimes we are very latched onto like, I need to make my kid do this, or my spouse should be doing this and they're not.

And I actually think it's very important to speak up about our needs, but from a place of like something more genuine, rather than just trying to get them to do what they want. Cause I found that when we just get into control. And then can't accept if the partner doesn't do what we want. It's it. It's not a helpful place to be

**Yael Schonbrun:** yeah. That's so well sad. And just this, this sort of echo, it's much easier to tell other people to do this than to do it myself.

**Debbie Sorensen:** said than done. Isn't it?

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. The thing that I'm often thinking about right. In the middle of a fight with my partners, I just helped like dozens of people this week do this much better than I'm doing So it.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. Yeah. It. I [00:07:00] also, was thinking about the, one of the A's is affection and how I think sometimes in this stressful situation, you know, affection with your partner, sort of. Gets tossed aside or put on the back burner, just because it's like, people are exhausted and it's like, I've got nothing left to give, you know?

And I, I do think that one of the things to think about is that sometimes it just takes a little bit of effort.

It doesn't have to be a big deal or anything like that, but it's like just tuning in, I think, but being aware that sometimes that does take effort.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, I have two thoughts on that. And one is that being locked in our houses, is really a challenge for couples, because it's much easier to make an effort if you

can sort of have a change of scenery. But in our homes, we can carve out that space more deliberately.

We can create an in-home date night, you know, have a glass of wine or a cup of tea, or play a board game, or even do a Netflix show, but be deliberate [00:08:00] about it, you know, sit on the couch together and really savor that time.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I have a fire pit in my little backyard here in Denver, and sometimes we'll like, go sit out sometimes with the kids, sometimes just me and my partner, but he'll go start a fire out there. And sometimes I'm just like, Oh, my gosh, it's cold. I'm too tired. I just want to like go to sleep or something like that, but that little bit of effort of kind of making it happen.

It's like really nice. It's one of the best times that we have to just sit and relax and enjoy some time together, but you know, it takes effort.

**Yael Schonbrun:** it takes effort and may the recommendation is like, put it on the calendar and put it on for a weekly date and then aim for two out of four, but be, be disciplined about getting to two out of four, but give yourself a little bit of wiggle room knowing that life happens. And these times are exhausting.

But that sometimes, you know, in a value consistent way, it's useful to kind of give yourself that push. And w as you're saying, it can really, you know, be rewarding, even though it took some effort to get there.

[00:09:00] **Debbie Sorensen:** It's like a lot of things in life, right?

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, 100%, a couple other things that I think we often don't feel like doing, but are very good for our relationship is working with our own brains, right? Our brains are constantly scanning the environment for like what isn't going well, so that we can make it go better. And that applies to our relationship too.

And so when it comes to the two A's of attentiveness and appreciation, I think being really deliberate about looking for. Things that you appreciate about your partner. So paying attention to them and really actively looking for things that you like about them and sharing it either through verbal affirmation or through, physical touch, can be really helpful.

. And similarly, Exactly right, right. Try to enter into a virtuous cycle instead of the vicious cycle that can feel really natural, you know, during a pandemic, but just generally when life is stressful

**Debbie Sorensen:** I think in this pressure cooker situation, there is something about looking at some of those silver linings.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, and I just wanted [00:10:00] to end too, by noting that. We tend to buy into this myth that our partners should be able to offer us everything that we want at all

the times that we want it. But just to appreciate that we're sometimes maxed out in our partners sometimes maxed out.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I love in the episode when he talks about how acting lovingly helps us to be more loved and that there is something that even in these hard situations about just showing love and being loving toward others, that sorta like the cycle gets created.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, so we hope you get a lot out of this episode with Dave Richo

I'm so excited that one of our listeners requested to have dr. David Richo on to discuss his books, .Dave is an author therapist, workshop leader, and teacher.

He combines youngian poetic and mythic perspectives in his work with the intention of integrating the psychological and the spiritual, he's written 20 books, but, , one of his best [00:11:00] sellers, how to be an adult in relationships, the five keys to mindful loving is going to be coming into its 20th anniversary this fall. so we're going to be spending some time talking about that today. Welcome. So given that how to be an adult and relationships is about to reach its 20th anniversary. , I'm curious, what do you think makes this book, so enduringly helpful for people.

