

Defense of David Richo's Five A's of Mindful Loving

Analysis of Response to Divorce Predictors Scale (DPS)

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Abstract

This project studies the influence of David Richo's five A's on divorce rates: acceptance, attention, affection, allowing, and appreciation. Each section analyzes prompts from the Divorce Predictors Scale related to one of the five A's. Findings included average attention and affection were required to lower the overall divorce rate to twenty-five percent. Additionally, above-average acceptance, appreciation, and allowing are required. These findings also indicate the importance of self-allowing which is comprised of self-acceptance and self-appreciation.

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1 Introduction

Aiming to explain how to be an 'adult' in relationships, David Richo states that the five A's to mindful loving are attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection, and allowing. Since he claims these concepts are the basis of healthy love in childhood and adult relationships, this project aims to test that theory. [1] Do these measures affect divorce rates and to what extent? Do couples need to be adept in these areas or merely adequate?

The data used in this experiment contains answers acquired during face-to-face interviews to fifty-four questions by one-hundred and seventy divorced or happily married couples from Turkey. The Divorce Predictors Scale (DPS) dataset is derived from a study focused on predicting divorce using the DPS within the framework of Gottman couples therapy focused on various aspects of relationships, including creating a common meaning, failed attempts to repair, and negative conflict behaviors. Each section of this project will handle one of the five A's, and the subsections will handle the most relevant prompts from the DPS using SQL.

2 Acceptance

Richo defines acceptance as being "Received respectfully with all our feelings, choices, and personal traits and supported through them." He explains that each partner must be free of preconceived agendas for partnership [1]. The three ideas considered in this section are the willingness to accept an apology, perseverance through differences, and the use of blanket generalizations.

2.1 Q1. "If one spouse apologizes when a discussion deteriorates, the discussion ends."

The majority of participants, about forty-one percent, answered that they never feel an apology helps their argument end when it should. Table one shows the greater the inclination to accept an apology, the exponentially increasing chance of a successful marriage. The couples that never or seldom truly resolve arguments have a very high divorce rate. An average instance of this occurrence leads to a slightly below-average divorce rate of about forty-three percent. However, couples that frequently or always are accepting of an apology decrease to a divorce rate of about four to six percent. This discrepancy could be due to misreporting because no one is perfect. Alternatively, couples that always

Table 1: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question one

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	69	1	1.4%	98.6%
1(Seldom)	9	1	11.1%	88.9%
2(Averagely)	14	8	57.1%	42.9%
3(Frequently)	47	45	95.7%	4.3%
4(Always)	31	29	93.5%	6.5%

move on after an apology might hold long-lasting grudges. This trend relates to acceptance because a partner who feels received respectfully with all their feelings, choices, and traits is ready to accept an apology. After all, we only continue arguments when we feel misunderstood or inadequate. Alternatively, the opposite of acceptance is rejection. A partner who feels rejected when facing a problem is not quick to reconcile.

2.2 Q2. "My spouse and I can ignore our differences even when things get hard."

Again, the majority of responses indicated that participants can never ignore their differences; however, this was only about thirty-five percent of all answers. Table 2 shows that every couple that has mastered this is still married. Additionally, the difference between averagely and seldom is large: about seventy-three percent. Couples that can

Table 2: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question two

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	59	2	3.4%	96.6%
1(Seldom)	23	2	8.7%	91.3%
2(Averagely)	28	23	82.1%	17.9%
3(Frequently)	38	35	92.1%	7.9%
4(Always)	22	22	100%	0%

always ignore their differences have a very high level of acceptance. It makes sense that these couples have a zero percent divorce rate because they are supported through all feelings, choices, and personality traits. A better word for ignore might be to lovingly persevere through those differences. It is worth noting that averagely upholding this idea leads to about an eighteen percent divorce rate. The average should be the aim of course as no one is perfect and always is not reality. Of course, analyzing this specific prompt could lead to the conclusion that acceptance is necessary one hundred percent of the time. However, it might not be reasonable to require acceptance to this degree in our relationships. Later sections will analyze this dilemma.

