



Our basic need for connection: The 6As

Dr. Gina Madrigano © 2020

Connection is a primal need that we all have, whether we are introverts, extraverts or a combination of both. We are a social species.

We build healthy connections and relationships through

- acceptance
- appreciation
- attention /acknowledgement
- affection
- allowing
- attunement

We will see how these 6As as the foundation of healthy couples, and positive attachment between parent and child.

There is an overlap and they are interconnected.

We discuss what is at the source of social disconnect.

- **Attention/Acknowledgement**
 - Eye contact when they talk to you- get off your devices
 - Listen more than you speak, pay attention: Be present, don't plan what you are going to say, make assumptions or judgments, just listen.
 - Notice body language and what is not said
 - As a result of paying attention, you will be more attuned to their wants and needs

- **Acceptance**

- Unconditional love
- Stop trying to change people
- Lessens the struggle and the suffering as we stop trying to control or impose our agenda on others and our kids
- Better problem solver because when we accept we can communicate better because we see things as they are not as we wish they would be. It's a better place to start.
- It does not mean you have to like it or agree with it, it means you see it.

- **Appreciation**

- makes the other feel good about what they do
- it makes a difference to their lives to know they are appreciated
- it makes them feel better about themselves
- it strengthens your relationship
- It motivates the person to keep on doing what they are doing
- They don't feel used or taken advantage of- reduces resentments/arguments/frustration
- Everyone loves positive attention
- Shows that they are not taken for granted
- Shows reciprocity
- Promotes closeness
- Different ways to show appreciation (eg [5 love languages](#)):
 - Words of Affirmation
 - Acts of Service
 - Receiving/Giving Gifts
 - Quality Time
 - Physical Touch

- **Attunement**

- Attunement involves self-awareness and awareness of the other separate from you. It refers to the ability to pick up on the nuances of the person's responses and to respond in a way that accurately captures the sense of how that person is feeling at that moment. As a result, they feel seen and heard.
- You need to be both attuned to yourself and the other and dance the dance. Because you need to respect yourself and your boundaries while also seeing the other and respecting their boundaries
- We really need to be attuned to ourselves to understand the other better and be attuned to them
- Because when we do so, 1) we are able to separate ourselves from the other 2) reduce projections 3) not take things personally- we allow the other be other
- Reduces conflict
- It allows you to adjust your body language, posture, proximity with the other.
- Improves problem-solving- less messy
- Promotes connection, not separation
- Improve satisfaction and the quality of the relationship

- It is an integral part of any healthy relationship
- An important precursor to attunement is presence and curiosity (open-ended questions without assumptions).
- **Allowing**
 - Live true to your values while allowing others to live in a way true to theirs, without judgment
 - Goes hand in hand with acceptance
 - You let things be, it is freeing/ liberating
 - Reduces resistance to what is, relationships are easier and more enjoyable
 - Stop trying to control what other people think about us... stop people-pleasing and co-dependent behaviour - which are both very controlling behaviours
 - The result is we are more authentic and less resentful
 - Reduces anxiety
 - Allows us and others to be ourselves so we can grow
- **Affection**
 - **WARNING:**
 - The relationship has to be safe and appropriate and respectful of boundaries and individual preferences (victims of sexual/physical abuse).
 - Dependent on the level of intimacy of the relationship - (parenting, friends, & couples NOT at work)
 - Affection is an important part of any loving relationship—it is the verbal and physical expression of the love, warmth and caring people have for each other. It is the glue that keeps us together.
 - Multiple benefits of affection: co-regulation, calms the body, soothing, promotes intimacy
 - Intimate relationships:
 - Physical affection releases feel-good hormones. It elevates our level of [oxytocin](#), a hormone that reduces pain and causes a calming sensation
 - It [reduces cortisol, blood pressure, and heart rate](#).
 - Engaging in affectionate touch increases how [trustworthy](#) you appear.
 - Physical affection is associated with higher relationship satisfaction. The more physically affectionate romantic partners are with each other the [more satisfied](#) they are with their relationships
 - Physical affection with a loved one predicts an [increase in positive mood](#) the following day.
 - With children:
 - A variety of [sensory stimulation](#) is essential for a child's overall physical development and [brain development](#) (eg Skin contact, or physical touch such as hugging). Studies in [Eastern European](#) orphanages have shown that infants deprived of physical touch presented with cognitive and [developmental deficits](#). Alternatively, children who are [touched thrive](#) and are healthier

- Hugs can alleviate emotional and physical pain. Hugs are beneficial to both sharing joyful and difficult emotions
- The [importance of touch](#) cannot be underestimated. Despite adequate nutrition, the bodies of children deprived of physical contact [stop growing](#). As a result, many suffer from [failure-to-thrive](#).
- Just like with couples hugs triggers the release of oxytocin, the *love hormone* which has [many beneficial effects](#) on the body, one of them is to stimulate growth because it also releases [growth hormones](#). It also increases the level of oxytocin also strengthens [immune systems](#).
- The release of oxytocin can help [calm](#) the nervous system, reduce stress and relieve anxiety. Prolonged period of distress, due to their inability to self-regulate, exposed the child to toxic levels of stress hormone which will impact the child's physical and mental health. To a point of compromising their immune system, impact memory and verbal reasoning later in life, it can even lead to [depression in the teen and adult years](#).
- Hugs can thus act as [protective factors](#) as they to lower the level of stress hormone. Hugging your children will teach them how to regulate their own emotions and develop resilience.
- At birth, children's nervous systems are not mature enough to regulate big emotions by themselves. This is why toddlers having intense emotions have a hard time stopping. Hugs are good for a child's emotional health, such as tantrums (validation/seen). It helps them learn self-regulation.
- Studies have even shown that hugs foster [optimism](#) and nourish self-esteem as the child will feel loved .
- Hugs improve relationships as they increase trust and reduce fear
- Most importantly physical contact, hugs and touch promote [secure attachment](#), promote [trust](#), reduce [fear](#), and encourage parent-child [bonding](#).

Resources:

[On iTunes](#)

[On Insight Timer](#)

[The 5 Love Languages](#)

[Benefits Of Sensory Play To Brain Development](#)

Brain Development – Why Early Years Matter

Are your needs really being met?