**Dave Richo:** I think it's because I look into the various issues that come up in relationships. In a way that kind of opens the reader into it. Instead of coming up with a plan that everybody has to follow, I think it has a lot of options in it as opposed to demands as to what you have to be like for a relationship to be successful.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. So it kind of invites you to be really reflective [00:12:00] about relationships, your role in relationships, how you engage your history of relationships. , it is a book that covers a huge amount of. Topics relevant to relationships. So I'm curious, how would you summarize the goals of how to be an adult in relationships?

**Dave Richo:** I would say it's the. Your ability to be present by showing what I call the five A's. the five A's are. Attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection, and allowing. And we were always looking for those. And the person that we go with as a partner is one that we believe rightly or wrongly will give those to us. And of course, Our commitment is to give those to the other.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. So these five A's being attacked, being accepting, being appreciative, being affectionate and allowing [00:13:00] sort of sit at the core of healthy relationships. And what I think is really important that you talk about in the book is that, you know, those are the necessary ingredients in a healthy relationship at that.

We never perfectly get them as children, even in the most ideal of homes and we never perfectly get them as adults. And so what is the job of an adult in a healthy relationship in terms of orienting around these needs in a healthy way?

**Dave Richo:** First of all that they, were in born needs. We came into the world, not yet ready to take care of ourselves. We weren't born like a little, uh, uh, full, uh, who stands up within minutes of being born. We had to. You're taken care of. And that means that somebody had to be paying attention to our needs. So, hence [00:14:00] attention is not just, something that you're asking for.

It's something that is required. If you are to survive, somebody had to know whether we wanted to be fed. Or held or changed. And we had no words. somebody had to divine what our various sounds and cries represented. Of course, all through life. We're looking for someone who can get us, who can figure out. Our, stated cries. Likewise, when we showed that we had a specific personality and everybody is born this way, we're not just like a lump of clay that somebody can manipulate.

No matter how they try. There will always be a core self. That is you, it's different from your [00:15:00] brother. It's different from your sister and when you're caregivers, you this way, rather than demanding that you be the way they need you to be, that helps you grow and have self-esteem. So that also is a unnecessary building blocks for life on the planet.

Thirdly, you have to have the feeling that you were valued for yourself, that you weren't being compared to your brothers and sisters, that you weren't less valuable because of your gender. made into someone too valuable because of how your parents represented you in their own minds. Just had to be kind of like Goldilocks just right. Then we also know that the human brain does not develop. [00:16:00] Appropriately, um, less we are held and caressed and cradles and played with. So that's the need for affection. It's not something extra. It's a requirement for our full development. And then finally, since every human is called to be on some kind of a journey, the first journey that we took was crawling across the room on our own, instead of being carried across as we had been before. So we had to have the kind of a caregiver who could. Handle that who could let it be okay. That now we are starting to take over the functions of our parents. And the [00:17:00] first function is locomotion. Getting from one place to the other. So we crawled across the room. Then we walked across the room. Then we left the house all together to go to school and we kept leaving all through our childhood and adolescence in various ways.

And we finally left altogether to go to college or to start our own life. And all of that had to be allowed. Obviously we're free being so we can do things on our own. Allowing means that you can tell that they support your launching, who supports the caregivers. They want you to grow. They want you to move on while still being connected to them. And that's the essence of health that I can. Move forward in my life as myself, while maintaining my connections to [00:18:00] those who brought me into the world who created the holding environments in which I could grow. And as you said, uh, nobody does any of this perfectly, but we don't need it to be perfect.

What all we need is good enough parenting. And, uh, how do you tell that it's good enough. You can remember some times that it happens and you notice that you're not craving these things from other people now, because you've already had them satisfied and you've come out of your childhood with a capacity. To be satisfied with a moderate amount of these five A's from other people, other adolescents or adults. And that all happens because your

original experience of [00:19:00] life on this planet that is in early childhood, you were given. The fulfillments of the needs that all of us have and then our requisites for our personal growth. So the book goes into all of this and shows you that there is a connection between what happens to you in childhood and who you are as an adult, how you are in relationship. My other book goes into this in more detail, because I thought it was such an important topic. I wanted to devote special time to it, special attention to it.

**Yael Schonbrun:** is that the book when past his present?

**Dave Richo:** Yeah. And the title says it all.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. Yeah. And I think that's such an interesting and important point that early wounds can really carry into the present. And I'll just share that I am a more behaviorally oriented therapist and more present oriented [00:20:00] therapist. But what I know as a couples therapist and you write this in your book that we often accidentally sort of very unintentionally train our partner, to engage with us, to repeat patterns from our childhood. And unless we are able to take a look at them with some perspective and work together, either with our partner or work together with ourselves to, to heal, then we're.

