



Becoming the Best Version of Myself

AFAR Retreat - 2025

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Agenda

- Who I Am:
 - Visualization Exercise
 - How My Authentic Self Went Awry
- Who I Am in Relationship(s):
 - My Partner's Authentic Self
 - How I show up in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid Model
- Who I Am Moving Forward
 - Meeting My Future Self
 - Bringing My Future Self into Today



Who I Am

Visualization Exercise:

- My Authentic Self

Who I Am

Write down 3 words that describe who you are as you are fully seen, known, and loved

My Authentic Self Gone Awry

Contrast Between Our Authentic Self VS.
How We Come to See Ourselves



How this original goodness goes awry:

Impacts of our upbringing

Our actions / shame

My Authentic Self Gone Awry

Impacts of Our Upbringing

- Trauma / abuse
- How we make sense of core wounding impacts our view of God, others, the world, and self
- Formation of negative core beliefs
- Orientation to the world confirming core beliefs

My Authentic Self Gone Awry

Debilitating effect of shame: Hiding from self and hiding from others

- Hiding from ourselves
- What shame is
- How toxic shame is
- What messages shame tells us
- Defenses against shame (Adapted from Kaufman - 1980)
 - Rage • Contempt • Striving for Power • Striving for Perfection
 - Transfer of Blame • Internal Withdrawal

A person stands on a rocky shore at sunset, their silhouette reflected in a pool of water. The background shows a calm sea and distant mountains under a warm, orange sky.

Authenticity with Self

Who I am: Loveable and flawed

My Authentic Self Gone Awry

- Are there any truths that I need to be real with myself about NOW?



Who I am in Relationship(s)

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Who My Partner Is

Visualization

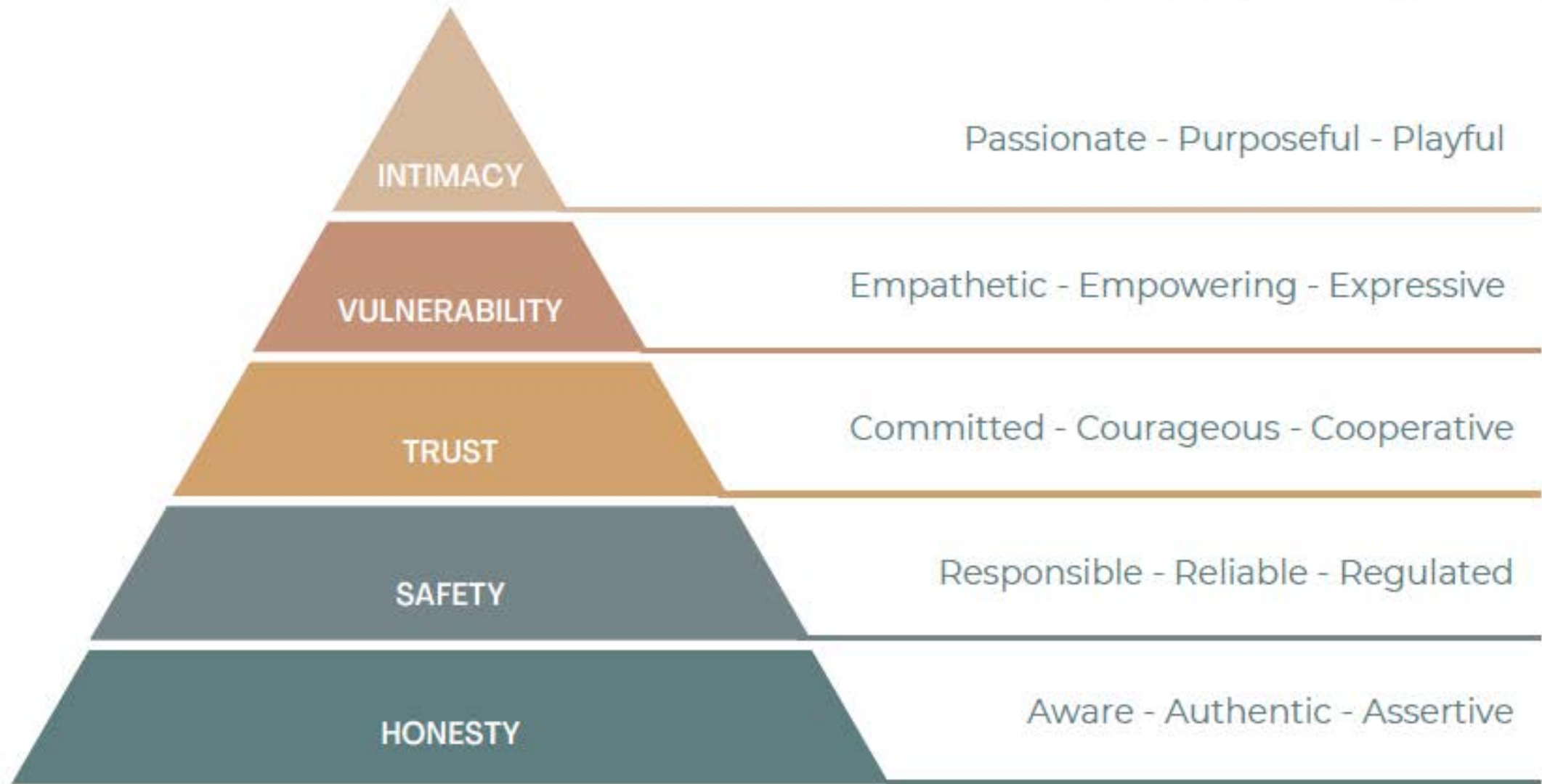
My partner's Authentic Self

Who My Partner Is

Write 3 words that describe how my PARTNER is authentically
(if not in a relationship, imagine a future partner)

Who My Partner Is

If I were to truly treat my partner according to those attributes, what would I do more of? Less of?



Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

HONESTY

- The regular practice of transparency with self and others
- Involves
 - Awareness
 - Authenticity
 - Assertiveness
- Honesty is the BASE for a healthy relationship to form and flourish

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

HONESTY

How much am I actively employing:

- Awareness
 - Recognizing the emotional, physical, spiritual wellbeing of my partner and myself?
- Authenticity
 - Knowing my true self (and my partner's) and expressing it?
- Assertiveness
 - Recognizing and communicating my needs in a healthy way?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

HONESTY gone awry:

- Deception / lies / manipulation
- Do I honestly communicate needs? Or am I aggressive / passive-aggressive?
- “Forgetting”
- “Apparent” kindness
- Denial
- Gaslighting

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

Potential solutions at the HONESTY level:

- Disclosure
- Recovery plan / check-ins
- Trauma work / family of origin work
- Grounding tools
- Intensive workshop / therapy

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

SAFETY

- A sense of relational security created by ongoing constructive behavior from each person
- Involves
 - Responsibility
 - Reliability
 - Regulation
- Safe relationships are healthy and sustained relationships

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

SAFETY

How much am I actively employing:

- Responsibility
 - Ability to own and accept my own experience, taking responsibility?
- Reliability
 - When I say I'm going to do something do I follow-through?
- Regulation
 - Do I manage my own nervous system when in difficult situations with my partner?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

SAFETY gone awry:

- Emotional dysregulation when partner is triggered / activated
- Shut down / defensiveness
- Do I do what I say I'm going to do 90%+ of the time?
- Do I apologize with a “but” at the end?
- Do I disparage my partner?
 - Am I judgmental, critical, discounting?
- Do I use hostility / aggression / insults?
- Do I intimidate (use destructive actions or threatening gestures)?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

Potential solutions at the SAFETY level:

- Boundaries
 - Honoring partner boundaries
 - Determining my personal boundaries
- Addressing partner triggers: VASE / AVR
- Building emotional regulation
- Understanding the impact of betrayal trauma

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

TRUST

- A confident conviction that our partners say and do things that are for us and for our relationship
- Involves
 - Courage
 - Commitment
 - Cooperation
- Trusting relationships operate as originally designed, and we behave in trustworthy ways

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

TRUST

How much am I actively employing:

- Courage
 - Do I go “all in” in my relationship(s) without waiting for reciprocity?
- Commitment
 - Regular investment in myself and in my relationship with time, energy, attention?
- Cooperation
 - Do I work as a team with my partner?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

TRUST gone awry:

- Am I consistent with my words and actions lining up?
 - Trust is rebuilt through consistent, trustworthy actions over TIME
- Diverting difficult conversations
 - Blocking / diverting
 - Countering / correcting

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

Potential solutions at the TRUST level:

- Partner impact level
- Empathy response letter / restitution letter
- Work of forgiveness begins (when trust and safety have been EARNED)
- Beginning work on relational dynamics

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

VULNERABILITY

- Giving of ourselves to open up to a deeper potential for connection
- Involves:
 - Empathy
 - Mutual Empowerment
 - Expressiveness
- Vulnerable relationships involve “into me you see”

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

VULNERABILITY

How much am I actively employing:

- Empathy
 - Recognizing my partner's emotional state and connecting rather than avoiding?
- Mutual Empowerment
 - Sharing leadership / decision-making?
- Expressiveness
 - Communicating with my partner with depth and true vulnerability
 - Hearing them in their true depth?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

VULNERABILITY gone awry:

- How do I disempower my partner through control?
 - Isolation from support?
 - Use faith / religion / authority to insist on certain behaviors?
 - Undermine / sabotage achievements?
- Withholding empathy or support

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

Potential solutions at the **VULNERABILITY** level:

- Couples grief
- Work of forgiveness continues at a deeper level
- Sexual reintegration
- Transforming relational dynamics
- Visioning together as a couple
- Mutual sharing of early wounding / trauma

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

INTIMACY

- Intimacy is a sustained, life-giving unity that leads to mutual flourishing
- Involves:
 - Purpose
 - Passion
 - Play
- Intimate couples are connected, with shared vision and values

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

INTIMACY

How much am I actively employing:

- Purpose
 - Using our experience, strength, and hope to serve our relationship and others?
- Passion
 - Giving wholeheartedly to pursuits as a couple?
- Play
 - Letting go of outcomes and expectations to explore creativity and whimsy in my relationship?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

INTIMACY gone awry:

- What ways do I withhold affection or intimacy from my loved one?
From my family?
- Do I deprive my partner?

Who I am in Relationship(s) - Intimacy Pyramid

Potential solutions at the INTIMACY level:

- Overt forgiveness
- Addressing impact on children
- Service / giving back
- Supporting others who are healing

Let's Get Real with Reality

- What are 3 truths about how you show up in your relationship(s) that you need to be honest about right now?



Who I am Moving Forward

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Meeting My Future Self

Let's meet our future self

Bringing My Future Self into Today

Let's have our future self meet our current self

Bringing My Future Self into Today

- What are 2-3 things I need to say “yes” to, in order to move towards my future self over the next month?
- What are 1-2 things I need to say “no” to or let go of to help me move towards my future self?

Bringing My Future Self into Today

Uplevel Challenge:

- Can we all commit to these “yes’s” and “no’s”?
- Let’s transform society by being TRANSFORMED men
- **If you need more support, scan the QR Code below:**





DISCUSSION

Who I AM



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