2.3 Q32. "Expressions are used such as 'you always' or 'you never'."

This time, the most recorded response is a four; about twenty-nine percent of participants feel that blanket generalizations are always used in their relationship. Table three shows that this one is a bit of an enigma. These results initially seem contradictory to

Table 3: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question thirty-two

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	46	0	0%	100%
1(Seldom)	30	5	16.7%	83.3%
2(Averagely)	12	3	25.0%	75.0%
3(Frequently)	32	28	87.5%	12.5%
4(Always)	50	48	96.0%	4%

the concept of acceptance because blanket statements are inherently disapproving. Some participants might not admit or even notice they do this. On second glance, it makes sense that the forty-six out of one hundred and seventy couples that say they have never done this are all divorced; it is impossible to have never done this. Alternatively, the couples that report they always do this could be thought of as self-aware thus leading to healthier marriages. This prompt exemplifies the fact that self-acceptance is necessary for a healthy relationship.

2.4 Required Degree of Acceptance

According to the dataset, the overall divorce rate is fifty-one percent. For this project, aims will be made to reduce to a twenty-five percent divorce rate. Table four shows that

Table 4: Divorce Percentage Aims

Question	Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
1	2(Averagely)	14	8	57.1%	42.9%
1	3(Frequently)	47	45	95.7%	4.3%
2	2(Averagely)	28	23	82.1%	17.9%
32	2(Averagely)	12	3	25.0%	75.0%
32	3(Frequently)	32	28	87.5%	12.5%

sustainable acceptance can be characterized by frequent acceptance of apologies, average acceptance of differences, and partners who are self-aware enough to admit that they frequently use blanket generalizations. This is a generalization, and there is more to acceptance. However, the connections mentioned above demonstrate the importance of acceptance within marriage. Table five reinforces that some level of acceptance is required.

Since two out of the three prompts required a response of frequently to be at or below a twenty-five percent divorce rate, frequent acceptance is required.

Table 5: Non-Acceptance

Question	Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Divorced
1	0(Never)	69	1	98.6%
2	0(Never)	59	2	96.6%
32	0(Never)	46	0	100%

3 Attention

Richo defines attention as engaged focus, not only listening to someone’s words but internalizing their feelings and experience [1]. So, the prompts for this section will look over the knowledge of one’s partner and the willingness to learn.

3.1 Q3. "When we need it, we can take our discussion from the beginning and correct it."

Starting with the willingness to learn, the first prompt looks similar to another we’ve seen. Table six shows that the couples that are never willing to learn what led to an argument or how it progressed, are all divorced.

Table 6: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question three

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	51	0	0%	100%
1(Seldom)	24	4	16.7%	83.3%
2(Averagely)	26	15	57.7%	42.3%
3(Frequently)	52	49	94.2%	5.8%
4(Always)	17	16	94.1%	5.9%

This is similar to the non-self-aware or non-accepting couples that claim to never use blanket generalizations. So far, the obvious attributes of couples that are divorced are non-acceptance and indifference. This specific prompt shows that an average instance of this occurrence leads to a relatively average divorce rate of forty-two percent, but frequent or always responses both decreased to about six percent, a thirty-six percent difference.

3.2 Q21. "I know exactly what my spouse likes." and Q26. "I know my spouse's basic anxieties."

This section will group two prompts because they are similar and have similar results. What someone likes and doesn't like is the basis of what a partner should know about them. Showing attention not only includes knowing these things but also lovingly utilizing them.

Table 7: Divorce percentage grouped by response to "I know exactly what my spouse likes."

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	78	5	6.4%	93.6%
1(Seldom)	17	4	23.5%	76.5%
2(Averagely)	17	17	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	47	47	100%	0%
4(Always)	11	11	100%	0%

Table 8: Divorce percentage grouped by response to "I know my spouse's basic anxieties."