Almost doomed to keep repeating it. So it's not that we can't heal from the childhood wounds, but we need to be able to take a look at them and do the work. And your book really does help individuals do a lot of that. Now, in my opinion, as a reader, I think that's, what's so powerful is that you really guide people in being able to take a look at how the past has been carried forward and that either with your partner or with yourself, you can really.

Process a lot of that and reframe it and engage in some healthier habits with yourself and with it and within relationships.

**Dave Richo:** Thank you. Yes, I do think that's what it's [00:21:00] about.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I'll share a few quotes from your book that I really love, but one of them is that if hope doesn't include a plan for change, it is actually hopelessness and avoidance of change. what we do not change we choose. And so again, I think that they're, they're sort of, you know, Untapped potential in healing, childhood wounds.

If we're able to take a look at what they were and to, to collaborate again with ourselves and with our partners. One question related to that, that I had for you is that we usually think about mindfulness is something that we do as individuals. And I'm just curious from your perspective, how does mindfulness apply to relationships?

**Dave Richo:** One of the main recommendations that I make in the book is that people in relationship would, have a spiritual practice together. That you know, you sit mindfully together for a little time each day, that you practice a loving kindness toward each other. [00:22:00] So instead of thinking of our spiritual practices as just about ourselves, we're also noticing that they make a contribution to the health of the relationship. And that is one of the main points I'm trying to get across. And by the way, when you mentioned the wounds of childhood, and that's a very good phrase, I just want to be sure people know that means

neglect, abuse, emotional, or other abandonments. And all of us have had some kind of experience of. Not being attuned to in our feelings, those would all be also the examples of wounds.

**Yael Schonbrun:** right. So the wounds can really range in severity. And while some people have experienced really deep wounds, pretty much all of us have experienced [00:23:00] something, right. A moment where we didn't get a need met. And one thing I actually was listening to another podcast interview. I think you had done it like 10 years ago, but you were saying that one of the things that you'd observed is that even individuals who had been brought up in these sort of Donna Reed style households have wounds and that, you know, it's sort of hard to really fully understand why, but I think maybe, you know, you can even.

Think about it from like a resilience perspective that, you know, it's not always bad to not get our needs met because it helps us to grow some strength in tolerating, imperfections that are inevitable in life. And yet it's also true at the same time that those tough experiences are wounding.

So it's sort of a, both and.

**Dave Richo:** one of the, wonderful thing about things about us humans is that, the wounds are not only able to be fields are all, they also become openings into the deeper [00:24:00] reaches of ourselves. So I get to know. That one, I was hurt this way. It has stayed with me. And now I'm more sensitive that way. When I noticed those kinds of connections, then the wounds are actually also serving as insights into who I really am. So many pieces of ourselves have been mislaid over the course of time. And our wounds are one of, our pathways into, locating those pieces of ourselves. for instance, so here we heard as children and we're showing that we're afraid. And of course, what we need is mirroring of our fear. We need somebody who accepts or fear pays [00:25:00] attention to our fears. Wholes are fierce with affection, appreciates how our fears are impacting us. Allowing us to have our fears.

In other words, giving those five A's to our feelings. When that happens, we will not be ashamed of being afraid all the rest of our lives, because we already were blessed with a presence of people who let our. Fears be totally appropriate. But if instead someone said, uh, there's nothing to be afraid of.

What's wrong with you? Opposite of mirroring the total. Misattunement the total shaming of us for our feelings. Then later in life, when we're afraid, we might [00:26:00] also think there's something wrong with us. Why can't I be more courageous? Why do I have these fears that shows that, I am, not who I should be.

You know, we bring all these shits and shame into her experience of our feelings and, uh, all of that goes back to the original misattunements and shaming. So, this is what I mean by, examining an inquiring into what happened to us is so important in our knowledge of ourselves today. And by the way, we don't blame our parents.

Now that is a complete distraction. From the actual only appropriate feeling, which is grief about what we missed out on.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. And I want to get back to talking about blaming and sort of figuring out who's [00:27:00] responsible, , before I do that, I wanted to say, as you were talking, one of the things that came to my mind as a parallel, and, and what's really fun about your writing is that you, refer to a lot of, Stories from mythology and, and, you know, fables and Shakespeare.

