

The Intimacy Hierarchy™

Attachment Style: How we connect, experience, and cope with security or insecurity (anxiety and avoidance) within significant relationships. Attachment Styles are developed in our pre-verbal, formative years from the relationships with our caregivers and, as we grow into adults, heavily influences our significant relationships today. Understanding our Attachment Style and the implications are crucial in understanding how our relationships work – or do not work – in the present. Thus, Attachment Style is the foundation of the Intimacy Hierarchy.

Spiritual Program: We are all spiritual beings as well as physical bodies. Ninety-four percent of mankind today believes in God, or a Higher Power. Integration of and reconciliation with our Higher Power – the *foundation* of developing confidence, courage, and healthy self-regard/esteem – is an inner process that dominates inner world (that private ‘self’ of what we believe and how we feel about ourselves). How we visualize God correlates directly in how we view the world we live in; thus, our “big picture.”

Boundaries: Our choice of behaviors with others and behaviors we allow from others. Boundaries serve as self-protection, self-regulation, and self-balance – the *practice* of confidence, courage, and healthy self-regard/esteem. We become an “individual” and differentiate ourselves from others through the development and exercise of our boundaries. Exhibited through behaviors the purpose, design, and application of boundaries are *always* intended *to protect ourselves* rather than a tool for controlling others.

Friendships: The life-dance of attraction, commonness (experience, goals, and purpose), collaboration, sharing and revealing, exchanging feedback, emotional connecting, and expressions of affection with another and others. Through our friendships we become better individuals by refining and practicing our boundaries, exuding confidence, and exhibiting courage – resulting in higher levels of self-regards/esteem.

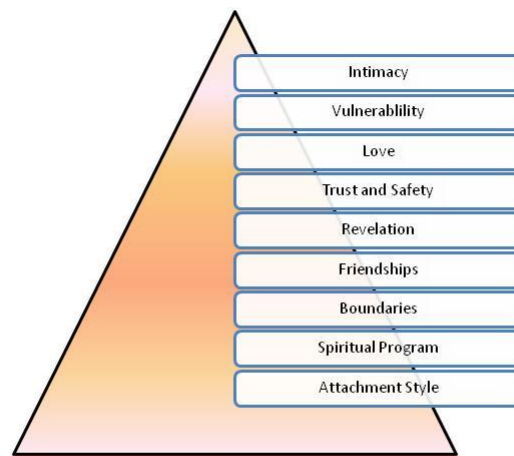
Revelation: A mutually shared, supportive exchange of our inner world – past, present, and dreams. It is through revelation that we teach others how to be with us and how to love us while being available for the lessons of others. Exercising our *boundaries* and *discernment*, we reveal ourselves through dialogue (verbal sharing and relating) of our life experiences, thoughts, beliefs, feelings, needs, wants, and impacts. Self-disclosure facilitates the deepening of friendships and intimate relationships while *fortifying* our own inner confidence, courage, and self-regard/esteem. Boundaries and discernment customizes the level of revelation and how we relate with each person in our friendships.

Trust and Safety: **Trust** is the ability to rely and depend on another person based on their consistency and positive behaviors exhibited *over time*. **Safety** is the degree of inner security and comfort that permits revelation (genuine emotional expression and self-disclosure) extending from experiencing trustworthiness. Always be trustworthy, but trust another when earned. Trust and safety are the mechanisms for developing intense and deeper relationships that transcends basic friendships.

Love: The process of actions (behaviors) that transform the “I/me” toward the “we/us,” developing into a “special relationship.” Strong experiences of connection, friendship, revelation, trust, safety, and balance (maintaining boundaries) serve as the foundation for developing a loving relationship. The willingness to integrate, collaborate, expose (vulnerability), and the sharing of responsibilities and accountabilities facilitates the growth of all love relationships. Life-partners enjoy sexual expressions as transformative.

Vulnerability: Shared genuineness and authenticity. Vulnerability involves deep levels of revelation with confidence, courage, and complete honesty. The goal of being vulnerable is to evolve a special friendship into an intimate relationship. Mutually shared, this combination of verbal and non-verbal emotional expressions and self-revelations are non-condemning, supportive, secure, and private – the practice of high levels of trust and safety.

Intimacy: The results of all that has gone on before it over a long period of practice and of time. Intimacy includes the descriptions of “transparent” and “interdependence.” There is a mutual feeling of security (low anxiety and low avoidance); honor and respect for each other’s individuality (boundaries) and for the relationship itself; perpetual mutual revelation with high levels of trust, safety, and the willingness for vulnerability; and the actions and security of a loving relationship. Intimate relationships stand the test of time, are solid, respected, and the goal of most all healthy people. At the core of all intimate relationships are intimate people; thus, Intimate Person, Intimate Couple.



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