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	70	3	4.2%	95.8%
1(Seldom)	20	3	15%	85%
2(Averagely)	21	21	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	37	37	100%	0%
4(Always)	20	20	100%	0%

Tables seven and eight show that attention is really important. Averagely, frequently, or always knowing a partner's likes and dislikes leads to a divorce rate of zero percent in both prompts. Interestingly, forty-two to forty-six percent of couples from the study reported feeling like they never knew their partner's likes or anxieties. Again, this shows how important attention is; most couples don't have it, but the ones that merely attempt it have a much greater chance of success.

3.3 Required Degree of Attention

As seen in the previous section, knowing a partner's likes and anxieties at an average level or above leads to a successful marriage. However, the willingness to learn these things requires a frequent level of attention to be below a twenty-five percent divorce rate. Alternatively, only average willingness to learn about a partner increases the divorce rate by about thirty-six percent. This trend makes sense because no willingness to learn leads to ignorance. However, for this project, an average level of attention will be required.

4 Affection

Richo defines affection as, "Closeness on a physical and emotional level: kindness, considerateness, thoughtfulness, and romantic gestures". This one is unique to each partnership; it includes being loved as we are with our physical appearance [1]. Therefore, this section will analyze quality time, perception of the relationship as more than physical proximity, and taking care of a partner when sick.

4.1 Q5. "The time we spend together is special to us."

This prompt was chosen because quality time is a good measure of affection; it can be described as quality proximity on an emotional and physical level. All couples can spend a lot of time together, none being quality. Being one of the five famous love languages created by Gary Chapman, quality time is known to be important and could be a possible point of expansion on this project. Although Table nine shows this prompt

Table 9: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question five"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	82	3	3.7%	96.3%
1(Seldom)	10	5	50%	50%
2(Averagely)	8	6	75%	25%
3(Frequently)	44	44	100%	0%
4(Always)	26	26	100%	0%

is straightforward and intuitive concerning happy couples, it shows some more interesting insights. First, the response with an overwhelming number of selections was a zero: the couple's time together was never special. Second, the couples that rarely spend quality time together are split evenly; fifty percent are divorced and fifty percent are married. Many reasons lead unhappy couples to stay together, but this trend directly mimics the overall divorce rate of close to fifty percent. Therefore, maybe divorce is not a question of one's devotion to their marriage, but devotion to oneself. Once quality time reaches an average level, the divorce rate decreases to twenty-five percent: the aim of this project.

4.2 Q7. "We are like two strangers who share the same environment at home rather than a family."

Sixty-seven percent of couples say they never feel like strangers who share an environment rather than a family. This seems good initially, but Table 10 shows that seventy-five

percent of these couples are divorced. Couples that rarely, but sometimes, feel this way decrease to a divorce percentage of about two percent. Averagely, frequently, or always feeling this way can lead to complacency.

Table 10: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question seven"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	114	29	25.4%	74.6%
1(Seldom)	42	41	97.6%	2.4%
2(Averagely)	5	5	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	4	4	100%	0%
4(Always)	5	5	100%	0%

This trend is the opposite of what it should be based on the idea of affection. However, the small sample of fourteen couples who feel this way at least half the time and are all still married might just be comfortable. Feeling like strangers is much different than being in an abusive relationship for example, the point being that it is easy to ignore this problem because it is not confrontational. Again, this exemplifies that self-affection is required for a happy marriage. If someone were to give themselves all five A's, they might not enter into an unsuccessful relationship. Considering the responses with more selections and a larger sample size can confirm these insights. It is normal to feel disconnected from a partner sometimes, and ninety-eight percent of couples who realize this are still married. After all, without these times, affection would not be as valuable. On the other hand, seventy-five percent of couples that say they never feel disconnected are divorced, possibly due to a false sense of reality.

4.3 Q22. "I know how my spouse likes to be cared for when sick."

This prompt is reflective of affection because it includes caring, emotionally and physically, for someone while they are hurt. It is possibly the most obvious example of pining for what we receive in childhood in our adult relationships. Table eleven shows the ex-

Table 11: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question twenty-two"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	87	7	8%	92%
1(Seldom)	13	7	53.8%	46.2%
2(Averagely)	26	26	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	29	29	100%	0%
4(Always)	15	15	100%	0%

pected results. Again, averagely knowing how to care for a sick partner led to a zero percent divorce rate.