And I love that. And it's not maybe quite as high brow, but my, my children and I are very into the Harry Potter series right now. And I was just thinking about the parallel between, um, Albus Dumbledore, the greatest wizard in the series and Voldemort, you know, that the evil villain

whereas Albus Dumbledore is very reflective and uses his difficult experiences to grow empathy and compassion and, a sense of purpose Voldemort instead translates those difficult experiences into, vengeful thinking and. Self-righteousness and I think that is where mindfulness is so powerful is, is not, is not in avoiding painful experiences, but rather as you're saying, using them as a [00:28:00] vehicle to grow and to better ourselves and to, you know, move towards a sense of purpose and a life full of meaning.

And to me, that is really, a powerful message that, that runs throughout your book.

**Dave Richo:** Thank you. Yeah, I really, I like how you stated that and that's a good summary of it.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Getting back to this question of blaming it. I like that you're saying that it's important that we not blame our parents, but that we give ourselves permission to grieve what we didn't get. One of the things that happens a lot. that people come in and they're less focused on anger with their parents, but they're really focused on anger with their partner and.

I'm curious, what tack you might take with somebody who is really, enraged with the ways that their partner is falling short in meeting their needs and in the areas of the five A's because, you know, on the one hand, I think your book makes no bones that sometimes we do match up with partners who can't meet our needs, no matter how hard we try, but you also put an [00:29:00] emphasis on building these abilities to meet those needs.

In our relationships and for ourselves. And so I'm curious, what would you say to somebody who is coming in and saying, you know, I just can't stop feeling enraged with my partner, for how thoughtless and how, Unwilling. They are to make accommodations and work with me. And every time I engage with them, I just feel a sense of deep rage.

How would you help that person reframe and sort of work with those five A's to get to a better place?

**Dave Richo:** first of all, I would want to look at anger itself, which the dictionary defines as displeasure. Better perceived injustice. So basically what you're saying when you're angry at your partner is you're not giving me what I expected to get, or you're not giving me what we agree to give each other. And whenever there is [00:30:00] something missing or a loss, the

first appropriate feeling is not blame, but grieving again, that you're not getting your needs met.

And by grief, I mean three main feelings. First, I'm sad about what is missing. Secondly, I'm angry that you're not giving me what I expected. That's a topic we're on now. And third, I'm afraid that I'll never get my needs met by you. Now, when you go to blame, you are canceling out the shall we say appropriate first feeling, which is the grief. And you are putting all the accent on how inadequate the other person is. So I would say, we want to focus on the anger as [00:31:00] part of your personal account. I'm angry that I'm not getting my needs met and, and we would want to let ourselves feel our own sadness and our own fears. And when you let yourself feel those mindfully by mindfully, I mean, without judging yourself for them and without blaming anybody else for them, when you just hold them as they are rather than.

Uh, somebody's fault when you do that, you are of course, no longer putting all the accents on the other person and your anger at that other person. And you come from a much deeper place when you finally do turn to the other and say, here's what I'm sad about. Here's what I'm angry about. Here's what I'm afraid of. Just declaring your own grief rather than blaming in any [00:32:00] way. You're going to get a lot farther into the relationship and create a deeper bond by doing it that way. And I know it's hard to do because of course, you know, we're not very good at being mourners. We're in a society, not just this society, all societies, put a lot of accents on preserving you from feeling grief.

You know, there's so many distractions and, you know, ways we have of just not admitting. We're thinking of a poem by Emily Dickinson. that says this very well. it's called, um, a great hope, a great hope fell. You heard no noise. The ruin was within Oh, calming wreck that told no tale and let no witness in a, not admitting of the wound.

[00:33:00] Until it grew so wide that all my life had entered it and there was room beside. So go to that first, before you start laying and you're going to wind up a deeper person, a more compassionate person and a person who has a chance that the relationship might work.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, so I'm actually reading a book by Thich Nhat Hanh a Buddhist monk right now on anger. And he has this really lovely script which really parallels what you're saying, which is to say to your partner or to whoever it is that you're angry with. I am hurting. Um, I'm sad that I'm hurting, please help me and what he talks about and what you're talking about.

And I think what we all know is that anger feels safer. It's more protective, right? It makes us feel big and strong. And when you admit to somebody who has hurt you, that you're hurting and that you're sad, it puts you in a vulnerable position. And I think exactly what you're [00:34:00] saying in a very paradoxical way.

That vulnerable position is actually a much more powerful position in the relationship because it gives you much more opportunity to strengthen the relationship, to heal, to grow together, to learn, to grow more compassionate and perspective taking. Um, but in the moment it feels terrifying. To that. I was also kind of curious. So, you know, by the time

couples come in to see me, and I think this is true for most couples therapists, in fact, research suggests that couples wait about six years on average from the time that a problem is a significant problem can be identified before they seek counseling.

So by the time they come in, there's often mountains of ill will that have formed. And one patient who I was talking about, building compassion for their partner recently asked me, why is it important to get rid of ill will when somebody is hurt us, doesn't it serve us to hold onto it in order to protect ourselves.

So I'm curious what your [00:35:00] answer would be to that question.

**Dave Richo:** And what's, you're protecting yourself from is the full experience of the grief.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah.

**Dave Richo:** Yeah. But it's grief that helps us become people of depth, character and compassion. So when you, and by the way, when you were saying about, You know, ill will and blame. I don't consider that actual anger. I consider that abusive rather than actual anger.

The actual anger is within the grief complex. I'm sad that it isn't there I'm angry that it was taken away or not given. And I'm afraid that it will never be given. that will not include ill will or playing. So in the book, I have my chart that shows the difference between anger and abuse and some of us have never seen actual anger. [00:36:00] People have only come at us with abuse. If they were intimidating, you blaming you, Demanding that you change, screaming at you that was not anger that had crossed the line and become abuse. So, I consider it a spiritual practice to be able to show anger in a healthy non-violent way.

**Diana Hill:** we've had a number of guests on the show that we've been inspired by and that are offering you our listeners discounts on their programs if you go to our website [offtheclockpsych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com) you'll be able to find coupon codes for the programs of dr Judson brewer dr Rick Hanson and Jen Lumenlun So go check it out at [offtheclockpsych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com) and start learning today

**Yael Schonbrun:** .

one exercise that I would actually love for you to share with our listeners is that even though technique, I don't know if I'm going to put you on the spot here, but I love this because it's such a great example of [00:37:00] how, even if somebody has a very poor match for you, even if they're abusive, The best answer is not to sort of, you know, do the same in return.

It's not, I for I, that is the answer there. It is to walk away with a sense of peace. And I think you're, even though technique is just really helpful to kind of frame your own orientation towards an unhealthy relationship in a way that doesn't leave you, you know, saving in vengeful thinking and action.

**Dave Richo:** First of all. I'm glad you mentioned about vengefulness because I have noticed in working with clients over the years, couples, that in many instances, couples, partners. Are, um, retaliatory toward each other. And of course, as long as retaliation is present in any relationship, it is [00:38:00] still primitive.

It is still Cro-Magnon. It has not been civilized missionized. It has not been brought into. The best wisdom that came to us from Buddha Christ. Gandhi, take him out. Huh? Martin Luther King Dalai Lama. Well there, Theresa all of whom propose non-violence as the only way that we could ever survive on this planet. , so we want to keep that in mind. And then regarding the F, even though it's, even though I'm head over heels for you, um, I have to acknowledge that there's some major things missing, such as the ability to show the five A's or, Something that really gets in the [00:39:00] way of your making a commitment, like you're afraid to commit yourself.

Uh you're so, defended that you can't show your feelings. So even though you look good, I can't make the decision to stay with you because. There's something missing that in my mind is a necessary component of being healthy in a relationship. And of course, one of the, one of the experiences that could get in the way of our being able to say this.

This even though is, that there's so much adrenaline and, other hormones aroused by how excited we are by somebody that we, he either failed to notice the inadequacies or gloss them over or sugar coat [00:40:00] them. And, I'm thinking of a few verses from a song, my foolish heart from my childhood, but listen to these lines because I think they, they address this whole thing.

there's a line. Between love and fascination. That's hard to see on an evening, such as this for the both give the very same sensation when you are lost in the magic of a kiss. Get the idea.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Dave Richo:** Now, in other words, you can't tell the difference. Between fascination and love. So you just like go into it, but what's actually happening is, um, not really love.

It just feels so good. It's an [00:41:00] attachment. That feels good. That's the poor man's version of love that won't get us anywhere. It won't last. And, There's no problem with it. As long as you see it as fascination. And if you want to have a little fun for the weekend, no problem. Why don't you try to make it into a marriage?