4.4 Required Degree of Affection

An average amount of quality time led to a twenty-five percent divorce rate. An average or above instance of knowing how to care for a sick partner led to a zero percent divorce rate. Last, seldom feelings of disconnection led to a divorce rate of about two percent. Thus, an average level of affection is required to be at or below a twenty-five percent divorce rate.

5 Allowing

Richo defines allowing as, "Spreading out a red carpet for us as we walk into fulfillment of our deepest needs, values, and wishes." This is in support of our inherent freedom. [1] So, this section will analyze similar values in terms of personal freedom, trust, and how marriage should be.

5.1 Q12. "My spouse and I have similar values in terms of personal freedom."

This prompt is straightforward in regards to how it relates to allowing. Table 12 shows that the average upholding of this idea led to a divorce rate of about eighteen percent. However, frequently or always agreeing on ideas of personal freedom led to a zero percent divorce rate. Whereas rarely or never agreeing on personal freedom almost always led to divorce. This is intuitive, but it is worth pointing out that the largest category of these

Table 12: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question twelve"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	58	2	3.4%	96.6%
1(Seldom)	27	1	3.7%	96.3%
2(Averagely)	22	18	81.8%	18.2%
3(Frequently)	42	42	100%	0%
4(Always)	21	21	100%	0%

couples reported that they never feel they agree. This has been an ongoing trend in this project: most couples have it wrong.

5.2 Q20. "My spouse and I have similar values in trust."

As seen in the last section, the couples that have opposing views of personal freedom at least sometimes do not have successful marriages. The ones that do agree more often on ideas of personal freedom trust their partners. Couples that do not trust each other are much more likely to be controlling.

Table 13: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question twenty"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	81	1	1.2%	98.8%
1(Seldom)	10	4	40%	60%
2(Averagely)	21	21	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	36	36	100%	0%
4(Always)	22	22	100%	0%

Table 13 reinforces the insights explained above. Averagely trusting one's partner led to one hundred percent success. However, moving from average trust to below average increased the divorce rate by sixty percent. Again, it is worth noting that the largest category of response indicated that a lot of couples have no trust in their partner.

5.3 Q18. "My spouse and I have similar ideas about how marriage should be."

This prompt zooms out on trust and personal freedom by focusing on marriage as a whole. Table 14 shows the same trend at an increased importance. Now, averagely

Table 14: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question eighteen"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	79	1	1.3%	98.7%
1(Seldom)	10	2	20%	80%
2(Averagely)	16	16	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	44	44	100%	0%
4(Always)	21	21	100%	0%

agreeing how marriage should be led to a zero percent divorce rate. However, below-average agreement increased the divorce rate to eighty percent.

5.4 Required Degree of Allowing

Again, average allowing led to mostly successful marriages. However, this section was more stringent. Average levels led to zero percent divorce in two prompts and about eigh-

teen percent in the other. For these reasons, frequent allowing is required for a successful marriage. Increasing the level goes against the twenty-five percent restriction; however, slightly above average allowing always led to one hundred percent success. Additionally, it makes more sense to frequently but not always allow a partner to do what they want instead of allowing half of the time.

6 Appreciation

Richo defines appreciation as, "Someone that acknowledges and cherishes your unconditional worth without envy or possessiveness." It is one person's faith in another's value and includes gratitude. [1] There were no good prompts for this type of action, so this section will focus on the opposite of appreciation: criticism or disapproval. The prompts include the ability to insult or degrade a partner.

6.1 Q35. "I can insult my spouse during our discussions."

As we've seen previously discussions can be productive when the five A's are upheld. For example, accepting disagreements and moving on after an apology or paying attention by dissecting a conversation and what went wrong. However, insulting a partner directly goes against one of the five A's: Appreciation.