It's not going to really go anywhere because it's not enough to build. Huh?

**Yael Schonbrun:** Right in your book, you talk about sort of the importance of doing some investigative work before you commit to a partnership long-term and you, I can't remember all the analogies that you give, but you give some analogies that, you know, we do a lot of investigation before we buy a car before we, you know, invest in anything that's going to.

Take residents in our home for a long time. We're in our lives for a long time. But, um, that feeling of romantic love can be so intoxicating and we interpret it as something far

[00:42:00] deeper and more permanent and enduring than it actually is. And that, that can be a mistake that can sort of be fooling ourselves and then refraining from doing the investigative work that's needed to go back to the, even though technique, I wanted to just.

Share it, verbatim from, from your book? Because for me, it was really, a very cool analogy. So you write, would you eat strawberries, even if you were seriously allergic to them, would you eat poisonous mushrooms, even if you knew them to be poisonous, would you attempt to read a book written in a language that you don't understand?

And then would you stay in a relationship with somebody that you loved? Even if you were unhappy and, and then you sort of followed up by asking the reader, would you blame the strawberries for your allergic reaction? The mushrooms for poisoning you the book for confusing?

You. And then would you blame your partner for your unhappiness? And so doing that investigative work and then also taking responsibility for our choices, I think is an important point. I mean, of [00:43:00] course, relationships aren't static. We can learn and grow and we should learn and grow with our partner. But there is something to be said for being honest with yourself about the nature of, of a match that you've made.

**Dave Richo:** I see your role in it to see how you made your choice.

**Yael Schonbrun:** And I think that's a bit for me of, what's so powerful in your writing and how to be an adult in relationships, because it really is. a, both and both kind of own your own behaviors and your own, , wounds that you're carrying forward. Cause we all have them. And then to be also willing to assert your need and your right to have a partner who can look at their own stuff and work together with you to get to a better place to grow together with you.

I was wondering if we could actually run through a common example of. A couple, it's sort of an amalgamation of lots of different couples that I've been seeing recently, which, has to do with COVID related decisions that people are having to [00:44:00] make. So in this example that I made up.

We have a husband bill who runs a billing company. And then his wife, JC is a stay at home. Mother JC is on the anxious side. And so when COVID began, she wanted to keep their family that they have one toddler, mostly at home and have bill work from home. But bill had a hard time working from home because he's social and wanted the ability to kind of get out of the house.

He was feeling stifled at home and he also wanted to feel free to connect with his brother who lives nearby and runs the company with him. So he insists on returning to work, claiming that he can do it safely enough. And that JCS. Anxiety is just getting the better of her.

But as the holidays approach, they fight tooth and nail about whether to get together with family, whether to get together with friends and they each grow more and more frustrated with the improve ability on either side, she wants. To have a lot of isolation and carefulness. He wants her to relax and thinks that her anxiety [00:45:00] is overblown.

I wonder how you might guide this couple through something like this. Seemingly non-negotiable. Topics. So how can the five A's help here and how can some of the tools or questions self inquiry that you offer help here?

**Dave Richo:** I really liked your example by the way. Because it's so relevant to here and now during this COVID crisis. And, uh, I have certainly seen examples of exactly what you're bringing up. I would begin with, uh, from the point of view of the husband that you mentioned, I would in with really wanting to holes compassionately. And sensitively with the five A's the anxiety that his wife is having. I would really want to start there.

I really get it that this is a scary time [00:46:00] and that you are feeling the fear and. That you have concerns for the toddler and for me, and I really want to appreciate that I'm paying attention to it. I totally accepted, I really get it. And at the same time I myself have to. Pay attention to my own needs.

And I don't want to do anything that would put anyone here at risk, but I can make a commitment that whenever I am out, I'll be wearing a mask. I will be keeping the social distance. I will be doing the hand washing and, it won't just be business as usual as it used to be a year ago. I am really going to pay attention to all the recommendations that the health department has made. And, uh, [00:47:00] I need you to allow me to do this within those boundaries. So I would see that as a healthy response, because you're both acknowledging you are. That's the husband acknowledging the anxiety as appropriate and holding it lovingly. And at the same time, taking care of your own meats.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, that response. And for me, I really like the use of the five A's here. And I've been thinking about that more as I'm doing couples therapy, because I think it really gets to this. Issue that you, that you described in your book of that it's very easy to fall into this either or thinking that either we do it my way or we do it your way, and then one person's a winner one, person's a loser, but really you both lose because cause if one person's deeply unhappy that isn't going to work as a couple and instead step into.

Being attentive, [00:48:00] accepting, appreciative, affectionate, allowing and respecting how each person feels. And from that position, you're. Just much more able to do compromising negotiating and finding , a behavioral position where you both feel like there's influence. So you move from controlling one another, or trying to control one another to allowing one another, to have influence in your individual choices and your decisions as a family.

And I think the more that as couples we can help. ourselves and our partner moving from control to influence, then we'll be in a more, uh, cooperative state, a happier, more fulfilled state. And I think that the five A's are really helpful as a tool in doing that, really thinking

about giving your partner attention, being accepting, being appreciative, being affectionate, and allowing for them to have their own desires and preferences and wishes. [00:49:00]

**Dave Richo:** Yeah, well, at the same time taking care of your own, and somehow you have to negotiate that difficult, pass through the mountains of either or.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. Yeah. It's not easy, but I also think it's often, much more possible than it feels like it is.

**Dave Richo:** Yes, it's always possible. In fact, the first sentence of my book, if I may not get it exactly right, but I think it starts with love is the possibility of possibilities.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, I love that.

**Dave Richo:** in other words, it's the highest potential that we could achieve as humans.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I think that's spot on. I want to end with something that you wrote that really resonated with me, again, as a more behaviorally oriented therapist, and that is, and I'm quoting from your book. People who believe they are lovable are [00:50:00] people who love. And the reason that I like that is because.

When we're feeling unloved, one of the most powerful things that we can do and you write about this is to act lovingly. And when we act more lovingly, it helps us to feel more lovable. And so I was curious if you could just speak to that idea and maybe also talk about how we can all work towards becoming more loving as adults, even when things feel difficult.

**Dave Richo:** Only possible if you yourself, regardless of others had decided to live by the standard of loving kindness to all beings. And that's one of our Buddhist practices. So once I have settled in my own heart, that my life [00:51:00] purpose is to show all the love I have in any way I can and everywhere and always to everyone, including me, once that is.

Engendered into our consciousness as the standard, the value and the commitment that we live by then we never have to worry about the kinds of questions that you're bringing up in that keep coming up. In fact, Saint Augustan bravely says love and do what you will. In other words, once you know, that you act from a loving place, you can trust that the choices you make will have love in them.

And of course we can't take that too. Literally we still have to inquire and audit ourselves, but I believe that it begins with our own commitment. Our [00:52:00] own, awakening to the fact that I'm here to love myself and others, rather than I'm here to get all I can get, have as much power as I can have control as many people as I can control. when your real central value is love itself, then, st. John of the cross says love comes in and transforms every other feeling into loving ness. So we can trust that that's what will happen. And it certainly applies to relationships. May my, every choice here be about loving and such a way that I'm not in the relationship to gratify my own ego. And then the relationship to gratify the intimacy between us and to magnify it. [00:53:00] On a daily basis. Imagine being with somebody who has that as his or her or their approach

**Yael Schonbrun:** Right. That would be a very lovable person to be with. And couldn't we all aspire to be that lovable.

**Dave Richo:** yes. And fail at it every day,

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. What a great place to end. , your, your books are just so full of wisdom. And I really thank you for taking the time to speak with me and share your wisdom on this podcast.

**Dave Richo:** Well, thank you. Yeah. And I really appreciated your question.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Oh, thank you.

**Dave Richo:** . You have a lot of depth in the way you do your interviews.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Thank you. That's a huge compliment. Thank you. so we'll definitely link to your, um, how to be an adult in relationships, but also to your website where you can link up with Dave's many other wonderful books, and I'm hoping we can have you back to talk about some of them. Cause this was a lot of fun.

Thank you [00:54:00] again,

Thank you for listening to psychologist off the clock. If you enjoy our podcast, you can help us out by leaving a review or contributing on Patreon.

You can find us wherever you get your podcasts and you can connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

**Jill Stoddard:** We'd like to thank our strategic consultant, Michael Herold and our interns, Katy Rothfelder and Melissa Miller.

**Debbie Sorensen:** This podcast is for informational and entertainment purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for mental health treatment. If you're having a mental health emergency dial 911 if you're looking for mental health treatment, please visit the resources page of our web page [offtheclockpsych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com)