Table 15: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question thirty-five"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	85	6	7.1%	92.9%
1(Seldom)	13	7	53.8%	46.2%
2(Averagely)	1	1	100%	0%
3(Frequently)	15	14	93.3%	6.7%
4(Always)	56	56	100%	0%

Table 15 shows that a lot of couples responded that they can never insult their partner during a conversation, but about ninety-three percent of these couples are divorced. However, this seems like a disingenuous response as it is natural to mess up sometimes. An inflated ego can definitely lead to divorce. On the other hand, the next biggest category was always insulting a partner; none of these couples are divorced. It is important to notice that the prompt says can you insult, not do you insult. Interestingly, this distinction implies that couples who believe they are always allowed to insult a partner are happy in their marriages. We know this can't be true, and this result points towards an

abusive relationship where one partner is more reluctant or scared to leave. Both of these conclusions could be the reason that couples who say they rarely can insult their partner are about forty percent more likely to be divorced than those who say they are frequently able to insult. This makes sense because a disagreement naturally leads to high tension, and mentioning an issue could be deemed insulting. Thus, couples that say they averagely insult their partner during a discussion are all still married.

6.2 Q52. "I'm not afraid to tell my spouse about their inadequacy." and Q54. "I'm not afraid to tell my spouse about their incompetence."

Narrowing down the concept of insulting, this subsection combines two similar prompts. Inadequacy refers to a person's perception of their value; whereas incompetence is the inability to complete a task. Of course, these things might be true, but a partner who practices the five A's accepts their partner's flaws and appreciates them anyway instead of criticizing them.

Table 16: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question fifty-two: Inadequacy"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	23	0	0%	100%
1(Seldom)	28	5	17.9%	82.1%
2(Averagely)	23	6	26.1%	73.9%
3(Frequently)	30	16	53.3%	46.7%
4(Always)	66	57	86.4%	13.6%

Table 17: Divorce percentage grouped by response to question fifty-four: Incompetence"

Response	Response Count	Married	Percent Married	Percent Divorced
0(Never)	50	4	8%	92%
1(Seldom)	27	3	11.1%	88.9%
2(Averagely)	21	7	33.3%	66.7%
3(Frequently)	15	14	93.3%	6.7%
4(Always)	57	56	98.2%	1.8%

Tables 16 and 17 show what we expect. However, there is a difference between insulting a partner based on their worth rather than ability. About forty-seven percent of couples who are usually scared to insult a partner's adequacy are divorced. Whereas only about seven percent of those usually afraid to insult competence are divorced. Additionally, average caution leads to a sixty-seven to seventy-four percent divorce rate.

6.3 Required Degree of Appreciation

The first prompt shows that self-aware couples are more likely to realize disagreements can be insulting, and the last two prompts show we should be careful with our partner's feelings. To get to a divorce rate of twenty-five percent or below, this section indicates that above-average appreciation is required. This conclusion was made because each prompt had a different result of average, frequent, and always, so the median was chosen.

7 Conclusion

Richo's advice for successful marriages is just that: advice. There is no one-size-fits-all all, and this would decrease the value of loving relationships. However, based on the findings above, his ideas are influential. To decrease the overall divorce rate from fifty to twenty-five percent, average affection and attention are required. Additionally, above-average but not perfect acceptance, allowing, and appreciation are required. Richo explained that appreciation gives depth to acceptance. These findings indicate affection and attention are important, but acceptance, appreciation, and allowing are more important. This conclusion also further exemplifies the idea that successful marriages start with couples that 'allow' themselves: they practice self-acceptance and self-appreciation.

8 Further Study

One suggestion for further study is to visualize this data using Tableau or PowerBI. Additionally, the study could benefit from a larger sample size that covers multiple areas to eliminate cultural bias. Lastly, The study could add a few questions, specifically prompts related to appreciation.

References

- [1] D. Richo. *How to Be an Adult in Relationships: The Five Keys to Mindful Loving*. Shambhala, 2021.